COGNITIVE ESTRANGEMENT IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S NEVER LET ME GO AND BLACK MIRROR

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Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2023

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:172:821197

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-01-07**

Repository / Repozitorij:

Repository of Faculty of humanities and social sciences

Sveučilište u Splitu

Filozofski fakultet

Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost

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Split, 2023

University of Split

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

Cognitive estrangement in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go and Black Mirror

BA Thesis

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Split, 2023

Contents:

1. Introduction

Cognitive estrangement, as the basis of creating science fictional literary works and other science fictional media, provides the audience with a fresh outlook on the world and their lived experience, through the defamiliarization of reality. Kazuo Ishiguro's science fiction novel *Never Let Me Go* about a dystopian society where clones are used for organ harvesting programmes, and the science fiction television series *Black Mirror*, generally dealing with exploring possible effects that rapid technological advancements could have on society, can serve as prolific groundworks for their audiences' thought exercises about the inner workings of society, as they can be connected to many current societal issues, raise many different questions about society and are open to a number of different interpretations. For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen an episode of *Black Mirror* titled "Men Against Fire" that explores inscribing social biases into technological advancements and the consequences that can have in regard to dehumanization and marginalization, as it can both thematically and stylistically parallel *Never Let Me Go*. Through the analysis of these works, while drawing on theoretical works regarding the science fiction genre, I will analyse how each work utilizes the genre's devices of cognitive estrangement and the novum, as well as explore how the issues examined in the works relate to society i.e., what the audience is incited to rethink. Most importantly, what I also intend to explore is how the said works can alter and provide a different outlook on the theoretical underpinning of the thesis i.e., how the delivery of these works can alter the approach to science fiction and its inner workings. What I am thus proposing, is that along with providing the audience with a fresh outlook on their reality, the works also bring about a fresh outlook on the theoretical constituents of the genre, precisely different interpretations of cognitive estrangement and novum. Such an analysis contributes to the field of science fiction as it provides a different outlook on interpreting the genre that can be criticized as too formulaic. In the following analysis of the concepts of cognitive

estrangement and novum and their utilization in *Never Let Me Go* and "Men Against Fire," I will centre the work of the genre's critic Darko Suvin i.e., his *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*, which provides a basis of the conceptualization of cognitive estrangement and the novum, to thus explore the reconceptualization of the said concepts offered by other critics of the genre and Suvin's theoretical work and to consequently develop my own take on reconceptualizing the interpretation of estrangement and the novum. The first section of the following thesis will focus on setting the theoretical groundwork, for the analysis of the utilization of cognitive estrangement and the novum in Never Let Me Go and "Men Against Fire" and the reinterpretation of said concepts, by outlining the development of the concepts, starting from the first ideations of the notion of estrangement by the Russian Formalist literary critic Viktor Shklovsky and the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht, followed by the extensive conceptualization of the said devices by Suvin, and finally concluded by the critical reconceptualization and more contemporary takes on the matter and the science fiction genre by: literary critic Samuel R. Delany in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*, writer and literary theorist Carl Freedman in *Science Fiction and Critical Theory*, editor and academic Veronica Hollinger in "(Re)reading Queerly: Science Fiction, Feminism, and the Defamiliarization of Gender," academic Patrick Parrinder in *Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition, and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia*, and by Suvin himself, in *Defined by a Hollow: Essays on Utopia, Science Fiction and Political Epistemology*. The following main section of the thesis deals with the analysis of the utilization of cognitive estrangement and the novum in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go*, the interpretation of how the novel produces a new understanding of the novum and what it can be and a critical approach to the novel and the matters explored in the novel, by applying the theoretical underpinning from the first section and the critical discourse on the novel examined in the first half of the

main section. The final section of the thesis deals with the analysis of the utilization of cognitive estrangement and the novum in an episode of the *Black Mirror* series, titled "Men Against Fire," created by Charlie Brooker, in order to exemplify applying the theoretical underpinning of the said concepts on a different form of media, and a more contemporary and mainstream one, as well as to provide a critical comparison to the utilization of the concepts in *Never Let Me Go* on the basis of their thematic parallels. The section hence also deals with examining the main argument of the thesis i.e., with the interpretation of how the narrative of the episode produces a new understanding of the novum and what it can be by applying the theoretical and critical underpinning of the thesis, as well as by applying the idea of accelerationism developed by the cultural critic and academic Steven Shaviro in *No Speed Limit*. Finally, the last section provides a conclusion of the thesis and its main argument, in which I suggest my own contribution to the discussion the idea of an "accelerated novum."

