

# Between Two Worlds: Japanese Writers in Post-WWII Europe

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# Kazuo Ishiguro /1954 -/

- The Nobel Prize in Literature  
2017
- Motivation for the Prize: “who, in novels of great emotional force, has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world.”



# Kazuo Ishiguro's Work

## ○ **Novels**

- *A Pale View of Hills* (1982)
- *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986)
- *The Remains of the Day* (1989)
- *The Unconsoled* (1995)
- *When We Were Orphans* (2000)
- *Never Let Me Go* (2005)
- *The Buried Giant* (2015)
- *Klara and the Sun* (2021)

# Kazuo Ishiguro's Work

- **Short-story collections**

- *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall* (2009)

- **Screenplays**

- *A Profile of Arthur J. Mason* (television film for Channel 4) (1984)

- *The Gourmet* (television film for Channel 4) (1987)

- *The Saddest Music in the World* (2003)

- *The White Countess* (2005)

- *Living* (TBD)

# Kazuo Ishiguro's Work

- **Short fiction**

- "A Strange and Sometimes Sadness", "Waiting for J" and "Getting Poisoned" (in *Introduction 7: Stories by New Writers*, 1981)
- "A Family Supper" (in *Firebird 2: Writing Today*, 1983)
- "Summer After the War" (in *Granta 7*, 1983)
- "October 1948" (in *Granta 17*, 1985)
- "A Village After Dark" (in *The New Yorker*, May 21, 2001)

- **Lyrics**

# Kazuo Ishiguro: Between Two Worlds

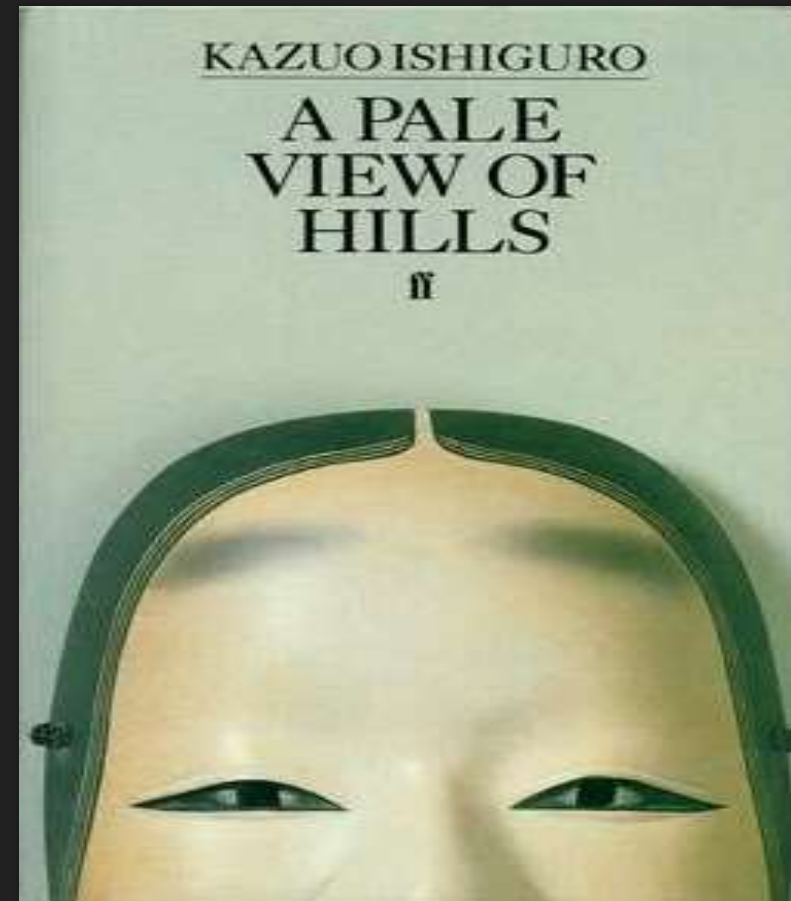
- “As I was growing up, long before I’d ever thought to create fictional worlds in prose, I was busily constructing in my mind a richly detailed place called ‘Japan’ – a place to which I in some way belonged, and from which I drew a certain sense of my identity and my confidence. The fact that I’d never physically returned to Japan during that time only served to make my own vision of the country more vivid and personal.”
- *A Pale View of Hills* (1982)
- *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986)
- “I wanted, to write ‘international’ fiction that could easily cross cultural and linguistic boundaries, even while writing a story set in what seemed a peculiarly English world. My version of England would be a kind of mythical one, whose outlines, I believed, were already present in the imaginations of many people around the world, including those who had never visited the country.”
- *The Remains of the Day* (1989)

