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## POETICS OF NEW SINCERITY LITERATURE VS POSTMODERN AESTHETICS: KAZUO ICHIGURO'S NOVEL "NEVER LET ME GO"

*Мета* роботи полягає у визначенні особливостей поетики літератури нової щирості як полемічно загостреної проти постмодерної іронії, скепсису та цинізму та їх реалізації у романі Кадзуо Ішігуро «Не відпускай мене». Для досягнення мети застосовано культурно-історичний, культурфілософський, герменевтичний *методи* дослідження.

У роботі досліджено становлення поняття «щирість», яке трансформувалося впродовж багатьох століть, набуваючи нових значень на тлі різних епох. Поняття «щирість» розглядається в контексті культурфілософії та літературної критики. Особливу увагу зосереджено на протиставленні нової щирості та постмодерністської іронії, яка проаналізована не тільки як художній прояв, але й як спосіб мислення. Феномен нової щирості розглянутий в роботі як реакція на соціокультурні зрушення, що призвели до присмерку епохи постмодернізму.

У науковій розвідці здійснено спробу визначити диференційні риси поетики творів, які складають шар літератури нової щирості. Серед них виділені особливості проблематики, яка полягає в загостренні проблем більш інтимного, особистого характеру, своєрідність героя, який є рефлексуючою особистістю, що з великою увагою ставиться до свого внутрішнього світу, переймається питанням самоідентифікації; характерна оповідна манера, яка відзначається наявністю дієгетичного наратора та сповідальним характером; глибокий психологізм та емпатія; апеляція до загальнолюдських цінностей; самоіронія як показник індивідуального стилю письменника або повна відсутність іронії.

Роман-антиутопію К. Ішігуро досліджено з позиції естетики і поетики нової щирості. Проведене дослідження дало можливість зробити висновки щодо характерних рис твору, властивих для літератури нової щирості. Так, оповідь у творі ведеться від імені дієгетичного наратора, який перейнятий питаннями самоідентифікації і пізнання свого внутрішнього світу. Наративна манера запрошує читача до активного діалогу та сприяє переживанню ним емпатії, в тому числі для опрацювання власних психологічних проблем. Фрагментарна, афективна оповідна манера підкріплена мінімалізмом сюжетної насиченості, що дозволяє досягти глибокого психологізму. Образи героїв роману повністю відповідають парадигмі, характерній для літератури нової щирості.

Простежено наявність мотивів дому, дороги, недовомовленості, втрати, смерті, усвідомленої жертви, за допомогою яких реалізується гуманістична ідея твору, та їхня трансформація і перетворення на свою протилежність.

Зроблено висновки щодо протистояння нової щирості постмодернізму на всіх рівнях художнього твору. Так, у романі відсутня домінуюча функція гри, на протигагу цьому текст роману гранично простий, художні засоби мінімізовані, оповідна манера максимально наближена до

розмовної щоденникової сповіді. Однією з цілей є пошук абсолютів етичного характеру, на які можна було б спертися в глобалізованому світі, де стерті всі кордони. Еклектичні та фрагментарні образи постмодернізму в романі поступаються складним, багатограним і ретельно промальованим. Поведінка та різноманітні реакції героїв твору психологічно мотивовані. У романі спостерігається відмова від деперсоніфікації дії завдяки домінуючій функції дієгетичного наратора та повна відмова від постмодерністської іронії.

*Ключові слова: антиутопія, нова щирість, постмодерністська іронія, дієгетичний наратор, емпатія, рефлексуюча особистість, гуманізм, оповідна манера, мотив дома, мотив смерті, мотив жертви, маніпулювання свідомістю, бунт проти системи, дискримінація*

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## Introduction

The essay by T. Vermeulen and R. den Akker "Notes on Metamodernism" [2010], reflected the change of epochs in society, culture and art, stating that postmodernism lost its dominant position to metamodernism. The prefix 'meta' was used to indicate its unstable position between the two poles, namely modernism and postmodernism. The literature of new sincerity became the fundamental component of metamodernism, which has been the most productive trend in the world literary process for more than two decades.

The emergence of the new sincerity movement marked a new worldview, certain worldview shifts, realised in literature as a special poetological phenomenon, which presents a new psychological type of person who treats him/herself differently as a personality, their place in society, in the global world, assesses local and global events in a new way, analyses their own actions and the behaviour of others from the point of view of moral imperatives. The latter, by the way, have also undergone certain changes over time due to the development of science, culture, social changes and powerful transformations in the field of personal freedom, etc.

These aspects are reflected in the diversity of contemporary literature, affecting not only realistic but also conventionally metaphorical works. The aforementioned has made it significant to study the phenomenon of new sincerity, to determine the peculiarities of the poetics of literature of this trend and its influence on classical genres.

## The Concept of 'Sincerity' in the Context of Ideas of Cultural Philosophy and Literary Criticism: An Introduction to the Problem

The term "new sincerity" itself refers to the history of the concept of "sincerity" and its functioning since its advent.

In her book "Sincerity after Communism: A Cultural History", Ellen Rutten analyses in depth the origin and transformation of the content of the new sincerity under the influence of various social factors, aspiring to conduct a transnational study of this phenomenon. The work traces the history of the concept of "sincerity", which E. Rutten begins with its use in China in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC, where it meant 'the moral responsibility to be true to oneself' [An, 2004], and the "Platonic distinction" and the ancient Greek figure of speech "parrhesia", denoting the speaker's moral obligation to speak frankly [Rutten, 2017, p. 94]. The value of honesty towards the listening audience persisted throughout the Middle Ages. Especially in ancient times, frankness in statements about politicians and people in power was valued, while the speaker's frankness about him/herself was not of great importance. This issue comes to the fore only in the culture of early modernity, when the words *sincerite* and *sincerity* appeared first in French and then in English. Both words are derived from the Latin term *sincerus*, meaning 'pure', 'genuine', or 'untainted' [Rutten, 2017, p. 95].

The question of sincerity undergoes a change in its interpretation during the Renaissance period, largely due to the emergence of theatre as an art form and the transition to the printed book, as a result of which 'sincerity was drawn into media forms that complicated... an integrated semiotic field in which body and mind were considered to be one' [Bal, van Alphen, 2009, pp. 2–3]. The general social development contributed to growing interest in the individual as such and his/her interaction with the world, where truth and veracity occupied a prominent place. In early

modern culture, the concept of sincerity moved from the private sphere to the public and political ones: certain political forces began to position themselves as models of sincerity contrary to their political rivals.

This phenomenon became especially acute in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hypocrisy became a critical political issue in (pre)revolutionary France. The influence of the 18<sup>th</sup> century French vocabulary on emotions in the public sphere can hardly be overestimated: in the political and public opinion of the time, the concept of 'sincerity' became a core cultural concept [Rutten, 2017, p. 105]. R. Ellert claims that one of the main supporters of this concept in literature is J.-J. Rousseau who uses it in his confessional works in order to oppose his own personality to social hypocrisy, which will contribute to the development of revolutionary thought [Ibid, p. 106]. A similar attitude to the concept of sincerity can be observed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in other European countries in literature and culture in general, although, of course, in each country it acquired certain national characteristics.

The understanding that the lower strata of society are also capable of feeling spreads with the emergence of the concept of human rights and under the influence of sentimentalist literature. Later, this prerogative was reserved exclusively for this part of society, as opposed to the hypocrisy of the upper strata.

With the intensification of urbanisation, the concept of sincerity began to play a significant role in the opposition between the industrial, technological and 'natural', where the onset of technology was perceived as a threat to sincerity. As large cities gradually replaced towns and villages as the dominant form of social organisation... alienation between people became the rule rather than the exception' and numerous publications on social etiquette elevated sincerity to the rank of a panacea that solves the problems of hypocrisy in a world full of "strangers" [Halttunen, 1982, pp. 34–35]. First, sincerity as an aesthetic and moral ideal spread in the United States, then in Europe.

Notwithstanding the fact that feelings become the basis of Romanticism as a literary movement, the attitude toward the concept of sincerity among the Romantics was ambiguous. Already at this stage, the pursuit of sincerity as an ideal faced irony, due to which sincerity was perceived as something unattainable, and the positioning of the author as an insincere person became a fashion.

O. Wilde was also quite critical of this category. In her work, E. Rutten cites the writer's aphorism: 'Sincerity in small doses is dangerous, but in large doses it is deadly' [Wilde, 1913]. The protagonist of Wilde's novel *Dorian Gray* takes a similar view: "Is insincerity such a terrible thing? I think not. It is merely a method by which we can multiply our personalities" [Wilde, 1890]. Expressing his direct attitude to the author's sincerity in a work of fiction, O. Wilde in his essay 'The Truth of Masks. Notes on Illusion' refuted the necessity of sincerity, giving preference to the motif of the mask, which excludes sincere self-expression, in which the writer had supporters and followers.

Thus, sincerity turned out to be a very problematic concept in the literary and philosophical debates of the time. In other discourses, it retained a more consistent semantic core. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, this tendency to attribute sincerity either exclusively to one's own state or to marginalised social groups consolidated in nationalist and populist rhetoric [Rutten, 2017, p. 117].

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century, associated with a powerful technological boom, 'opened a new aspect in the perception of sincerity: the growth of media such as advertising and journalism ... contributed to the phenomena of language and images being constantly manipulated, calling into question the existence of authenticity' [Fishzon, 2011, p. 800].

The notion of sincerity has been attracting attention since the late 1950s. Against the backdrop of increased interest in Romanticism with its pathos of individual freedom; feminism, neo-Marxism, anti-racism; the Beat Generation and hippies; ideologies directed against the establishment, libraries are flooded with studies of sincerity in literature and cultural history [Rutten, 2017, p. 145]. But the increased focus on sincerity has also raised suspicion of the word itself.

The attitude toward sincerity became the most sceptical with the onset of the postmodern era, whose theorists openly opposed the rhetoric of sincerity, which was not in line with their interpretation of the human self and subjectivity (D. Butler, J. Derrida, M. Foucault, R. Barthes). In addition, as postmodern deconstruction flourished, cultural critics increasingly doubted that art was a way of direct expression [Ibid, p. 148]. Sincerity began to be associated with something homemade, amateurish, aesthetically imperfect. Thus, the issue of sincerity in art turns into a discussion aptly summarised by the American writer David Foster Wallace, who said that in writing, there is a certain mixture of sincerity and manipulation; the writer is always trying to estimate the effect of one or the other [Lipsky, 2008, pp. 110–111].

### Sincerity VS irony

In a way, the opposition between postmodernism and the metamodernism that replaced it was perceived as a contrast between irony and sincerity. Indeed, irony has become an integral component of postmodernism, the emergence of which is associated with the loss of ideological illusions of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the sense of spiritual emptiness that results from this global disillusionment. Consequently, the famous cultural critic Jane Flex sees postmodernism as a deeply political and ethical response to the unprecedented horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the Holocaust, the Gulag, the Algerian and other bloody wars that accompanied the break with colonialism, and the invention and use of the atomic bomb [Flax, 2007, p. 79]

Postmodern irony has a powerful history of research (from the classics of postmodernism J. Baudrillard [1988], I. Hassan [1987, pp. 84–96], F. Jameson [1991], U. Eco [Eco, 1984], J.-F. Lyotard [1984], R. Barthes [1990], who considered irony to be one of the key concepts of postmodern philosophy and aesthetics, to the works of contemporary scholars L. Hutcheon [1994], J. Doyle [2018], M.-O. O. Shuster [2011], N. Slukan [2017], A. Doda [2004], etc.). The latter perceive irony as one of the main components of postmodernism, study it as a postmodern artistic technique, its difference from various tropes, focus on the intellectual nature of irony, which does not describe the subject but is a reaction to it, the resistance of a work to reading, etc. Postmodernists actively parody the genres and techniques of mass literature, ironically rethinking the individual styles of writers of previous eras. The dominant function of play inherent in postmodern works, their intertextuality, of course, also become certain manifestations of the ironic style.