2.   The concept of cognitive estrangement

2.1. The conceptualization of cognitive estrangement and novum

The conceptualization of the notion of "estrangement" in literary works is dated back to the 1920s Russian school of literary criticism – Formalism, namely to its major voice, a literary critic and novelist Viktor Shklovsky. In his works *On the Theory of Prose* and *The Technique of the Writer's Craft*, Shklovsky argues literature as a combination of stylistic choices and literary devices that hence imposes on the readers a new perspective on old, familiar and mundane ideas, as it presents them in fresh, unfamiliar and unique ways. Accordingly, in his

essay "Art, as device," he introduces the concept of "ostranenie" or "defamiliarization," thus creating the foundation of the concept of cognitive estrangement. Further laying the foundations of the concept, the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht underpins the notion of "ostranenie" and defines it as "Verfremdungseffekt" or the "alienation effect" in his *Short Organum for the Theatre* (1949), and argues that "a representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar" (Brecht 192) i.e., for someone to observe something familiar with curiosity, they "would need to develop that detached eye with which the great Galileo observed a swinging chandelier. He was amazed by this pendulum motion, as if he had not expected it and could not understand its occurring, and this enabled him to come on the rules by which it was governed" (Brecht 192). Synthesizing the works and notions of his predecessors, Darko Suvin, a Croatian academic, critic and writer, offers his analysis of the concept of estrangement and of the science fiction genre he ties it to, in his most notable work *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (first published in 1977), thus creating the first major academic contribution to science fiction. In it, Suvin regards literature as a spectrum, ranging from genres that recreate the world and reality as it is and convey the author's empirical environment, to genres that employ the empirical environment, from reality and the familiar and known into what's not yet realized, into newness, which doesn't necessarily have to imply futurity, the narrative can be set in the present or the past, it is the aforementioned sense of newness and unfamiliarity that is crucial. The novum itself, for Suvin, can be anything, from a thing and a person to a place or even a world i.e., "the postulated innovation can be of quite different degrees of magnitude, running from the minimum of one discrete new invention (gadget, technique, phenomenon, relationship) to the maximum of a setting (spatiotemporal locus), agent (main character or characters), and/or relations basically new and unknown in the author's environment" (64).

The novum represents the key to achieving cognitive estrangement within a literary work and serves as a device that forces the reader to imagine a world different to one of their empirical reality. Through the utilization of the novum, authors create a new, unfamiliar world, novum being something non-existent in our empirical reality, which according to Suvin aligns with, e.g., technological advancements and inventions, fictional and often, but not necessarily, futuristic creatures, societies, worlds and settings etc. The novum thus is what displaces the story out of the reader's experienced reality and imposes the idea of the reader witnessing a different, unfamiliar reality. Accordingly, Suvin considers science fiction to be a literary genre "whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (8), whose essential condition is the presence of estrangement, and crucially, in contrast to other estranging genres, the presence of cognition, thus postulating science fiction as "literature of cognitive estrangement" (4). Science fiction thus presents a reality different to the authors' and readers' empirical reality, it estranges and defamiliarizes reality and creates a new, unusual one by the means of the novum. With that, it forces the readers to imagine a different world, to acknowledge the differences between the imaginative framework and the experienced reality, to recognize which elements and ideas of the empirical reality were estranged, and consequently to develop a new perspective of their empirical reality, all of which introduces cognition into the framework of science fiction. By employing both estrangement and cognition, science fiction introduces a strange, unfamiliar reality in order to initiate a new understanding of the experienced, empirical one. When hypothesising science fiction as such, a literature of cognitive estrangement, Suvin opposes it to other genres – estranging yet "non-cognitive" ones, and by doing so precisely outlines his view on the makings of science fiction as a genre and the role estrangement and cognition have in it. Namely, when contrasting myth to science fiction, Suvin stresses:

Where the myth claims to explain once and for all the essence of phenomena, SF first posits them as problems and then explores where they lead; it sees the mythical static identity as an illusion, usually as fraud, at best only as a temporary realization of potentially limitless contingencies. It does not ask about The Man or The World, but which man?; in which kind of world?; and why such a man in such a kind of world? (7)