# A Pale View of Hills

- "His English is perfect, and not just in the obvious sense: it is accurate, unhurried, fastidious, and noiseless. A hush seems to lie over it, compounded of mystery and discretion. The elegant bareness inevitably reminds one of Japanese painting. But at the very start of the first novel, *A Pale View of Hills*, he warns against such a cliché response. A Japanese girl has committed suicide in England:
- *Keiko...was pure Japanese, and more than one newspaper was quick to pick up on this fact. The English are fond of their idea that our race has an instinct for suicide, as if further explanations are unnecessary."*

Gabriele Annan. "[On the High Wire](#)"

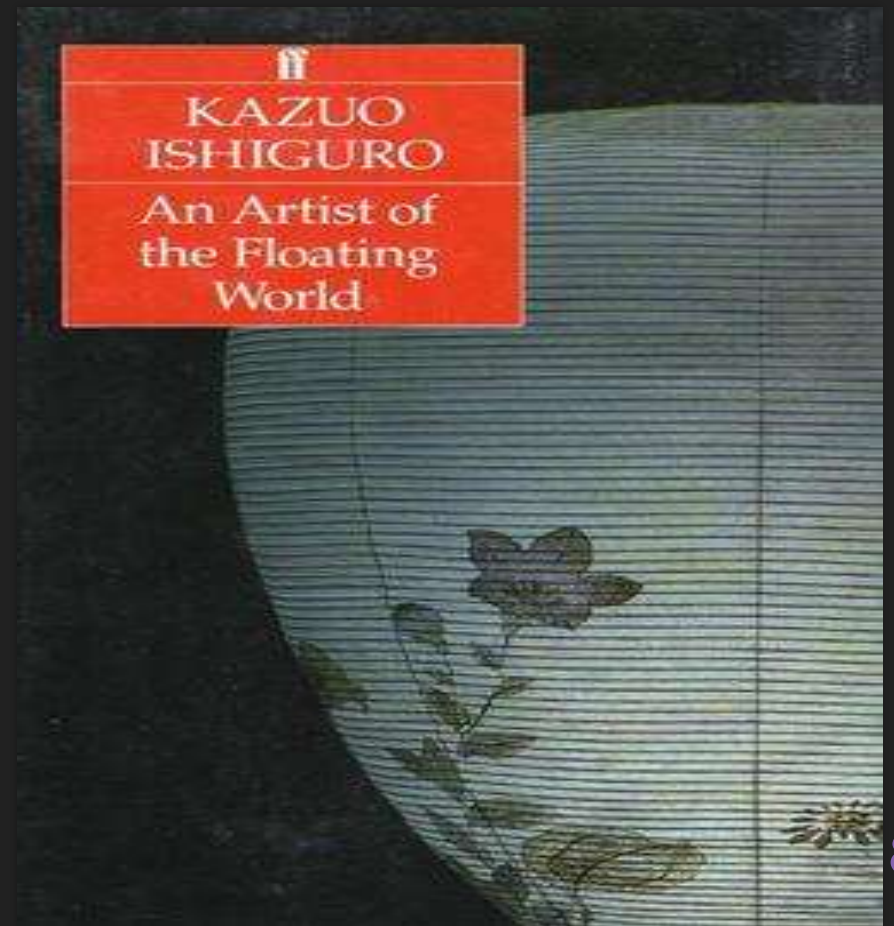
*The New York Review of Books.*



# An Artist of the Floating World

- “Ishiguro’s fiction has certainly mined the complexities involved in the unreliable, first-person narrator. *An Artist of the Floating World* is perhaps the supreme example of his art. It is, at face value, deeply Japanese, but many of its themes – secrecy, regret, discretion, hypocrisy and loss – are also to be found in the 20th-century English novel.”