Simultaneously, postmodern irony is not only an artistic manifestation, but also a more global way of thinking, a reaction to the world around us, a manifestation of attitude towards it and awareness of our own place in it. As already mentioned, disillusionment with the ideologies of the mid-twentieth century, spiritual confusion, and a sense of loss of stable social and artistic ideals played the leading role in this situation. In 1992, the book “The End of History and the Last Man” by the American philosopher Francis Fukuyama was published, preceded by the author’s essay “The End of History?”, widely resonating both in the scientific community and in the media. The scholar argues that the Western world of liberal democracy has reached the final stage of socio-cultural evolution, pessimism being a natural consequence of world wars and other inhumane manifestations and trends of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [Fukuyama, 2006], which is absolutely in line with the postmodern idea of the exhaustiveness of history (despite the fact that in the continuation of his research Fukuyama reassures the reader with the imminent victory of liberal democracy).

The postmodernist rejection of grand narratives leads to the idea that all previous values are trivial, false, and therefore worthy of criticism and ridicule, which opens the way to the total irony of the postmodern period.

Irony is always a distance, a deliberate distancing from certain norms, manifestations, events, people, etc., which does not imply sympathy, but is instead a criticism, a demonstration of one’s negative attitude. Irony opposes sincerity, the expression of true feelings; it mostly hides and disguises them. Moreover, irony is always a superior attitude, a certain snobbery. Modernism positioned itself as an art not for everyone, an art for the elite, elitist. In a slightly different aspect, we can observe the same in postmodernism. The author’s game with the reader, intertextuality, which become a form of organisation of a postmodern work, directly testify to it. One of the features of postmodernism is excessive erudition, which consists in the authors’ attempts to combine a lot of knowledge, facts, events, cultural, philosophical, religious and other aspects in one work (U. Eco’s “The Name of the Rose”, J. Cortázar’s “The Game of Classics”, etc. are vivid examples). The combination of elite and mass culture within one work, on the one hand, expands the readership, and on the other hand, demonstrates the gap between different layers of the readership: those who see P. Susskind’s “Perfume” as a simple detective story, and those who can comprehend the depth of social, moral and philosophical issues in it. Thus, postmodern irony becomes a marker of belonging to a thinking minority, to those who understand what is happening in the world and can critically evaluate it. Irony helps to come to terms with the complexity of life. Finally, postmodern irony reaches such a concentration that what used to be non-trivial becomes a trend and then degenerates into a pattern. If irony used to be perceived as an attribute of intellectuals, dissidents, hipsters who fought against bureaucracy, cosmopolitan traditions and mass culture, now it is turning into a weapon of conservatives and radical thinkers, because total irony easily turns into cynicism (when everything is

subject to criticism and ridicule without exception), which is often striking in its aggressiveness. The concept of 'irony poisoning' emerges, which refers to a worldview so imbued with irony and sarcasm that provocative statements and questionable actions are no longer considered something bad.

The response to these processes is the phenomenon of 'new sincerity', the emergence of which was announced by David Foster Wallace in his work "E Unibus Pluram: Television and Literature in the United States" [1993], at least Wallace is presented by literary historian Adam Kelly in his 2010 study as the founder of the American "new sincerity" [Kelly, 2010, pp. 131–147]. In the same year, the journalist Angela Warcutter in Wired magazine argued, referring to Wallace, that contemporary media culture is abandoning sarcastic distance and moving towards a revival of sincerity [Rutten, 2017, p. 309].

Extra-literary factors contributed to the emergence of "new sincerity", which is considered one of the main components of metamodernism. There is a view that historical events such as the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the tragedy of September 11, 2001 in the United States of America, when almost 3000 people became victims of a series of terrorist attacks, played a major role. People felt vulnerable with renewed vigour. The world had reached a point where it is no longer funny, when any irony is inappropriate. The consequences of the post-traumatic syndrome of the entire nation were especially noticeable in the United States, when after the tragedy, everything that had a connection with the Twin Towers and could remind of them was removed from television broadcasting, scenes in action movies and even animated films that could cause fear were removed or cut. In 2002, Glenn Mannisto's New Sincerity manifesto [Mannisto, 2002] appeared, which saw a trend towards the search for sincerity and truth in art in response to the September 11 terrorist attack and the dominance of entertainment content in the media. In his 2006 Manifesto for a New Sincerity, Jesse Thorne declares: "Irony was dead. In what would come to be called 'The Post-9/11 World', there would be no room for that particularly distasteful form of discourse. It was to be replaced by soft, sweet sincerity" [Thorn, 2006].

These tragic events have left a profound wound on the hearts of people who are tired and exhausted by the world that is endlessly changing around them, a world where no one can feel safe anymore. Nihilism has become obsolete. At the same time, it should be noted that, as already mentioned, D.F. Wallace spoke about the phenomenon of new sincerity actually a decade before the September 11 tragedy, and H. Murakami's novel Norwegian Wood, which has all the signs of the literature of new sincerity, was published even earlier, in 1987, actually predating the new literary era. For instance, Princeton professor Christy Wempole argues that "New Sincerity has been around since the 1980s and is a response to postmodern cynicism, detachment and meta-referentiality" [Fitzgerald, 2012]. Although, undoubtedly, these tragic events have increased the sense of insecurity and vulnerability, contributing to the development of the moods that defined a new cultural era.

Undoubtedly, globalisation and the digitalisation of the world dramatically influenced the formation of the literature of new sincerity. The process of globalisation implies the erasure of the traditional borders as a result of economic, political, cultural, religious integration and unification, and the response to this is the attempt of a person to define his/her moral and ethical boundaries in the new globalised world, to preserve his/her own identity in those aspects that remain important to him/her, and to actually defend his/her "self".

The World Wide Web, which, on the one hand, has helped to break down borders and bring people living in different parts of the world closer together, in a way contributing to globalisation, has also provided an unprecedented opportunity for self-expression and self-identification, as well as for defining one's own boundaries.

Sensitive to internal problems, modern individual 'realizes his need to solve the accumulated problems' [Taratuta et al., 2022, p. 73]. It is on the Internet that they most often 'gets the chance to confess and find a comrade in misfortune, a virtual interlocutor who is ready to listen, understand, and advise <...> while talking aloud about their worries and experiences, one often finds a key to overcoming these problems <...> In such a way people become more sensitive to their state of heart, make an effort to recognize the sources of certain sensations, suffering, mood swings' [Ibid].

Stereotypes of self-expression are also changing. What used to be unacceptable to bring to the public eye (personal feelings, emotions, experiences, views, vicissitudes and complexities of one's own love relationships or family life, etc.) is becoming fashionable to express in public, to make available to a wide range of readers, often to complete strangers [Taratuta, Melnyk, 2023, p. 250].

All these processes at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries are reflected in literature that is distinguished by a certain style and issues. "The next literary 'rebels' might well emerge as some weird bunch of 'anti-rebels', <...> who dare to back away from ironic watching, who have the childish gall to actually endorse single-entendre values. Who treat old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction. These anti-rebels <...> Clearly repressed. <...> Real rebels, as far as I can see, risk things. Risk disapproval. <...> Accusations of sentimentality, melodrama. Credulity"... [Wallace, 1993] – wrote D.F. Wallace, actually predicting the features of the literature of new sincerity.

While studying the genesis of new sincerity, its opposition to postmodern irony, and trends in politics, television, social media, and various forms of art, contemporary scholars have not yet paid attention to the poetic originality of the literature of new sincerity. A handful of available studies only outline approaches to the study of this phenomenon from the literary aspect.

Thus, in his article "Jennifer Egan, New Sincerity and the Turn of the Genre in Contemporary Fiction" A. Kelly [2021] traces the history of the emergence of new sincerity as a phenomenon, the process of transition to it from postmodernism. The main part of the work is the study of Wallace's influence on the early prose of J. Egan. Analysing the writer's works, the scholar highlights the emphasised generational shift from irony to sincerity in *The Invisible Circus* and the gendered assumptions underlying it. A. Kelly notes the narrator's obsession with sincerity in "Look at Me", which can be traced in the repetition of phrases of the corresponding content, the heroine's desire to restore the truth not only through verbal means, but also through the visual sphere. Following the writer, the researcher stresses that the paradigmatic subject of the new sincerity is primarily a woman, emphasising the contradictions between the author's and the narrator's positions regarding the personal nature of her inner life. In her article, A. Kelly addresses the issue of commodification of sincerity as a basic feature of the works of this genre, which is common in literary studies on the phenomenon of new sincerity.

E. Siltanen, in her article "New Sincerity and Commitment to Emotion in Dorothea Laska's Poetry" [2020], attempts to approach the poet's lyrics from the perspective of new sincerity, observing in the author's work the subtle line between sincerity and irony, which can be clarified through metarepresentation, thanks to which the reader attributes certain mental states to literary characters and which correlates with our ability to imagine the mental states of others, thus causing empathy. The researcher highlights the role of performativity in creating a sincere discourse of Laska's poetry. The open commitment to emotions in the poet's work, from the author's point of view, is potentially ironic. While her poems explore such strong emotions as depression, sadness, and anger, her sincerity includes feelings of rage, strong determination, and harsh opinions towards herself and others. The tendency towards sincerity as purposeful naivety exposes emotions to close scrutiny, focusing it on the mental states of the narrator, reader and author. Laska's version of New Sincerity poetry, according to Siltanen, calls on readers to make a choice between irony and sincerity and challenges the readers' meta-representational capacity.

Z. Gorenstein in his dissertation "New Sincerity and Contemporary American Family Novel: 'Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* and Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead*" [Gorenstein, 2014] explores the impact of the new sincerity on the revival of the family novel genre. The researcher examines the rhetorical strategies of sincerity in the novels of American writers, noting that they are particularly suited to the medium of literature: providing access to the hearts and minds of others through the imagination, without denying the mediated nature of literature. The researcher also states the return to individual subjectivity in family prose through the "inner gaze" of literary sincerity, which reflects an attempt to regain the communicative position of the subject after its loss during postmodernism. In her paper, she brings to attention the family home, the figure of the child, etc. as elements for articulating sincerity in the family novel. The author considers sincerity as a rhetorical strategy for creating trust in unstable social situations: the apparent transparency of the rhetorical form is transformed into the accessibility of what is communicated, and thus into the moral sincerity of the sender and/or the message. The narrator's discourse in *Gilead* imitates oral speech; the skilful reduction and simplification of language leads to the apparent transparency of the representational form and the immediacy of the thoughts and feelings conveyed, which determines the sincerity of the narrator. The use of the epistolary form offers an intimate insight into the author's thoughts and the protagonist's consciousness. The novel actively employs psychonarration. In Franzen's *The*

Corrections, which is regarded as an example of New Realism, personal sincerity is largely absent at the level of the represented relations, but the narrative discourse of the novel demonstrates rhetorical sincerity in relation to how the story and its characters are presented to the reader, and the nakedness of the form is achieved through two narrative strategies. They are the orchestration of narrative mode and perspective to achieve an apparent transparency of consciousness and the manipulation of chronological structure to reveal narrative meaning. Accordingly, sincerity is played out purely as representative sincerity at the level of the narrative form and never as personal sincerity at the level of the characters. The author's ironic assessment in the form of dissonant psychonarration often accompanies inner views in the novel. Ironic assessments of the characters' mental discourse allow the reader to keep a distance. It is for this reason and not only that, from our point of view, Franzen's novel *The Corrections* cannot be considered as literature of new sincerity. The author's narrative style is ruthless, the descriptions of the characters are harsh, and do not imply empathy, which is characteristic of works of new sincerity.

M.J. Balliro's dissertation "The New Sincerity in American Literature" [2018] describes the influence of the phenomenon of new sincerity on American literature. The researcher perceives the new sincerity as a provocative way of literary interpretation. This thesis analyses the works of D. Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, J. Diaz's *Drown*, and K.T. Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* from the standpoint of new sincerity. The main goal of the research is to find out how the new sincerity relies on a complex reader-text paradigm, with each following the impulse to elevate coherence, cohesion, and clarity over fragmentation, alienation, and confusion. The texts under study share one basic principle: to condition and direct readers to connect, to engage in actions that take place in fictional worlds to combat the forces of alienation and fragmentation that have become dominant motifs in literature, culture, politics, and other spheres of life. The regime of confrontational and cynical literature, which is more often associated with postmodernism, is undermined in American literature by more intimate moments that are important for readers in the context of establishing connections, and what the reader finds in the text is entirely up to them. The researcher argues that the new sincerity is not just a set of features that can be identified in a text, not just an attitude and approach to literature, but above all a mode of interpretation.