Further characterizing science fiction, Suvin makes a clear distinction between the genre and fairy tales, which do not use "imagination as a means of understanding the tendencies latent in reality, but as an end sufficient unto itself and cut off from the real contingencies (…) it simply posits another world beside yours where some carpets do, magically, fly, and some paupers do, magically, become princes, and into which you cross purely by an act of faith and fancy" (8). In that sense, Suvin takes on an unusual standpoint when it comes to works such as *Star Wars*, which are commonly considered classic examples of science fiction, as he, based on his characterization of the genre, regards them as retrogression of science fiction into fairy tale. Moreover, Suvin foregrounds the distinction between science fiction and the fantasy tales of a Gothic and horror nature, by underlining that such tales fail to "establish a superordinated maleficent world of (their) own, causing a grotesque tension between arbitrary supernatural phenomena and the empirical norms they infiltrate" (8).

Finally, Suvin highlights the reflective property of science fiction: "in the twentieth century SF has moved into the sphere of anthropological and cosmological thought, becoming a diagnosis, a warning, a call to understanding and action, and most important - a mapping of possible alternatives" (12). Hereby, while addressing the genre's reflective approach on reality, Suvin points out the importance of social sciences for the genre, as opposed to the more commonly taken into account natural ones. By drawing on social sciences, science fiction implements a reflective approach of reality and on reality (10), it

both reflects empirical reality and simultaneously reflects on it by the means of fiction, novum and estrangement, in an attempt to convey a certain message, promote a needed change in reality or simply criticize it: "the aliens - utopians, monsters, or simply differing strangers - are a mirror to man just as the differing country is a mirror for his world. But the mirror is not only a reflecting one, it is also a transforming one, virgin womb and alchemical dynamo: the mirror is a crucible" (5). With this, Suvin once again stresses cognition and the readers' induced process of cognition and reflection, as the essence of classifying a literary work as a work of science fiction. Consequently, science fiction and novum are tied to the oppressed, the dominated, the labouring and the exploited in society (95).

The utilization of estrangement itself, regarding this given context, can then be in the sense of a device and in the sense of an attitude i.e., estrangement can be employed as an essential, mirroring literary tool in the genre and/or as a means of trying to critique, convey a message, warn and prompt change (Suvin 7). In conclusion, Suvin's theoretical work on the concept of cognitive estrangement argues: science fiction as the literary genre combining estrangement and cognition and novum as the main device of achieving cognitive estrangement, as well as outlines: the concept of cognitive estrangement as the process of defamiliarizing reality in order to reflect on it with a fresh perspective and the concept of the novum as the estranged element of empirical reality responsible for the creation of such an alternative, unfamiliar reality.

2.2. Criticism of Suvin's work and contemporary takes on cognitive estrangement and novum

Suvin's 1977 work on conceptualization and synthetization of the idea of cognitive estrangement, framework of science fiction as a genre and the novum as a literary device in

the *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre,* has since been criticized, and the proposed concepts themselves have been reimagined and reconceptualized. Firstly, most notable of such works is one of the American author and literary critic Samuel R. Delany's *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*, first published in 1977, in which he tackles the limitations to the linguistic model of science fiction and rejects the notion of estrangement being the process through which a new perspective of familiar ideas is accomplished. Delany proposes his idea on the functional framework of science fiction through a linguistic analysis of examples of science-fictional terms, sentences and plots. He questions how the coined science-fictional term "ornithopter" would differ from its similar objects in our empirical reality, such as a helicopter; how the coined science fictional sentence "the door dilated" would imply a difference of the functionality and role of such door from the functionality and role of the ones which we are familiar with and have used in the empirical reality; how the science-fictional plot of discovering that an amnesiac patient is in fact an alien would imply a difference between an amnesiac human and an amnesiac alien, a difference in the hospital's discovery of such a condition in either and how the hospital would be affected in either case (Delany 139-140). Delany does so to point out and propose the idea of science fiction's main literary device actually being the interaction of unusual signifiers of a syntagm with the rest of the linguistic structure, instead of estrangement of familiar concepts as theorized by Suvin. Delany elaborates that "the occurrence of unusual signifiers in the syntagm focuses our attention on the structures implied" (139), i.e., by placing an unusual term within a linguistic structure in a science-fictional work, the entire structure's meaning changes which forces the reader to reconsider what is being applied and how such an implication relates back to their experience of the empirical reality. "Once the new word has been absorbed into a sentence (…), neither the word, nor the sentence considered apart from the word, retains its old meaning. Signifier intrudes into the signified"