Robert McCrum (6 July 2015). "[The 100 best novels: No 94 – An Artist of the Floating World by Kazuo Ishiguro \(1986\)](#)". *The Guardian*.



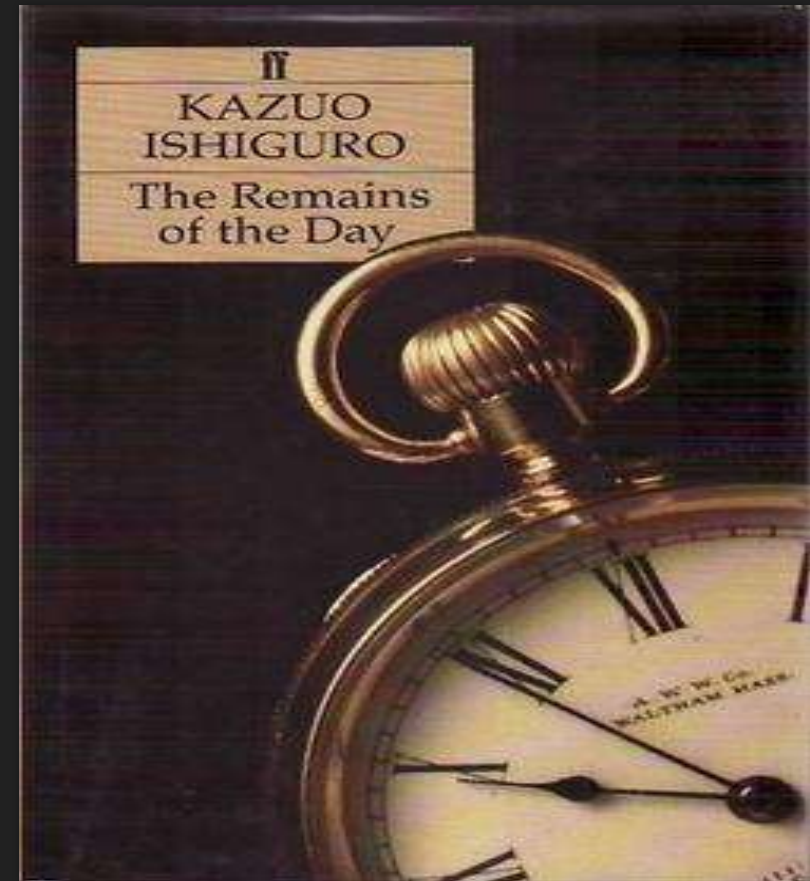


# The Remains of the Day

- "A striking characteristic of Ishiguro's books is how remote they are from his own experiences of time, place and even - in the case of "A Pale View of Hills," which is narrated by a woman - sex. Two of his novels were set in a Japan that Ishiguro had not seen for almost 30 years - he made his first trip back to the country last fall - while "The Remains of the Day" is narrated by a butler, about whose profession Ishiguro happily professes large-scale ignorance.
- "I've always found it easier to be intimate and revealing with central characters who are not like me," he says. "Partly it's to do with not being of an exhibitionist kind of nature, but also I think it serves me as a form of artistic discipline."