Meanwhile, the "new sincerity" movement is increasingly embracing contemporary literature, exerting a significant influence on it and defining the artistic originality of works that are alternative to postmodern poetics. This shapes the relevance of the chosen topic, which is determined by the need to distinguish the literature of new sincerity as a peculiar phenomenon with its own aesthetic and poetological specificity.

Thus, *the purpose* of our study is to determine the peculiarities of the poetics of the literature of new sincerity as polemically sharpened against postmodern irony, scepticism and cynicism and the specifics of the manifestation of the poetics of new sincerity in K. Ishiguro's novel "Never Let Me Go". Achieving the goal requires the use of cultural-historical, cultural-philosophical, hermeneutical research *methods*.

### **Aesthetics and poetics of the new sincerity literature**

In his dissertation "The New Sincerity in American Literature" M.J. Balliro states that the new sincerity is a method of interpretation, a way of approaching texts rather than identifying the features of a text to explain what makes it sincere [Balliro, 2018]. However, the perception of new sincerity as "an ethical and aesthetic movement of our time is associated with the worldview of metamodernism" [Hrebenyuk, 2021, p. 133], in our opinion, gives grounds for identifying certain differential features of the poetics of works that make up the layer of literature of new sincerity.

**The peculiarity of the problem.** The fact that in the works of the new sincerity problems of a more intimate, personal nature are exacerbated, which 10–20 years ago could be discussed only with the closest people, and some were kept silent can be considered as peculiar. This is largely due to the influence of social media. The new generation perceives the Internet as a means of shaping new public opinion and desacralising aspects of life that were traditionally regarded secret and not worthy of discussion. For instance, in 2017, the debate about harassment reached its peak and became global. The movement, which was founded in 2006 to help survivors of sexual violence, gained widespread attention and evolved into a massive campaign under the slogan #MeToo. This manifestation of new sincerity led to a rethinking of the cultural norms that existed in the world, certainly influencing the subject matter of artistic works.

**A peculiar hero.** In the works of the new sincerity, we usually meet a protagonist (mostly a protagonist-narrator) who:

a) is a reflective personality, implying his/her constant self-immersion, self-evaluation, attempts to understand momentary outbursts of emotions, feelings, experiences, and their causes;

b) pays great attention to his/her inner world, constantly explores it and the factors that influence it, strives for harmony with him/herself and tries to understand the problems that interfere with this harmony, psychological traumas, the processing of which may affect psychological health;

c) is concerned about his/her own identity, tries to answer the questions: who am I? what am I like? what does it mean to be me?

d) feels lonely and misunderstood in the global world around them, seeks communication with those for whom their problems are close and important, who will hear and understand.

**A peculiar narrative style.** Works of new sincerity are characterised by a confessional narrative style, which mostly involves a diegetic narrator who is both the subject and the object of the story. In the process of narration, the protagonist-narrator explores both themselves and his environment. Confession in the works of the new sincerity is a means of overcoming total loneliness (mostly among people) that the narrator feels and suffers from. The confessional style is characterised by emotionally coloured vocabulary, proximity to colloquial style, is often full of various jargon and slang, reproduction of the narrator's individual style, etc. In the narrative style, there is a direct appeal to the addressee, who in most cases is the reader, and an invitation to a dialogue.

**Deep psychologism and empathy,** which become one of the main goals of the author: the reader should sympathise with the hero, identify with them if possible. Therefore, the transmission and analysis of feelings and experiences prevails over the movement of the plot and the variety of its moves. The plot is mostly minimised even with a large volume of the work.

**An appeal to universal values,** where jokes and irony fade into the background, giving way to a serious tone that builds trust. "Around the turn of the century, something began to shift. Today, vulnerability shows up in pop music where bravado and posturing once ruled – see artists across every genre, from Conor Oberst to Lady Gaga to Frank Ocean. Television sitcoms and 'bromance' movies depict authentic characters determined to live good lives. And respected literary authors like Jonathan Franzen, Zadie Smith, and Michael Chabon write sincere, popular books with a strong sense of morality. All across the pop culture spectrum, the emphasis on sincerity and authenticity that has arisen has made it un-ironically cool to care about spirituality, family, neighbours, the environment, and the country" [Fitzgerald, 2012]. The most productive genres of the new sincerity are family novels in all their existing subgenres, such as family sagas, family chronicles, novels of upbringing, etc. The adult protagonists of the works aim to close their childhood gestalts, which is perceived as a way to understand themselves today, to work through their own problems and mistakes. A discursive characteristic is the victory of family values, the necessity of their presence in a person's life to recreate harmony in the soul.

**Self-irony.** This issue is the most controversial because the new sincerity is typologically opposed to postmodern irony. Most scholars conclude that irony does not disappear from the literature of new sincerity, but simply takes on a different vector. "Irony is not dead-it's (ahem) a useful rhetorical tool – but it's certainly not the ethos of our age" [Fitzgerald, 2012]. Jesse Thorne, one of the first promoters of the new sincerity, describes this phenomenon as a combination of irony and sincerity: "Irony and sincerity combined like Voltron, to form a new movement of astonishing power" [Fitzgerald, 2012]. In his work "New Sincerity as Literary Hospitality", J. Voelz states that irony is not refuted, but acquires a different perspective – self-irony [Voelz, 2015]. Analysing the works of Knausgor and Lerner, the researcher confirms her conclusions by identifying various motives of irony in the works of these authors. In the first case, the writer uses the distance between the middle-aged narrator and the naive narrator of childhood and youth for the purpose of self-irony: irony here becomes a special kind of sincerity. In the second, the ironic view of oneself turns into a mockery, a form of self-deprecation, with the help of which the author creates a way of accessing psychological confidentiality in the mode of sincerity [Voelz, 2015, pp. 209–226]. It is worth mentioning that self-irony is not a differentiating feature for the literature of new sincerity. It can be a feature of the writer's individual style, which is fully observed, for instance, in the works of J. Tropper, R. Russo, B. O'Leary, S. Rooney, but in many other authors it gives way to a serious narrative style and is not reflected in the worldview of the characters.



### Kazuo Ishiguro's «Never Let Me Go» as a Novel of the New Sincerity Literature

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, written in 2005, has a powerful history of research, one of the main aspects of which is the genre identification of the work. Most scholars define it as a dystopia, E. Marks de Marques – as a “retrodystopia” [Marks de Marques, 2013], and claim its closeness to science fiction (or rather to its subgenre of alternative history) (H. Barnes [2005], A. Clark [2006]). The presence of parable elements in the work is noted (V. Silantieva, O. Adreychikova [Силантьева, Андрейчикова, 2021]), elements of the detective genre (A. Insanulah, B. Bardi, M.F. Zamani [2022]), and affinity with sentimental and abolitionist literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (L. Matek and J. Pataki [2020]).

The peculiarities of the work's chronotope have been studied by L. Toker, D. Chertoff [2008], L. Matek and J. Pataki [2020], and T. Kushnirova [Кушнирова, 2017].

The main issues, studied in the context of this work, include the means of influencing the consciousness of the characters, which is characteristic of dystopian discourse; indoctrination as one of such means (L. Matek and J. Pataki [2020]); instilling a sense of a strong and reliable structure that further limits their actions (L. Toker, D. Chertoff [2008]), and the use of euphemisms (L. Toker, D. Chertoff [2008], A. Kowalski [2014]). The dilemma of the humanity of the novel's characters, clones, is emphasised, which exacerbates the problem of humanism (E. Marks de Marques [2013], L. Toker, D. Chertoff [2008], S.A. Katsorchi [2023]). A. Kowalski examines the novel through the prism of the idea of biopolitical racism [Kowalski, 2014], while S. Kashi and Z.J. Ladani – in the context of posthumanism as a contemporary philosophical and cultural discourse [Kashi, Ladani, 2017]. C. Shaddox studies the role of empathy in the process of rehumanisation, expressing the opinion that readers' empathy for the characters of the novel turns into reconciliation, acceptance, and agreement with inhumane actions [Shaddox, 2013].

One of the vectors of the research is the typical for the dystopian genre rebellion of the hero/heroes against the inhumane system, which is actually absent in K. Ishiguro's novel (L. Toker and D. Chertoff [2008], S. Kashi and Z.J. Ladani [2017]. S.A. Katsorchi [2023]. C.C.L.M. da Silva and S.M. Takakura [2023].

Thus, in literary criticism K. Ishiguro's novel “Never Let Me Go” is viewed as an anti-utopia and the aspects related to its genre specifics are often analysed.

In our research, we suggest considering K. Ishiguro's novel as an example of literature of new sincerity. Such an approach will make it possible to introduce it into the context of the modern world literature, to trace the effects that the new sincerity has on the works of the conditional mode, and to prove that the specific features of the literature of new sincerity, used in the novel by K. Ishiguro, provide new opportunities for both the writer to influence readers and readers in exploring their own inner world.

The features of the new sincerity enlisted in the previous part of the study make us think that they should be inherent mostly in realistic works. But the purpose of our research is to study K. Ishiguro's anti-utopia “Never Let Me Go”, from the point of view of its belonging to the literature of new sincerity.

One of the defining features in the works of the new sincerity genre is the narrative manner, which is observed in the novel analysed. This is the confession of a 31-year-old female character who acts as a diegetic narrator. The reasons for the confession are not revealed explicitly in the work, but several points are vividly seen from the text. Firstly, the need for the character's self-identification, the answer to the question of ‘Who am I?’ ‘How do I live?’ ‘What do I feel?’ and ‘Am I living right?’ Secondly, the confession that the main character resorts to is a way to survive through the loss, overcome the trauma, restore the meaningfulness and integrity of her own life by working through her experiences.

The narrative manner is characterised by the minimisation of the storyline. Despite the novel's length, the number of events in it is fundamentally limited, there are no unexpected situations, twists of fate associated with the role of chance in human life, and the actions of the characters motivated by instant emotions, etc. Such formal event minimisation is aimed not at focusing on external factors (the world in which the characters live, the laws of society which they have to follow, the people around them, the accidents that happen to them, etc.), but on the inner world, which is the most interesting for the authors of the new sincerity and their characters, and to the study and understanding of which they pay the greatest attention.

The first-person narrative is characteristic of classic anti-utopias, but in this work, the diary, which has a purely chronological sequence of entries, is designed to reflect the main character's path

to rebellion against the system, his difference from the submissive environment. The confession of K. Ishiguro's female narrator is a memoir in which the chronology is broken (the events that took place in the childhood of the characters are interrupted by associative descriptions of moments that occurred much later, when the adult Kathy helps first Ruth and then Tommy to stabilise after organ donation in medical centres). Kathy's story is not a daily record, it has a fragmentary, elliptical and affective character: with more than 30 years of life, the girl chooses the most emotional moments for her, important for her self-awareness, becoming a person and understanding her place in the world around her.

The narrative manner in the work is extremely slow and verbose; there is a constant immersion in the slightest details when describing the lives of the characters. At first glance, these details seem insignificant, as that they do not add anything to the problems that are raised in the work, but only slow down the development of the plot. At the same time, such plot viscosity, which makes it seem that the narrator is drowning in all those details, should be perceived as the author's stylistic device that has a certain ideological load.

In our opinion, his technique of detailing and slowing down the plot, can be the means of reaching the specific goals. Thus, we can single out the creation of suspense as one of the techniques for achieving a certain psychological atmosphere. Wandering through the labyrinths of details of the characters' life, filled with almost insignificant details, the reader subconsciously expects some kind of emotional explosion, an important plot twist, because the slow turn of the plot creates an unsettling atmosphere of uncertainty, psychological tension. This technique works especially vividly at the beginning of the work, when the author intrigues, immersing his reader in a situation full of secrets and contradictions.

In the story of Hailsham, where the characters are brought up, the institution is presented as one in which children feel good and which they remember with gratitude and nostalgia. The lexemes 'donors', 'donation', 'recovery' are woven into the story and are used without any explanation, which inspires subconscious anxiety. Guardians (a lexeme used instead of 'educators', which is more acceptable to the status of the institution) treat children with attention and affection, weekly medical examinations are perceived as taking care of the pupils' health, creativity lessons contribute to their personal growth, a gallery stimulates creativity too. All these are contrasted to reactions of the Madame, who is the head of the institution, to an innocent joke of girls who stage an unintentional collision with her, suspecting that the woman is simply afraid of the inhabitants of Hailsham. The horror in Madame's eyes and the girls' reaction to this make the story even more disturbing, because gradually it becomes clear that the outcome will be astounding.