(140). It is important to note that although the unusual signifier impacts the meaning of the structure as a whole, it is the readers' imagination that finally creates what is being referenced and implied. Delany further argues that in the example of "the door dilated," the implied new, unfamiliar door and the implied new, unfamiliar way in which such a door functions are both imaginary referents, and to say that this referent meaning had been created by estrangement would be incorrect (141), Hence, Delany's main proposition is that the interaction of an unusual signifier with the rest of the structure is what creates a new meaning, i.e., a new reference. The mere unusual signifier itself, its mere presence, is not enough to create a new meaning and understanding implied, i.e., its mere presence does not estrange. Consequently, what thus distinguishes science fiction from the works of other genres is the manner in which unusual terms interact with the rest, on a linguistic level, or simply put the language of science fiction, rather than the mere inclusion of such unusual, or science-fictional terms and conventions. Altogether, Delany's conceptualization of the innerworkings of the science-fictional genre points to the importance of a closer linguistic analysis of such literary works and echoes Shklovsky's view on literature that foregrounds stylistic choices and devices being at the heart of interpreting literary work.

Further criticism and rework of the theoretical framework of science fiction was developed by the American writer and literary theorist Carl Freedman in *Science Fiction and Critical Theory* (first published in 1987). In said work, Freedman criticizes Suvin's work in the field, firstly stating that the genre of science fiction should not be viewed simply as a category in which to place certain literary works and from which to exclude such works that do not perfectly align with a certain theoretical framework of science fiction or which do not perfectly embody some theorized margins of the genre, but rather as a tendency within a work which then conceptualizes itself as a whole (Freedman 181-182). Furthermore, he touches on Suvin's distinguishment of science fiction from other genres, and proposes

differentiating science fiction from e.g., fantasy and Gothic literature on the basis of implying that such genres irrationally present alternatives to the empirical reality and that the discontinuities from the familiar and mundane are in such works inexplicable (187). When it comes to the outlining of his theory on the innerworkings of science fiction, Freedman, similarly to Delany, suggests that the connection of science-fictional motifs to the nonscience-fictional ones is what creates the science-fictional nature of a text, i.e. he states that the way in which science-fictional motifs connect to the nonscience-fictional ones "impel us to read the latter differently than we would read the language of mundane fiction" (185), simply put the science-fictional motifs signal the science-fictional nature of texts. Freedman also introduces an interesting novel idea regarding what could be regarded as new, unusual and unfamiliar within a science-fictional work, i.e. he states that what is thought of as universal regardless of the scenario it is placed in, can also in interaction with science-fictional motifs become completely different from how its empirically experienced, e.g. emotions are thought to be invariable in all possible settings and scenarios, but in connection to science-fictional motifs and in a certain context, even emotions can become different from what we empirically experience, for example in a scenario where they were being caused or controlled by some advanced technological gadget (186). Finally, Freedman emphasizes both the importance of critical theory in the interpretation of science fiction and the importance of the socially critical aspect of science fiction, especially considering the historical context of this literary situation under Western capitalism, hence providing a utopian approach to science fiction similar to the one of Suvin.

It is also important to note the feminist and queer lens of approach to the field of literary criticism regarding science fiction and its literary devices, exemplified by the work of the Canadian editor and academic Veronica Hollinger in "(Re)reading Queerly: Science Fiction, Feminism, and the Defamiliarization of Gender" (first published in 1999), which

offers a queer and feminist perspective on the issues of gender and sexuality, both in works of science fiction and on science fiction, while drawing on notable works of queer feminist philosophical theory such as Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. Hollinger calls attention to the embeddedness of heteronormativity and imposed gender roles as the universal defaults of the basic fabric of society and culture in theory and fiction. She further points out the idea that science fiction as a genre seems to be ideally suited to challenge societal norms such as compulsive heterosexuality, gender roles and gender binarism and questions why such concepts are not being defamiliarized and explored within the realm of science fiction. Ultimately, Hollinger calls for the inclusion of queer and feminist reading lenses in the critical theory discourse, criticizes a bias towards heterosexist and exclusionary readings that assume monolithic patriarchy as the universal norm, as this in addition risks further reinscribing of compulsory heteronormativity and gender binarity, and finally highlights the importance of intersecting queer theory and feminist theory when reading and analysing works through a feminist lens and perspective. Such readings of literary works enrich the spectrum of possible interpretations of literary works, this being especially important when it comes to works that aim to reflect society and reflect on society - like works of science fiction.