Bill Bryson,

*The New York Times*, 29 April, 1990

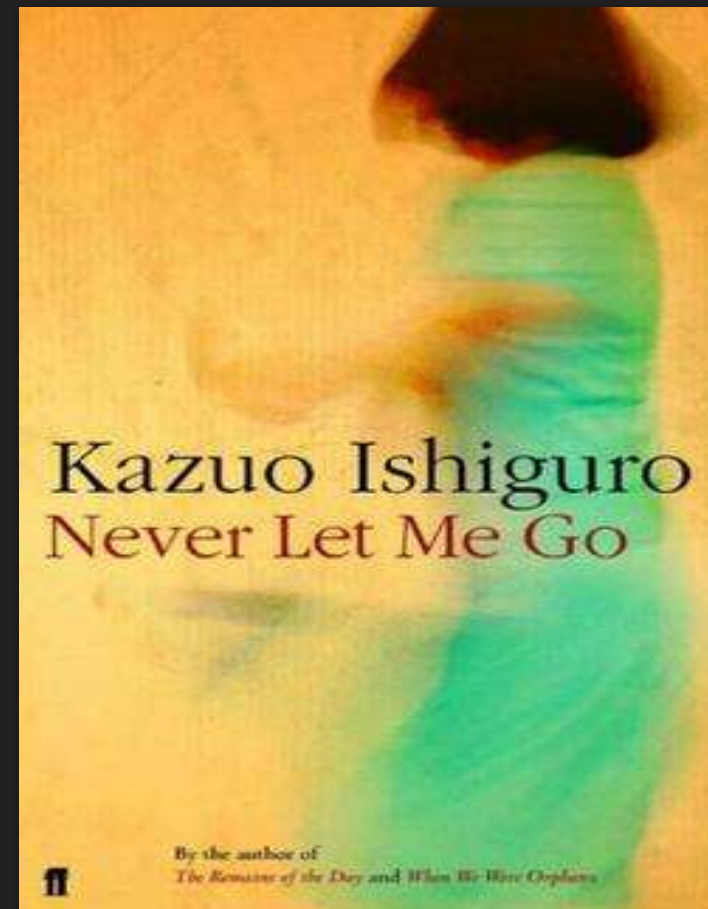


# Never Let Me Go

- “The theme of cloning lets him push to the limit ideas he's nurtured in earlier fiction about memory and the human self; the school's hothouse seclusion makes it an ideal lab for his fascination with cliques, loyalty and friendship.”

**Sarah Kerr,**

***The New York Times***, April 17, 2005



# World Literature?

- Goethe's *Weltliteratur*
- “The world republic of letters,” historically tied to a Francocentric republican ideal of universal excellence
- “Cosmopolitanism,” and its contemporary variant “the cosmopolitical” both steeped in a Kantian vision of perpetual peace through enlightened common culture
- “Planetary” would purge “global” of its capitalist hubris, greening its economy and rendering it accountable to disempowered subjects.
- “Literary World-Systems,” Braudelian and Wallersteinian in inspiration, rely on networks of cultural circulation
- *Littérature-monde* is the banner term for a writers’ movement that refuses postcolonial sectorizations of the literary field (*francophonie* is denounced as “the last avatar of colonialism”).
- “the Global South,” “imagined communities,” “the Americas,” “the terraqueous globe,” “Bandoon,” “parastates,” “translingualism,” “diaspora,” “majimboism,” “silicon cities,” “circum-Atlantic,” “îles-refuges”.

# World Literature/Comparative Literature

- Comparative literature is beset by the constraints imposed by its historic subject fields (genres, periodizing frames, theoretical paradigms)
- But it faces the rigors of the globalist injunction with a heightened awareness of the Babelian ironies of disciplinary self-naming, and remains more vulnerable than national literatures to the charge of shortchanging non-Western approaches because of its commitment to inclusiveness
- It also rubs up against what Nirvana Tanoukhi identifies as a fundamental disciplinary paradox: comparative literature's "cartographic claim to scale" and a "poetics of distance" leading to "the task of charting zones, paths, and crossroads obscured by strict adherence to 'national traditions.'" This task is undercut by the fact that "comparison depends for its existence on the entrenchment of nation-based geography."

# Kazuo Ishiguro as a Culture Translator

- “A translational model of comparative literature goes some distance in answering such concerns and paradoxes. Languages are inherently transnational and time sensitive. Their plurilingual composition embodies histories of language travel that do not necessarily reproduce imperial trajectories. They create small worlds of idiom and creative idiolect that ford the divide, often imposed on postcolonial writers, between those deferring to the experimental modernity of the West (stream of consciousness, wordplay) and those adhering to a colonial realism informed by local custom, tradition, and the romance of political aspirations to national self-determination. Language worlds that bleed out of dichotomized generic categories afford a planetary approach to literary history that responds to the dynamics of geopolitics without shying away from fractious border wars.”

Emily Apter, AGAINST WORLD  
LITERATURE

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!**