In addition, each of the details, scenes, any of the minor plot nodes has its own ideological load and contributes to overall psychological atmosphere. Thus, the story when Ruth, a friend of the main character, shows the girls a pencil case, hinting that this is a gift from her favourite teacher, presents the problem of loneliness, the desire to be needed by someone, to be singled out from the mass, to determine and protect their own personal boundaries. But at the sight this story seems completely unimportant for the general plot. The situation when Kathy was excluded by Ruth from Miss Geraldine's "protection" group raises the problem of self-realisation of a teenager, when personal exaltation is realised through the humiliation of others, demonstration of one's own capabilities, determining the boundaries of one's own charisma and power. Such fragments are woven into the fabric of the entire novel and determine its moral issues.

As it has been already mentioned, one of the features of the new sincerity is the special relationship between the author/narrator and the reader. The author's goal is to engage the reader in a dialogue, not to clash it with an ideologically constructed character, knowledge of everyday life. Artificial detailing contributes to the enlargement of feelings, emotions experienced by the characters, these emotions and feelings are understandable to the reader, close to him, which forces him to follow the narrator, experiencing the same sensations as he does, actually identifying himself with him by virtue of his life experience. This technique is supported by the use of direct appeals to the reader in a narrative manner: "*I don't know how it was where you were*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 60], "*I don't know if you had 'collections' where you were*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 13], "*I'm sure somewhere in your childhood, you too had an experience like ours that day; similar if not in the actual details, then inside, in the feelings*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 33] – the narrator appeals to the personal experience of readers, inviting them to establish the dialogue, addresses readers

as equals, regardless of where, how they lived and how they were brought up – the author uses a technique that also has its own ideological load, the meaning of which will become clear later.

Promoting the reader's experience of empathy pursues two goals. The first is that due to empathy, the reader, in the process of reading, studies himself, his experiences, looks for answers to his own questions, realises his own problems and works through them. The second is that due to sympathy and empathy, the reader perceives the characters as equal ones, with their emotions, feelings, reactions to various behavioural manifestations, etc. The conditional mode of the work becomes clear when a quarter of the novel has already been read and the actual equality between the reader and the characters has been established. That is why the fact that the characters of the work are clones, and their purpose is to die after organ removal at a young age, is perceived as tragic and terrible.

Attention to one's inner world and empathetic attitude to the inner world of others makes the narrative style of the novel quite emotional. If we consider it at the level of speech expressiveness, we can see a large number of expressively coloured lexemes, evaluative words and constructions inherent in conveying the reflection of the main character.

Most of them characterise the relationship with Ruth, a friend of the narrator. When talking about a situation where Kathy tries to expose Ruth's lies, she uses the following statements: *"how upset Ruth was; how for once she was at a complete loss for words, and had turned away on the verge of tears"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 54], *"my behaviour seemed to me utterly baffling"*, *"all this effort, all this planning, just to upset my dearest friend"*, *"I now felt awful, and I was confused"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 84] – as we can see, Kathy is extremely critical of herself and empathetic to her friend, whom she feels sorry for. She expresses every shade of sensations, clearly defining them and her own psychological state. *"But it was one instance when she seemed just to cave in. It was like she was too ashamed of the matter – too crushed by it – even to be angry or to want to get me back"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 55] – Kathy is not happy about her victory. Ruth's emotions bring her pain: the author emphasises the word 'crushed' in the text of the novel.

The diegetic narrator, studies himself in the process of his own storytelling. Therefore, the evaluations and reactions in the work are extremely clear and varied depending on the situation and the nature of the stimulators. It is the 'embarrassment' of the clones and the 'awkwardness' [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 119] of the guardians when talking about the impending donation, which is gradually replaced by a *"gloomy, sober understanding"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 122]. It is the feeling of *"disappointment disappearing under the onslaught of true happiness"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 105] when Ruth, as a sign of reconciliation, gives Kathy a cassette tape to replace the lost one. It is a feeling of *"shame and indignation"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 126] over a conversation that did not take place with Miss Lucy, whom Kathy and Tommy distinguish from the guardians because of her sincerity and sensitivity.

In the main character's confession, which is not rich in bright means of artistic expression, there are sometimes tropes that make it more emotional. The episodic epithets demonstrate the attentiveness, indifference of the narrator and determine her attitude to the moments which are important for other characters: Tommy's empty eyes after the departure of his beloved teacher convey the pain of losing an already destitute teenager, Ruth stares daggers at her boyfriend when he does not behave as she expected, expresses Kathy's annoyance, her dissatisfaction with that Ruth does not behave naturally, but plays a role, prompting Tommy to do the same, the mysterious dimension where the inhabitants of the cottages were transported to read books, the awe-struck reaction of the clones to the graduates of Hailsham express a somewhat ironic attitude of narrator towards all these events, although the feeling of pride for her institution and the joy of a short adult life are also present.

The nature of the similes used in the narration is quite systematic. In fact, once we come across a simile in which the object and the image are simple things: Ruth's beautiful pencil case *"was shiny, like a polished shoe"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 51]. Both the pencil case and polished shoes were unattainable luxuries for the ascetic lifestyle of clones, which is why Kathy conveys her admiration for the beauty of one item by comparing it to an even more unattainable one. In any case, contextually, the comparison is extremely expressive. Most of the similes in the text are of a purely psychological nature, when one action, reaction, perception is explained through other, more emotional one, to enhance the effect.

Kathy's similes are extensive, each of them is a psychological analysis of her own experiences, which conveys the complex inner world of the narrator and the difficult manner of its reflection. For

example, Ruth's confession about having received a gift from her teacher causes Kathy to feel a storm of emotions, perhaps because of her envy of her friend: "*This might sound a pretty innocuous sort of response, but actually it was like she'd suddenly got up and hit me*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 51]. Recalling an unpleasant conversation with her friends, when Ruth deliberately discredits Kathy in front of Tommy in order to interfere with their relationship, the girl conveys her own feelings quite extensively: "*I remember a huge tiredness coming over me, a kind of lethargy in the face of the tangled mess before me. It was like being given a maths problem when your brain's exhausted, and you know there's some far-off solution, but you can't work up the energy even to give it a go. Something in me just gave up*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 170].

Having got to know about the closure of Hailsham, Kathy suffers, and again her feelings are conveyed through a simile based on the impression that the girl received after meeting a clown with funny balloons the day before the conversation about the closure of the establishment: "*I thought about Hailsham closing, and how it was like someone coming along with a pair of shears and snipping the balloon strings just where they entwined above the man's fist. Once that happened, there'd be no real sense in which those balloons belonged with each other any more*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 184]. The comparison of Hailsham's pupils to balloons that flew apart certainly corresponds to Kathy's attitude to the institution as to her home, uniting its inhabitants, whose fates were woven in it like ropes in the hands of a clown. In a way, the girl's idea of cut ropes and balloons carried away by the wind supports the motif of death, which will be actively developed throughout more than half of the text. Consequently, epithets, similes, emotionally charged vocabulary and lexemes with an evaluative connotation contribute to the psychological atmosphere of the story and, according to the canons of literature of new sincerity, allow the reader not only to understand the state of the main characters, but also to identify their own experiences and their reasons, to explore and try to understand their inner world.

As a typical character of the new sincerity literature, Kathy is concerned with the issue of identifying herself as a person, trying to determine her own moral and ethical principles. The process is complicated by the fact that Kathy, like her friends Tommy and Ruth, is not an ordinary person, but a clone bred specifically to use their vital organs for transplantation. But, even despite this, the heroes of the work fully fit into the paradigm of a new sincerity, in which more and more often people are brought out as protagonists, people of a marginal type or those who clearly go beyond the generally accepted standards, such as the character of S. Rooney's novel "*Normal People*", who, due to her inhumane, humiliating relations with her family, feels herself a victim so strongly that even cannot build harmonious intimate relationships, a victim of gaslighting, which requires unreliable efforts to overcome dependence on a partner who exerts psychological violence (B. O'Leary "*The Flatshare*"), children who have become victims not only of complex social cataclysms, but also of the negligence of adults (D. Tartt "*The Goldfinch*"), an adult man, a hostage of severe childhood trauma (psychological violence of the father), who all his life tries to overcome pain, unintentionally causing suffering to others (R. Russo "*Nobody's fool*"), a person who experiences tragedy due to an indeterminate gender, who spends most of his life searching for himself (V. Perren "*Three*"), a victim of home violence, who diligently hides her suffering in order to remain an organic part of secular society (L. Moriarty's "*Big Little Lies*") and many others. So, K. Ishiguro simply goes further, exacerbating the problem and separating his characters from the so-called normal society, thereby bringing the situation to a new psychological limit. Therefore, in the context of the literature of the new sincerity, his characters are perceived quite naturally.

Typical of the literature of the new sincerity is also the presence of a diegetic narrator who offers a sincere confession about the events of his life. In the novel "*Never Let Me Go*", Kathy does not talk about her present so much (to this period of her life just a few pages are given), as she tries to analyse the period of her formation in childhood and adolescence, personal formation and socialisation after leaving an educational institution, factors that influenced these processes, and her reactions to life challenges.

That is why the novel "*Never Let Me Go*" can in a certain way be attributed to the novels of upbringing, teenage novels (their number has increased significantly over the past 2 decades), the main purpose of which is to trace the formation of personality, reflections that accompany the process of socialisation.

*"I'm sure it's at least partly to do with that, to do with preparing for the change of pace, that I've been getting this urge to order all these old memories"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 35]. Kathy explains her confession. Focused on their inner world, exploring themselves as individuals, the characters of the new sincerity mostly return to childhood to understand their current selves. Such retrospection can be observed in the works of J. Tropper, E. Nevo, E. Ferrante, H. Murakami, B. Schlink, D. Tartt, V. Perren, S. Rooney and many others. The process of self-exploring and one's own spiritual harmonisation is impossible without analysing the origins of life and closing children's gestalts. The anti-utopia of K. Ishiguro is no exception in this regard, because the heroine's story begins with memories of life in Hailsham, a specialised and specific educational institution by virtue of its purpose.

Along with it, the novel includes the *motif of home* and the *motif of paradise lost*, because Hailsham is represented as an image of a happy childhood, a place to which the soul flows, with which the best memories are associated, to which they brag (Hailsham's pupils are a friendly community, in addition, it is the best institution of this type). Values were instilled there (*"It's all part of what made Hailsham so special. The way we were encouraged to value each other's work"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 16]), where all the attendants called the children nothing but "sweetheart". Hailsham is a place where everything was fine, of course, there was a future, there was peace and comfort.

The motifs of home and paradise lost in the novel are enhanced by landscape sketches, which usually acquire a nostalgic sound in the mouth of the narrator. *"Driving around the country now, I still see things that will remind me of Hailsham. I might pass the corner of a misty field, or see part of a large house in the distance as I come down the side of a valley, even a particular arrangement of poplar trees up on a hillside, and I'll think: "Maybe that's it! I've found it! This actually is Hailsham!" Then I see it's impossible and I go on driving, my thoughts drifting on elsewhere"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 7] Narrow winding paths with dense ferns constantly pop up in Kathy's memory, thickets of rhubarb on the way to the pond, where *"sleepy calmness awaited the children: ducks, reeds, duckweed"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 24], where Kathy often talked to Tommy, grass near her favourite pavilion, where teenagers liked to listen to music in a circle, passing headphones. *"The earlier years – the ones I've just been telling you about – they tend to blur into each other as a kind of golden time, and when I think about them at all, even the not-so-great things, I can't help feeling a sort of glow"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 68].

The feeling of security in Hailsham is emphasised by the mytho-archetypal structure of space, represented by the opposition "house – forest", the essence of which is reduced to a figurative depiction of the world, in the centre of which the house is equipped, lived in, having its own space – and the periphery, which is always associated with a threat and an unsettled chaotic edge of the world, is described as a forest. The forest is a symbol of the outside world, in fairy tale discourse it is often inhabited by mysterious, mostly dangerous creatures that personify the difficulties of the initiation process. In contrast to the security of home, which is perceived as a centre of love, the forest becomes a place of trials, losses, and encounters with disaster. Thus, the forest that surrounds the buildings of the institution in the novel is a symbol of danger, which gives rise to various legends among the inhabitants of Hailsham about the troubles of runaway pupils who got into the forest: a boy whose body with severed limbs was found in the forest, a girl who turned into a ghost, because, despite her desire to return, she was not allowed back into the institution by very strict guardians (therefore, it is concluded that guardians are much kinder and more humane now). Trying to punish their friend for misbehaviour, the girls press her against the window glass and force her to look at the forest, which is perceived as the most terrible test. The motive analysis of the novel allows us to observe how the motives are brought by the author to their complete opposite, because the home, which is a space of peace, protection, humanity, to which the characters feel irresistible nostalgia and perceive it as a lost paradise, becomes for them the first step on the way to imminent death, because they get there in order to be divided into organs and destroyed. Thus, the motif of home, due to the inhumanity of the idea itself, is transformed into the motif of the anti-home – an alien, diabolical space, getting into which is equivalent to a journey to the world of dead.

A similar transformation is undergone by the motif of loss, the symbol of which is Norfolk – the city that children are told about in class – *"it's stuck out here on the east, on this hump jutting into the sea, it's not on the way to anywhere. People going north and south"– she moved the pointer up and down – "they bypass it altogether. For that reason, it's a peaceful corner of England, rather nice. But it's also something of a lost corner"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 59]. Norfolk begins to be the name of the room on the fourth floor of Hailsham, where forgotten or lost things are stored. Gradually, the lexeme is

enriched with connotations and the real Norfolk begins to be perceived as a mysterious place where everything lost is brought from everywhere. At the same time, the motif of hope appears: *"when we lost something precious, and we'd looked and looked and still couldn't find it, then we didn't have to be completely heartbroken. We still had that last bit of comfort, thinking one day, when we were grown up, and we were free to travel around the country, we could always go and find it again in Norfolk"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 59]. This motif is supported by the discovery of another copy of the tape, once lost by Kathy, after which the heroes felt *"deep down some tug, some old wish to believe again in something that was once close to our hearts"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 60]. Then it is further developed through the image of balloons flying in Kathy's mind when she learns about Hailsham's closure. And finally, by Tommy's vision, which predicts the loss of his beloved: *"...this river somewhere, with the water moving really fast. And these two people in the water, trying to hold onto each other, holding on as hard as they can, but..."* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 247]. But the most significant transformation is not related to the motif chain *loss – hope – despair*, each finding its own plot embodiment. The main characters experience losses, resort to certain activities to regain what they lost, but the emphasis is on the fact that they themselves become the objects of action of those who created them, who dispose of their destinies and turned them into the same loss. The traditional motif of loss is transformed based on the dehumanised, distorted parameters on which their world is built.

Thus, both the motif system and the key components of the artistic world in the work are realised in an antinomy form, on the one hand, reproducing traditional cultural anthropology and its reflection in literary motifs, on the other hand, violating and destroying it.

It should be noted that the previously mentioned cassette turns into a cross-cutting symbol in the work: the girl buys it, then loses it, then finds another copy in Norfolk. Kathy is fascinated by the song that will give the novel its title, "Never Let Me Go". The scene when a lonely girl dances to the sound of a song, rocking her pillow like an imaginary baby she will never have (deprived of parents, clones are also deprived of the opportunity to have children), will make a great impression on Madame, who ran the institution, and at the end of the work the reader will hear this story from her. In the novel, the cassette will become a symbol of both hope and despair, a symbol of the desire for humanity and the loss of it. Kathy carefully describes the picture on the cassette: palm trees, waiters in white tuxedos, a singer in a purple satin dress, which, according to the fashion of the time, does not cover her shoulders – another world, unattainable, alluring, impossible for the heroes of the work, for whom a different future is prepared. The picture on the cassette actualises a certain contrast: almost nothing is said about the clothes of the clones throughout the work (as, by the way, about their appearance: there are actually no portrait characteristics in the work), but one gets the impression that they are dressed very simply, without frills, not according to fashion: the external does not matter – the focus is on the internal, which gradually narrows to the internal organs of the clones. That is why the actress's bright dress and a cigarette in her mouth (clones are not allowed to smoke) are so attractive to Kathy. And the girl rethinks the love song, inventing a story about a woman who, despite the impossibility of giving birth, still gives birth. All this symbolises the desire for a normal and happy life, the thirst of which so permeated and touched Madame that many years later she would recognise Kathy and recall her tears at the sight of a doomed child who wants to live and cradles a child who will never be born.

The process of self-knowledge and self-awareness is characteristic of the heroes of the novel "Never Let Me Go" has two vectors: a) awareness of oneself as a person, which involves socialisation and preservation of one's own self, b) awareness of oneself as a special being, in a certain way separated from ordinary society.

The works of new sincerity present a somewhat new attitude of a person to the world, to the people around him, and a new approach of the author to the depiction of his character. Realizing the contradiction, complexity, ambivalence of human essence, human feelings and emotions, the authors of the new sincerity try to consider a person primarily in the moral and ethical plane, clearly building a hierarchy of moral values, which they present through the artistic images of their characters. This does not mean that all of them are positive, many make mistakes, do wrong, but understand this and suffer from their own imperfections, even resort to self-destruction. At the same time, it is important for the characters of the new sincerity to be moral and spiritual. Therefore, their gaze is directed inwards, their confessions are an attempt to understand what kind of person I am, why I act this way (although very often I understand that I am wrong). The author constantly confronts

the characters with difficult moral dilemmas. Unlike postmodernism, the main goal of which was a person, his existence, thoughts, aspirations, experiences, the literature of the new sincerity shows a person in his constant moral choice, a person in a global world where all boundaries, ethnic, national, religious, gender, are lost, only morality remains; In contrast to the realism of the twentieth century, the purpose of which was a deep social and psychological analysis, the social aspect in the literature of the new sincerity is minimised, as, in fact, all other moments, except for moral and ethical ones.

This is what K. Ishiguro presents to us in his novel "Never Let Me Go". Its main character is concerned with the questions of who she is, what she is, why she reacts the way she reacts to certain challenges and situations, why she behaves the way she does, etc. It is extremely important for Kathy to be moral. She is a first-class caregiver, an assistant, and this is a matter of pride for her. It is important for her to do everything well, it is important that her work is highly appreciated, that she is very positively treated by others, that the donors she helps endure longer than others.

*"I definitely started to look at everything differently. Where before I'd have backed away from awkward stuff, I began instead, more and more, to ask questions, if not out loud, at least within myself"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 68], Kathy explains her desire for self-knowledge, self-understanding after a conversation, when the prospect of donation ceases to be a secret. But she begins her attempt at self-identification with an analysis of her own childhood. And although the strategy of personal self-determination is not clearly presented, the author chooses such a way of expressing communicative intentions that leave no doubt about the sincerity of the narrator. Kathy's truthful and unpretentious confession, actually devoid of stylistic means, contributes to the fact that the addressee has the impression of complete mutual openness and trust. Carefully described emotions and experiences of the girl and the reasons that cause them, give the reader the opportunity, imbued with empathy for the character, not only to empathise with her, but also, as noted, to find parallels with his own life experience, to study himself, which is one of the most important tasks of the literature of new sincerity. The first quarter of the novel gives the reader complete confidence that he is facing a simple girl who grows up in a children's institution, has no parents and is going through a period of personal formation. Kathy is extremely vulnerable, observant, fair, attentive to other people's feelings (she is the only one of all children who empathises with Tommy, who, due to not always controllable behaviour, becomes a victim of bullying). A calm and balanced girl who has a certain authority among the pupils of the institution, Kathy becomes close to Ruth, a strong personality who attracts her with her charisma and self-sufficiency. It was Ruth who chose Kathy as a friend and took the first step by offering to ride non-existent horses, and Kathy gladly accepts the game and further friendship with a person with prominent leadership ambitions. Kathy suffers from Ruth's tough temper. In a relationship with Ruth, Kathy socialises, learns to build relationships, personal boundaries, and at the same time gets to know herself through her own thoughts and experiences. At Hailsham, in order to take a seat in the pavilion, which was very much loved by the pupils, and to spend time with friends, there had to be strong personalities in the company, and Kathy sincerely believes that it was because of Ruth that they got this place. No matter what the girls discussed in the bedroom, Ruth always had the last word, and everyone waited for her opinion and listened to her. Kathy feels that she is weaker than her friend, worse than her, not as talented and bright, but internally competes with her. However, she tends to lack toughness of character. Even when Ruth excludes Kathy from the secret society, the girl does not agree to an alliance with another offended friend against Ruth. In the story with a pencil case that Ruth passes off as a gift from her favourite teacher, Kathy tries to find out the truth to feel that Ruth is no better than she. But when she succeeds, the girl feels guilty, because she hurt a loved one. Decent, guileless, almost defenseless in her frankness, Kathy often suffers from the manipulative behaviour of her friend. Almost everything Ruth does in her life is not perceived by Kathy as dishonest or selfish, because she believes that a person like Ruth has the right to do so. Even when she, on a whim, begins dating Tommy, with whom Kathy has had a very warm and close relationship since childhood, she takes it for granted, although Ruth deliberately destroys the love of her friends. Moreover, Kathy, at Ruth's request, helps her rebuild her relationship with Tommy after an argument without feeling overtly manipulated. And when talking to Tommy, she assures the guy that he was just lucky that a girl like Ruth paid attention to him. Similar examples of the psychological introspection are constantly found in the novel, becoming markers of the literature of new sincerity, which uses this technique to enhance empathy: the reader feels close to the

main character, extrapolating the events of the work to his own experience of communication with stronger personalities, experiencing his unimportance and dependence, the inability to defend his own boundaries due to soft-heartedness, awareness of his weakness, guilt due to his inability to overcome it and establish justice.

The feeling of Kathy's personal unimportance in relation to Ruth acts in the text as a parallel to the clones' feeling of the insignificance of their lives in relation to the lives of other people. At the same time, the conditional mode of the novel makes it possible to consider the removal of organs from living donors as a metaphor for all-consuming empathy. Empathy, which plays a key role in the literature of the new sincerity, acquires a new aspect in the novel "Never Let Me Go". Responsibility for another person is transformed into a conflict with him, into the need to decide who is more important, me or the other. We observe how Kathy constantly resolves this issue not in her favour, giving everything to her friend and remaining in the shadow. But the main idea of the novel exaggerates the biblical principle "love your neighbour as yourself", because the characters of the novel, brought up in boundless empathy, must completely cancel themselves for the sake of others in order to make a conscious self-sacrifice.

Self-identification is important not only for the narrator. All Hailsham's pupils are concerned with this in different ways: they are engaged in creativity and wait for their works to be selected for the 'gallery', they collect personal collections – various important trinkets that define their personality. Interestingly, once in the cottages, Ruth abandons her collection (practically loses herself), which she later regrets. However, Ruth has a dream – to find her 'possible self' – the woman from whom she was cloned, to actually find her roots, as if to look into her future, to get some idea of her deepest essence. Interestingly, this is not only her personal dream: when the search ends in failure, Ruth's friends breathe a sigh of relief, because, according to Kathy, they did not want to envy Ruth in case of a positive result. The girl herself draws conclusions that are quite consistent with the upbringing that the heroes received in the orphanage: they could not find her 'possible self' in a good office – the dream of their lives – because they know that they were cloned not from successful, beautiful and talented people, but from scum, human garbage. Thus, the idea of insignificance of their lives and their confidence in this is emphasised once again.

It is interesting that Kathy herself is looking for her prototype, her 'possible self' among the models of erotic magazines, thereby trying to explain her sexual activity. It is worth saying that the intimate component in the novel is quite powerful, which is also one of the features of the literature of the new sincerity. On the one hand, in this way, the author emphasises the humanity of his characters: they love, are jealous, care, betray, assert themselves, and get to know themselves through their sexual experience. On the other hand, sex education in Hailsham begins quite early: it is necessary for the donor's body to function stably. At the same time, sex in the novel is detached from love, expressively reduced. Recalling her intimate relationships after Hailsham, Kathy emphasises that "*the sex at the Cottages seems a bit functional*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 110], "*in freezing rooms in the pitch dark, usually under a ton of blankets. And the blankets often weren't even blankets, but a really odd assortment – old curtains, even bits of carpet*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 110]. The lack of romance in intimacy falls under the traditional struggle of classical dystopias with love as a humanizing and destructive force.

The author's concept of self-identification of the characters is reflected in the features of the nomination in the novel. Each of the characters has a name and one letter of the surname, or rather just a letter, because a surname is a certain attachment to the family, a certain identity, which the heroes are deprived of by virtue of their origin and defined life mission. A similar thing can be found in the classic anti-utopia, where the use of letters and numbers instead of names is perceived in a certain way logically due to the submission of society to mathematical rules, depersonalisation of its inhabitants ("*we are the happiest arithmetic average*"). It is also advisable to compare the characters with F. Kafka's Josef K., who is perceived as a symbol of a certain depersonalisation of a small person. He makes attempts to fight for his life (in fact, like Ishiguro's characters), but these are minimal attempts that lead to nothing and which in both works do not address the main causes of the tragedy, because the heroes believe that what is happening to them is logical and legal, trying simply to mitigate the consequences.

The analysis of the characters' perception of themselves as special creatures, in a certain way separated from the usual society, makes it possible to single out the technique of understatement,



which becomes the leading one in the first quarter of the novel, turning into a motif. If the technique of understatement allows the author to keep readers in suspense and promote their empathy for the characters, then the motif of understatement has not only a plot-creating function, but also serves to characterise the characters, create a special narrative atmosphere, etc. At the lexical level, this motif is supported by a system of euphemisms: *to stop, to complete* instead of *to die, a donation* instead of *an operation to remove an organ, a carer* instead of *a nurse*. This system, on the one hand, determines the affiliation of the characters to a community that uses a certain specific vocabulary, on the other hand, it helps to soften the perception of their fate. The latter function is most clearly manifested in the metaphorical expression with which Hailsham's pupils designate the recesses of the organs that await them: they figuratively perceive future surgical interventions as "*unzipping stuff*", which gives them the opportunity to reduce the level of fear. On the other hand, a number of euphemisms can be perceived as an allusion to ideologically conditioned vocabulary, designed to lull the vigilance of those for whom this ideological influence is intended, to hide the inhuman essence of certain theories and their practical implementations behind stylistically neutral vocabulary that contributes to getting used to the inhumane, coming to terms with it, and perceiving it as quite acceptable. An example of the use of such terminology is the Wannsee Conference of 1942, where the euphemism "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" refers to an ideology aimed at the physical extermination of millions of people on ethnic grounds, and the words 'murder', 'extermination' and the like do not appear either in speeches or in protocols – purely humanitarian and technical issues are resolved and appropriate terminology is used, under which true motives and actions are hidden.

The motif of understatement unfolds during the first quarter of the work. From the beginning the reader understands that the characters in the novel grow up in an educational institution. They are taken care of: they eat healthy food, their health and lifestyle are monitored from birth, they are intellectually and aesthetically developed, and motivated to create art. At the same time, the Madame, who takes care of the institution, has a very strange attitude towards its pupils: she looks at them with disgust, she is afraid to touch them. When it comes to smoking, it turns out that it is especially harmful and unacceptable. Guardians avoid talking about some topics, pupils are embarrassed, afraid to ask questions, phrases-omissions are woven into the canvas of the story: "*we only needed to ask and Miss Lucy would have told us all kinds of things*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 61], "*we knew just enough to make us wary of that whole territory*", "*it's time for someone to tell you this*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 62], "*we are told and not told*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 71]. The high point of the motif of understatement is Miss Lucy's telling the pupils the truth about their future. The author unfolds the conversation against the background of heavy rain, which in the novel usually accompanies important unpleasant moments or situations that require strong-willed decisions.

So, children learn that they are artificially created as organ donors for transplants. The writer focuses on the basic thesis of humanism – the equal value of human life, regardless of its origin. At the same time, the question of the essence of the human being and its boundaries comes to the foreground; the moral aspect of the problem is related to the admissibility/inadmissibility of saving one life at the expense of another.

S. Cooper, analysing the novel, remarks: "The book's weakness lies in the fact that it is able to say nothing about the society that would sanction this kind of living organ factory" [Cooper, 2006, 92]. But, considering the novel in the context of literature of new sincerity, it can be argued that Ishiguro is not interested in a society that has committed such inhumanity. The author's purpose is to analyse the essence of a person who is on the verge of an extremely difficult moral and ethical dilemma. And the characters do not pass the test of humanity.

The motif of understatement in the novel is replaced by the motif of death: "*It was after that day, jokes about donations faded away, and we started to think properly about things*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 77]. Several pages of the text still show the coexistence of these motifs: "*Thinking back now, I can see we were just at that age when we knew a few things about ourselves – about who we were, how we were different from our guardians, from the people outside*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 33]. At the same time, it is this conversation that becomes the line between ignorance, unawareness and understanding. Firstly, by understanding why people on the outside react so strangely to them ("*there are people out there, like Madame, who don't hate you or wish you any harm, but who nevertheless shudder at the very thought of you – of how you were brought into this world and why – and who dread the idea of your hand brushing against theirs*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 33]), and secondly, when

the motive of understatement is inferior to the motif of death. The author deepens this moment of terrible self-realisation through the simile used by the narrator to convey his feelings: *"The first time you glimpse yourself through the eyes of a person like that, it's a cold moment. It's like walking past a mirror you've walked past every day of your life, and suddenly it shows you something else, something troubling and strange"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 34].

The motif of death, which becomes the main one, acquires various embodiments. Sunny, warm, joyful Hailsham is replaced by cottages and a farm, where the characters move in anticipation of moving to the category of donors. The story accentuates the ascetic interior of the cottages; the joy of existence in them is added by the cold due to the almost absent heating. For the first time, a description of the characters' clothes will appear in the work: sweaters, hard and cold fabric of jeans, rubber boots – everything demonstrates the discomfort of existence. A little later, these descriptions will be supplemented by the squalid furnishings of the centre, where Tommy will be located after the first organ donation. It should be noted that the antithesis of the descriptions of the centres where Tommy and Ruth are (Kathy admires the modern decoration of the centres where her friend remains) only strengthens the motif of death, because, being in different conditions, Tommy and Ruth are almost equally close to the end of their lives. Ruth's habit of reading in a quiet place near the cemetery fence, the unpleasant conversation between friends that takes place in the cemetery, after which Kathy walks past graves and monuments, explicate hidden expectations.

Ruth feels bad after the first donation and it takes the death motif to a new level. A trip of friends to an old boat demonstrates the exhaustion of a young girl after surgery, her inability to make basic movements. Kathy's empathetic narration makes the reader feel Ruth's pain almost physically. The girl's condition is enhanced by the appropriate landscape and weather. The faint sun during the journey is constantly contrasted with the faint smile of Ruth, who has almost no vitality left. A highway in the middle of an open, feature-free countryside, which clearly symbolises the empty life of clones, without any joys, leads to a forest and a fence with rusty barbed wire. A similar thing was seen in the chapters on Hailsham, but then it was a scary world opposed to a sheltered home, now it's a world they live in and where there is no home. The friends' journey to the boat is accompanied by a *'pale sky'* reflected in the water, *"ghostly dead trunks"*, twilight in the depths of the forest, and the soil gradually turning into a dangerous swamp. And the boat itself, old, with peeling paint, bogged down in the swamp, becomes a symbol of both Hailsham (that Tommy sees his orphanage sunk in a dream) and their lives. And despite Ruth's admiration for the old boat, her gaze at the silvery trail of the plane slowly rising into the sky reflects her true thoughts and desires. The motif of death correlates in a certain way with the motif of the road present in the work. The main character is driving almost all the time, all the time on the road – from one medical centre to another, from one person doomed to death to another. Behind the window of the car, the landscape is always bleak: *"sometimes I'll be driving on a long weaving road across marshland, or maybe past rows of furrowed fields, the sky big and grey and never changing mile after mile"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 100]. In the end, Kathy concludes: *"it seemed to me these dark byways of the country existed just for the likes of us, while the big glittering motorways with their huge signs and super cafés were for everyone else"* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 238]. The traditional motif of the road in world literature, which usually personified human life, is transformed into a separation of a certain group of people, worthy only of dark, uncomfortable, winding short paths and paths in an empty deserted area, from others, for whom wide and comfortable highways were built. Images of different roads symbolise the attitude of society to different social groups, a priori not equal in terms of the basic right to life.

It should be noted that the literature of the new sincerity is characterised by attention to the nature of interaction between people. Moral and ethical principles play a crucial role in building relationships. Instead, we see that the characters of the novel feel a squeamish attitude towards themselves, people on the outside are afraid of them for no apparent reason when they find out who they are. This fact is neither explained nor commented upon in the work, which allows the reader to make their own assumptions about the reasons for such an attitude, among which one can single out the artificial nature of their appearance and the purpose for which they were created. No wonder the characters of the novel so vividly discuss the good attitude of the woman towards them, who actually gave them a tour, talking about the paintings.

The young people wonder how a woman would treat them if she knew who they really are. The author's choice of artificially created people as main characters is motivated not only by the

plot orientation of the possibility of their use for purely biological purposes. The perception of artificially created people as non-humans / subhumans is one of the moral and ethical problems of our time. After all, for a long time there has been a discussion in society about whether such people are full-fledged, whether they have a soul, whether it is possible to interfere in the 'divine' process of the birth of a child, and so on. Turning to this kind of 'special' people once again returns to the problem of humanism, raises the question of what a person is, what defines the human in them, again emphasises the problem of the value of human life and the inadmissibility of discrimination on any grounds, biological, national, religious, etc. The clones in Ishiguro's novel become a metaphor for various categories of people whose discrimination in society is perceived as possible and acceptable in the modern developed world.

The second reason for such an attitude towards the main characters can be considered the seal of death, which lies on them and causes horror in others, the death to which they were doomed and the need for which they humbly accepted. It is in this way that the *motif of conscious sacrifice* is woven into the work, along with the motif of death.

Traditional for the genre of classical anti-utopia is the presence of the characters who rebel against the inhuman system, reflecting the author's attitude to the totalitarian social system. In K. Ishiguro's dystopia, there is no rebellion. The characters are aware of the inevitability of their fate, accept it as a fact that cannot be disputed, because this is their life mission, the purpose for which they were created and for which they have been diligently prepared since childhood. Discussing with Kathy her many years as an assistant, Tommy, who has survived three operations and is preparing for the fourth, which is likely to be the last, asks his girlfriend if she is tired of her hard work, if she thinks that it is time to end the role of assistant and become a donor. In Kathy's sincere story, there are several reflections of the heroine that soon, when she gets to one of the centres, she will have a lot of time to think about her life. Both Tommy and Kathy treat such a prospect unemotionally, perceiving it as a kind of inevitability that you need to be prepared for. The motif of conscious sacrifice can be interpreted as a metaphor for the power of an idea that takes over a person's mind through a purposeful, well-thought-out, and skillfully organised influence on the individual – an idea that suppresses the will, paralyses the mind, and is stronger than the instinct of self-preservation. An idea similar to the perfume in the novel by P. Süskind, which controls the crowd and makes it adore a serial killer who has no concept of morality. An idea that leads a terrorist strapped in explosives to sow death, knowing that the price will be his own life. The idea of self-sacrifice, the secondary nature of their life as a 'non-human' or 'sub-human' is firmly engraved in their consciousness and deprives them of the opportunity to resist it.

Nevertheless, the motif of conscious sacrifice is violated several times in the novel, transforming into its opposite. Doomed to a quick death, the characters of the novel subconsciously dream of a different future, working in a beautiful office, the advertisement of which they see during their trip. In fact, they are afraid of their future, they want to forget about it, if only for a little while: it "*once Hailsham was behind us, it was possible, just for that half year or so, before all the talk of becoming carers, before the driving lessons, all those other things, it was possible to forget for whole stretches of time who we really were; to forget what the guardians had told us; to forget Miss Lucy's outburst that rainy afternoon at the pavilion*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 123] (emphasis added) – the author enhances the emotionality of the narrator's words with rhetorical repetition. And this is not the first reflection on the inevitability of the appointment. "*This time round it wasn't awkward or embarrassing anymore; just sombre and serious*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 77]. Kathy reflects on the beginning of their awareness of the fatality of their own fate, the use of the epithet "sombre" shedding light on attitudes towards conscious sacrifice. The emotionality of the transformation of the motive reaches one of its highest points, when Ruth, who has had a very hard time with the first operation, in Rodney's opinion that Chrissy, who died during the second operation, was ready for it, reacts very expressively: "*Why would he know? How could he possibly know what Chrissy would have felt? What she would have wanted? It wasn't him on that table, trying to cling onto life. How would he know?*" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 196]. For the first time in the novel, the psychology of humility, the idea of awareness of one's own sacrifice, is so clearly violated: in fact, the characters of the novel want to live.

But the most obvious and emotional thought is embodied in the scene of Tommy's nervous breakdown when he and Kathy return from a meeting where they learn that no one can postpone Tommy's last donation, making it impossible for them to spend more years together. The guy is

waiting for the fourth surgery and death. Asking to stop the car, Tommy goes far into the field, from where his terrible screams can be heard – the cries of despair, the hopelessness of a man who has no power to control his life. This episode can be taken as an allusion to the appeal of Jesus to the Lord, before he had to sacrifice himself for human sins, known as the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Death frightens Jesus, who is about to be tormented, and he, showing human weakness, asks: *“Let this cup pass from me”*. Tommy’s cry is also the cry of a man who is denied having a soul, the right to live. It is a cry for help and a cry of helplessness. The motif of conscious sacrifice, which was doomed, and its destruction by the completely natural desire of man to live, the fear of death emphasise the parallel between the scene from Ishiguro’s novel and the biblical text. At the same time, this episode can also be perceived as an allusion to a passage from the Book of Prophets, where there is an image of a man who cries in the wilderness, addressing people, but no one hears him (which is reflected in the idiom of biblical origin *“the voice of a prophet in the wilderness”, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness”*). The empty dark field where Tommy screams makes it impossible to reach out to those who have made the inhumanity of the society acceptable. One person still hears it, in contrast to the biblical story. This is Kathy. But the same future awaits her, so Tommy’s lament is an attempt to protect her as well, which turns out to be impossible. And the motif of death finally becomes the main one in the work, supported by the news of the closure of Hailsham, the only place that somehow connected main characters with life.

In general, at the end of the work, we observe the actualisation of most motifs and symbols. After losing Tommy, Kathy starts to think about her own future. In her endless trips, she is constantly looking for Hailsham – her lost paradise. But there is a complete emptiness all around: empty places, the same faceless landscapes, empty glances of the people you meet. Even Norfolk, which used to give her vivid emotions, greets her with a dirty seashore and a barbed wire fence – a symbol of the lack of freedom: *“I was thinking about the rubbish, the flapping plastic in the branches, the shore-line of odd stuff caught along the fencing, and I half-closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I’d ever lost since my childhood had washed up”* [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 251] – the motive of death here closes with the motive of loss, the final point of both being the loss of human life legitimised by society.

### **Ishiguro’s Poetics of New Sincerity: a Withdrawal from Postmodern Aesthetics**

The artistic world of the novel *“Never Let Me Go”* is the complete opposite of postmodernism at all levels of form and content.

The author rejects the intertextuality characteristic of postmodern works, which is mostly used for the purpose of parody. Ishiguro’s novel contains isolated allusions, such as the scene when Kathy and Tommy return after an unsuccessful attempt to postpone the deadly excavation for the latter for several years. Faced with a deadly abyss at the very moment when he wants to live, Tommy stops the car, goes far into the field, into the darkness, and screams in despair. In our work, this scene is analysed as an allusion to the biblical story of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and the famous expression of the prophet Isaiah about the painful loneliness of man in the world – ‘a voice crying in the wilderness’. Unlike postmodern borrowings for the purpose of ironic reinterpretation, these allusions deepen the psychological nature of the narrative, bring the hero’s experience to a new level, scaling them up, and most importantly, reflect the hopelessness of the situation, enhancing its tragedy and inhumanity.

The novel lacks the dominant function of play, which is based in postmodernist works, including the accumulation of quotations, allusions, combinations of various forms and styles, and there is no deliberate *“literariness”* (R. Barthes), no quotations as a certain source of meaningful growth of the text. On the contrary, the text of the novel is extremely plain, without pretensions to metatext, artistic devices are minimised, the narrative style is devoid of stylistic eclecticism and is as close as possible to a conversational diary confession. Thus, the heroine’s story about her life begins as follows: *‘My name is Kathy H. I’m thirty-one years old, and I’ve been a carer now for over eleven years. That sounds long enough, I know, but actually they want me to go on for another eight months, until the end of this year. That’ll make it almost exactly twelve years. Now I know my being a carer so long isn’t necessarily because they think I’m fantastic at what I do. There are some really good carers who’ve been told to stop after just two or three years. And I can think of one carer at least who went on for all of fourteen years despite being a complete waste of space. So I’m not trying to boast’* [Ishiguro, 2010,

p. 5]. The quote can be continued. The whole text is written in a similar style, in a calm, measured, low-emotional manner. Despite the fact that the protagonist is quite well-read (the novel emphasises that the pupils at Hailsham were taught to read and that even after graduation they were armed with lists of literature), her speech is competent, but simple, uncomplicated, devoid of imagery (the tropes and figures used in the work are few and far between); neutral vocabulary dominates, and sometimes colloquialisms such as “to snap out”, “to wear down”, “hooked up”, “to unwind”, “to go full pelt”, “daft”, “a layabout” and others are found. All the words used in the memoirs are extremely specific, carrying the most unambiguous meaning, so that all the thoughts cannot be interpreted in any other way. Although in the above quote we find the expression ‘to put an end to it’, which can be understood as a common idiom that means the end of work, some kind of business, official duties, only later, as the plot develops, this expression, like some others, will acquire a new meaning and new connotations and turn into one of the euphemisms that denotes the passing of clone donors.

All postmodern art aims at commentary and interpretation, because by definition, postmodernist art exists in the context of artistic texts created in previous times. Thus, the secondary nature of the postmodern text is perceived as a certain differentiating feature, i.e., postmodern art is inward-looking, it does not look for the new outside, but rather seeks new forms of reflection that would captivate the reader with their non-standard, ensure the originality of the statement, which is actually built on the statements of others, and contribute to the dominant function of play. The new sincerity is outward-looking, it is busy searching for a new meaning. The main part of the novel, as noted, is made up of feelings, experiences, emotions of the characters, the factors that cause them, psychological processes that occur in a person, their conditionality and mechanisms. Throughout the novel, Kathy is extremely attentive to her feelings and emotions, both as a pupil and as an adult. Deprived of their parents, the clone pets appreciate any casual communication with their guardians, which is not something they get to do very often. That is why conversations with Miss Lucy, a childhood favourite, are imprinted in the girl’s memory: “*I remember there was a log burning in the fireplace, and that we were doing a play-reading. At some point, a line in the play had led to Laura making some wisecrack about the tokens business, and we’d all laughed, Miss Lucy included*” [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 37]. The children and the teacher were having a good time, when Polly asked, completely out of the blue: “*Miss, why does Madame take our things anyway? We all went silent. Miss Lucy didn’t often get cross, but when she did, you certainly knew about it, and we thought for a second Polly was for it. But then we saw Miss Lucy wasn’t angry, just deep in thought. I remember feeling furious at Polly for so stupidly breaking the unwritten rule, but at the same time, being terribly excited about what answer Miss Lucy might give. And clearly I wasn’t the only one with these mixed emotions: virtually everybody shot daggers at Polly, before turning eagerly to Miss Lucy – which was, I suppose, pretty unfair on poor Polly*” [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 38]. This unremarkable situation, typical of the protagonist’s confession, mirrors the reflective nature of the work’s discourse quite well. After all, the narrator clearly conveys the subtlest twists and turns of her own psychological reactions, analysing their origins. The joy of sincere communication, which is suddenly destroyed by an awkward childish question, which seems to have nothing indecent in it, but children raised in conditions of silent prohibition are deprived of the right to ask direct questions. Kathy is angry with Polly because she is embarrassing her favourite teacher. At the same time, the girl is worried that Miss Lucy’s bright image will be ruined by an aggressive reaction to her friend’s questions. Kathy feels sorry for Polly, because the ‘poor’ girl is being scorched by the eyes of everyone present: everyone perceives the situation in the same way, everyone is hostage to the unspoken propriety that they feel intuitively. Thus, the literature of the new sincerity does not accept secondary nature and is not focused on the past. The analysis of instant emotions and experiences, the search for the reasons that generate them, the reflexivity of one’s own behaviour, and the evaluative attitude towards the world and people become a reflection of effective, active humanism, while postmodern art pedals the active non-independence of one’s own position due to the inevitable secondary nature of the position, which is based on intertextuality.

The new sincerity, with its confessionality, also opposes the idea of relativism, which is the basis of postmodern philosophy. The relativity of everything leads to the variability of any point of view. This is especially evident in the field of ethics, where there are no imperatives of any kind, because good and evil as categories in this coordinate system are also relative, and therefore there is no ‘bad’ and ‘good’. In contrast to this idea, the new sincerity tries to find and define absolutes (mostly of an ethical nature) that could be relied upon in a globalised world where all borders have

been erased. Moral imperatives become important in the era of new sincerity: it turns out that it is significant for a person to be decent, to love his or her family and treat them responsibly, to be able to sympathise with someone else's grief, to care about their country, the environment, etc. The aforementioned can be observed in the confession of the heroine of the novel "Never Let Me Go", for whom decency, self-esteem, tolerance, responsibility, help and compassion for her neighbour become essential attributes. From the very beginning of the film, we see how responsible Kathy is for her work: "...it means a lot to me, being able to do my work well.' 'Anyway, I'm not making any big claims for myself. I know carers, working now, who are just as good and don't get half the credit" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 5], – Kathy is clearly proud of herself and her virtues. For her, it is important to be a good worker, a good, compassionate person ("You try and do your best for every donor" [Ishiguro, 2010, p. 6]) who makes things easier for those who are in trouble. Compassion is an essential quality for Kathy. She is delicate and sensitive: of all the children, she is the only one who feels the inner pain and irritation of Tommy, who is bullied and mocked by almost everyone around him because of his eccentricity and sometimes inadequate reactions. By focusing on the little things, the girl feels the essence of the problem. When Tommy, in the heat of anticipation for a football game, does not notice that he has stained his favourite blue t-shirt, only Kathy shows empathy for the boy, feeling sorry for him because of the feelings he will have when he sees that he has ruined his favourite clothes, which, in fact, happens.

The appeal to universal values can also be traced in the author's implicit position in the work: social and moral issues, the use of traditional motifs with their subsequent transformation into their own opposite, and the deep psychology of a rather simple plot conflict contribute to the conclusion that active humanism is important in today's global technologically advanced world. The main problem raised in the novel is, of course, the eternal struggle between good and evil. In addition, the writer makes it as difficult as possible to resolve this issue, immersing the reader in an ethical dilemma, because clone organs are used to save the lives of other people, that is, for a certain pseudo-good. Thus, in the novel, we observe the victory of pseudo-good over genuinely good. However, by portraying his characters as real people, the author clearly crystallises his own position, skilfully demonstrating how easy it is in today's complex world to pass off evil as pseudo-good by manipulating moral imperatives.

The new sincerity overcomes the conclusion of the 'death of the object', characteristic of postmodernism, which is based on the cultivation of the idea that there is no permanent self-identity of the individual. Contrary to the idea that a person is nothing more than an accumulation of an infinite number of never-ending selves, which is ultimately reflected in the eclecticism and fragmentation of postmodern artistic images, the new sincerity, deeply psychological in nature, aims to create a holistic literary character. The protagonists of the new sincerity are not the embodiment of a certain idea without any background and causality, both social and psychological. In contrast to apsychological postmodernism, they are complex, multifaceted, carefully drawn, deeply elaborated, their behaviour and various reactions are psychologically motivated, and the characters are constantly trying to understand the mechanisms and factors of this conditioning. All three protagonists are complete individuals, with their own contradictions, mistakes, defeats and victories. While Kathy is empathetic, tolerant, sensitive, and attentive to others, Ruth is selfish, indifferent to other people's suffering and pain, and at the same time strong-willed and respected among her peers, Kathy lacks faith in herself, tends to bow to her friend's strength and authority, and underestimates herself. Due to her kind-heartedness, she is not capable of committing harsh acts, even if it is inevitable to protect her own dignity and personal self-preservation. Both characters are directly or indirectly trying to understand who they are, to find the people they were cloned from. Both secretly believe in a brighter future. The enchanting image of the office, which seems to have come from the pages of a glossy magazine, becomes a momentary glimpse of a dream that will never come true. Kathy is naive and unaware of being manipulated. Ruth is desperately fighting for her place in the sun, for her short-lived happiness, using all the methods she can, by all means permitted and forbidden, not disdaining immoral means, manipulating people and destroying other people's lives for her own pleasure. Tommy undergoes a certain personal growth in front of our eyes, transforming from a victim of bullying in childhood to a decent and interesting person in adolescence and youth, with whom two friends fall in love. Intelligent and sensitive, he, like Kathy, cannot resist Ruth's manipulations, becoming her plaything, while at the same time having strong feelings for Kathy and understanding her well. Only before his death does

he realise the enormity and tragedy of his mistake. Thus, one of the goals of the heroes of the new sincerity is the endless process of self-identification of the individual. The novel's protagonists are typical heroes of the new sincerity, devoid of fragmentation, their images are carefully constructed and comprehensively outlined.

The new sincerity refuses to depersonalise action, which is terminologically fixed in the metaphors 'death of the subject' and 'death of the author' and is focused on the self-production of a literary text due to the growth of meaning in the process of the play of meanings. The dominant function of the diegetic narrator in the narrative organisation of works of new sincerity subjectifies the action, attaching it to the expressive and evaluative paradigm of the author/narrator, to the system of his moral imperatives. As noted, the narrative in K. Ishiguro's novel is told from the perspective of 31-year-old Kathy, who acts as a diegetic narrator. On the pages of the novel, she recalls the years of her formation as a personality and the factors that influenced it. The narrative is structured in such a way that the reader gets into the narrator's system of moral coordinates, experiences her victories and defeats together with her, assessing the degree of acceptability of the heroine's actions. Kathy is a reflective personality who is in a state of permanent introspection, which involves the reader, who studies both the characters and himself.

Thus, in the literature of new sincerity, the role of the recipient changes. If in postmodernist works he was involved in the process of interpretation, building up meanings, that is, he played an interactive role, participating in some way in the creation of a literary text, and then in works of new sincerity his functions become fundamentally different. The reader actually is identified with the protagonist of the work, feeling his or her problems, feelings, and experiences through empathy, which the author tries to evoke in him or her in various ways and which is stronger the more the work's description coincides with the reader's own life experience. The author of the novel contributes to the production of empathy in the readers in various ways. The novel shows us the formation of personalities who experience a plethora of difficult situations where they have to make a moral choice. The detailing of events and the feelings and experiences of the characters helps the reader to sympathise with the respectable Kathy in her moral battle not so much with Ruth as with herself, observing the compromises the girl makes because of her fear of losing her friend in childhood, indignant at the fact that the young Kathy destroys her own happiness with her own hands by establishing a relationship between Tommy, whom she certainly loves, and Ruth, who manipulates her friend, naturally relating the characters' actions to her own life experience. The reader expects a rebellion of lovers against a system built on the laws of segregation, and almost physically experiences the pain of the clones during and after organ harvesting. Thus, the main goal of the recipient is not the production of a text, but self-knowledge, self-identification, and the construction of their own personal boundaries and moral guidelines.

The rejection of postmodern irony, which not only rejected and made sincerity, naturalness, sensitivity, compassion, and empathy impossible, but also questioned their value and the expediency of their presence in works of fiction as worldview principles, allowed authors of new sincerity to create new content that differs from the literature of the previous era in being more democratic and humanistic. In the novel *Never Let Me Go*, there is no irony at all, because the plot conflict and the issues do not imply any smiling, ridicule or sarcastic attitude to the events. The tragedy that happens to the characters of the work determines the absolute seriousness of the confession. The narrator does not allow herself irony, even when analysing her emotions and experiences in childhood and adolescence (a similar tendency is present, as noted, in some works of new sincerity, when self-irony becomes a marker of the author's individual style/self-perception of the diegetic narrator). Recalling her own formation as a person, Kathy carefully draws out important situations for her that left a mark on her soul. As an adult, she certainly understands how childishly she perceived the world, how serious the stories of Miss Geraldine's guard, riding Ruth's imaginary horses, the legends of the Hailsham runaways who died in the woods, the situation with Ruth's pencil case, the misunderstanding with Miss Lucy, the conversations with Tommy, etc. But, even as an adult, she does not analyse any of these situations from the point of view of self-irony, the possibility of laughing at herself as a child, each of them being a step towards adulthood, important and serious. The only endeavour at irony is the reaction of the teenage pupils to the truth about their future, which is suddenly revealed to them in a conversation with Miss Lucy, after which they try to imagine the upcoming organ harvesting through the metaphor of a zipper that is unzipped and liver, kidneys, etc. fall out of the open cavity. This irony of self-defence turns out to be not funny at all, although the teenagers

laugh as they play with their future. That is why the tone of the story is serious, because Kathy's memories are a way of realizing her own and the people close to her heart's doom. Thus, the tragic pathos requires compassion for the characters of the work, sincerity and authenticity of emotions, which are characteristic of the literature of new sincerity and fundamentally rejected by postmodernists.

### Conclusions

The literature of new sincerity is a phenomenon of the late 20<sup>th</sup> – first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which has a powerful influence on the contemporary literature of various genres. Polemically opposed to the aesthetics of postmodernism, the literature of new sincerity is distinguished by its own aesthetic and poetological specificity. The differentiating features of the works of new sincerity include the peculiarity of the issues, which is the aggravation of problems of a more intimate, personal nature; a kind of hero/heroine who is a reflective personality who pays great attention to his/her inner world, is concerned with the issue of self-identification, and feels lonely in the global world around him/her; a characteristic narrative style that mostly involves a diegetic narrator, the confessional nature of the narrative; deep psychologism and empathy; appeal to universal values; self-irony as an indicator of the writer's individual style, which, in fact, is not a differentiating feature.

The poetics of new sincerity is the complete opposite of postmodern irony, which becomes not only an artistic manifestation but also a way of thinking. Irony implies distance, demonstration of a negative attitude, a certain snobbery, concealment of true feelings, total irony easily degenerates into cynicism and aggression, and the phenomenon of new sincerity that replaces postmodernism is the answer to this.

K. Ishiguro's dystopian novel "Never Let Me Go" certainly belongs to the literature of new sincerity. The novel is narrated by a diegetic narrator who is preoccupied with issues of self-identification and cognition of his inner world. The narrative style invites the reader to an active dialogue and promotes empathy, including for working through their own psychological problems. The fragmentary affective narrative style is supported by the minimal plot intensity, which allows for deep psychological insight. Despite their atypicality, the images of the novel's protagonists fully correspond to the paradigm characteristic of the literature of new sincerity. The ideological orientation of the novel is subordinated to the problem of humanism in the high-tech world, which is realised through various motifs: home, road, understatement, loss, death, conscious sacrifice, etc., which in the process of their functioning in the novel undergo transformation and mostly turn into their opposite. The analysis of the work demonstrates the significant influence of the socio-cultural phenomenon of new sincerity on contemporary literature, including works of the conditional modus.

The study has made it possible to draw conclusions about the confrontation between new sincerity and postmodernism at all levels of the organisation of a work of art. The author rejects the intertextuality characteristic of postmodern works, which is mostly used for the purpose of parody.

The novel lacks the dominant function of play, which is based in postmodernist works, among other things, on the accumulation of quotations, allusions, and combinations of various forms and styles. In contrast, the text of the novel is extremely simple, without pretensions to metatext, the artistic devices are minimised, the narrative style is devoid of stylistic eclecticism and is as close as possible to a conversational diary confession.

The literature of the new sincerity does not accept secondary nature and is not focused on the past. The analysis of momentary emotions and experiences in K. Ishiguro's novel, the search for the reasons that give rise to them, reflexivity, and an evaluative attitude towards the world and people become a reflection of effective, active humanism, while postmodern art pedals the active non-independence of one's own position due to the inevitable secondary nature of the author's position, which is based on intertextuality.

Contrary to the idea of relativism, one of the central ideas of postmodernism, the new sincerity aims at finding absolutes (mostly ethical) that could be relied upon in a globalised world where all borders have been erased, as seen in the confession of the heroine of the novel "Never Let Me Go", for whom decency, self-esteem, tolerance, responsibility, help and compassion for one's neighbour become essential attributes.

Unlike eclectic and fragmentary postmodern artistic images, the characters in K. Ishiguro's novel are complex, multifaceted, carefully drawn, deeply elaborated, their behaviour and various reactions are psychologically motivated, and they are constantly trying to understand the mechanisms and factors of this conditioning.



The new sincerity refuses to depersonalise action, which is terminologically fixed in the metaphors 'death of the subject' and 'death of the author' and is focused on the self-production of the artistic text due to the growth of meaning in the process of the play of meanings. The dominant function of the diegetic narrator in the narrative organisation of New Sincerity works in general and in K. Ishiguro's novel in particular subjectifies the action, attaching it to the expressive and evaluative paradigm of the author/narrator, to the system of his moral imperatives.

Finally, the novel shows a rejection of postmodern irony. The tragedy that occurs to the characters of the novel determines the absolute seriousness of the confession. The narrator does not allow herself irony, even when analysing her emotions and experiences in childhood and adolescence.

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## POETICS OF NEW SINCERITY LITERATURE VS POSTMODERN AESTHETICS: KAZUO ICHIGURO'S NOVEL "NEVER LET ME GO"

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**Key words:** *dystopia, new sincerity, postmodern irony, diegetic narrator, empathy, reflective personality, humanism, narrative style, home motif, death motif, victim motif, mind manipulation, rebellion against the system, discrimination*

The purpose of the study is to determine the peculiarities of the poetics of the literature of new sincerity as polemically sharpened against postmodern irony, scepticism and cynicism and to identify the poetics of new sincerity in K. Ishiguro's novel "Never Let Me Go". To achieve this goal, the author uses cultural-historical, cultural-philosophical, hermeneutical research methods.

The paper traces the formation of the concept of 'sincerity', which has been transformed over many centuries, acquiring new meanings against the background of different eras. The concept of 'sincerity' is considered in the context of cultural philosophy and literary criticism. Much attention is paid to the opposition between the new sincerity and postmodern irony, which is analysed not only as an artistic manifestation but also as a way of thinking. The phenomenon of new sincerity is considered in the work as a reaction to the socio-cultural shifts that led to the end of the postmodern era.

The research attempts to identify the differentiating features of the poetics of the works that make up the layer of the literature of new sincerity. Among them are the peculiarity of the issues, which consists in the aggravation of problems of a more intimate, personal nature, the originality of the hero, who is a reflective personality who pays great attention to his inner world, is concerned with the issue of self-identification; characteristic narrative style, which is characterised by the presence of a diegetic narrator and a confessional character; deep psychologism and empathy; appeal to universal values; self-irony as an indicator of the writer's individual style or the complete absence of irony.

Kazuo Ishiguro's dystopian novel is studied from the perspective of aesthetics and poetics of new sincerity. The study has made it possible to draw conclusions about the characteristic features of the work inherent in the literature of new sincerity. Thus, the narrative in the work is conducted on behalf of a diegetic narrator who is preoccupied with issues of self-identification and cognition of his inner world. The narrative style invites the reader to an active dialogue and promotes empathy, including for working through their own psychological problems. The fragmentary affective narrative style is supported by the minimal plot intensity, which allows for a deep psychological impact. The images of the novel's characters are fully consistent with the paradigm characteristic of the literature of new sincerity.

The author traces the presence of motifs of home, road, understatement, loss, death, and conscious sacrifice, which are used to implement the humanistic idea of the work, and their into the opposite.

The author draws conclusions about the opposition to the new sincerity of postmodernism at all levels of a work of art. Thus, the novel lacks the dominant function of play; on the contrary, the text of the novel is extremely simple, artistic means are minimised, and the narrative style is as close as possible to a conversational diary confession. One of the aims is to find ethical absolutes that could be relied upon in a globalised world where all borders have been erased. The novel's eclectic and fragmentary images of postmodernism give way to complex, multifaceted, and carefully drawn ones. The behaviour and various reactions of the characters are psychologically motivated. The novel shows a refusal to depersonalise the action due to the dominant function of the diegetic narrator and a complete rejection of postmodern irony.

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