When it comes to the contemporary work in the field following the exemplified criticism, firstly, Suvin offers both a response to the criticism of his earlier work on science fiction, cognitive estrangement and the novum as well as a reconceptualization of his theoretical work, with a Marxist and utopian approach to science fiction, in *Defined by a Hollow: Essays on Utopia, Science Fiction and Political Epistemology* (first published in 2010). In particular, in the essay "Where Are We? How Did We Get Here? Is There Any Way Out? Or, News from the Novum," Suvin responds to the criticism and questions his postulates of the novum denoting that the empirical reality had negatively changed in the

meantime, hence changing the relation of e.g., the settings, inventions and science in science-fictional works to ones of the empirical reality. He further gives a Marxist critique of mass taste and argues that the science fiction genre had with time become adapted to the mass taste i.e., it became formulaic due to innovation only being in service of consumerism, and calls for the need of science fiction to gesture toward a desired future, in his opinion a Marxist one, thus calling for the novum to be in service of that purpose: "We need radically liberating novum only" (206).

In one of the essays included in *Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition, and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia*, titled "Revisiting Suvin's Poetics of Science Fiction," the British academic Patrick Parrinder, outlines and discusses Suvin's main arguments regarding cognition, estrangement and the novum e.g., the importance of "scientific soundness" for the genre and the idea of estrangement being a matter determined by the novum (as opposed by critics of Suvin's theory claiming that science fiction actually familiarizes supposedly strange worlds), as well as discusses Suvin's simultaneous affirmation and denial of aesthetic autonomy of science fiction from the empirical reality. Parrinder reestablishes science fiction as a genre of both cognition and estrangement, and states that for it to be cognitive it must first be estranged (39), as well as further points out that the role of estrangement should not be to simply present the readers with a new and unfamiliar world for the sake of entertainment, but to change the readers' outlook on their own world and its conditions - "But estranged fiction needs to change our view of our own condition, and not simply to momentarily dazzle us with a superficially unfamiliar world" (40).

To conclude, the critical literary discourse regarding science fiction, firstly foregrounds its particular stylistic and linguistic devices (either theorized as the novum, unusual linguistic signifiers or science-fictional subjects) which utilize motifs characterized

by newness and their interaction with the rest of the text, as well as the role of such particular linguistic choices in the interpretation of the work. Secondly, it discusses the roles of estrangement and cognition in the creation of the works of science fiction and in interpreting such works as readers. Finally, it highlights the reflective and critical role of science fiction, its ability to change the readers' outlook on their empirical reality and to convey messages about and to society, consequently also highlighting the importance of the way we interpret such works and the lens we approach them with. Ultimately, all theoretical and critical approaches point to the fact that reading science-fictional texts impacts our view of our own empirical reality, thus emphasizing the importance of discourse regarding the interpretation of science-fictional works and the importance of versatile interpretational work itself.

3. Cognitive estrangement and the novum in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

3.1. Critical discourse on Never Let Me Go

The current critical discourse on Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go*, albeit the critics discuss the novel's simultaneous ties to other literary genres as well, indicates the novel's application of components of the science-fictional structural framework, as outlined previously through the analysis of the theoretical and critical work on the science fiction genre and its inner workings. Specifically, what attention is called to, is the novel's employment of a reflective and critical approach of reality and on reality, making the novel,

as Suvin postulated, a reflective and transforming mirror, as well as consequently the novel's inclination to providing the readers with a different perspective i.e., changing their outlook. Moreover, what is pointed out by the critics of the novel is the essential role of particular stylistic choices in writing that lead to various different interpretations of the novel ultimately responsible for the impact on the readers' new perspective of themselves and their empirical reality, their society and their world's inner workings; as all authors discussed further approach the novel with a detailed linguistic analysis, each through their own particular lens. Ergo, what the novel therefore further employs is the science-fictional tendency to be tied to the oppressed, marginalized and dominated in society as well as the theorized anthropological role of the genre. Precisely, what the novel's critics all point out through various different lenses of approach to the text and its possible interpretations is that, firstly, the novel makes the readers recognize and examine their empirical reality and rethink their own lives in some aspect e.g., rethink what makes humans human (whether this entails empathy, our origins, our ethnicity, our reproduction etc.) i.e., rethink humanness through an exploration of imitated humanness, as the readers are regarded as the narrator's peers and are hence invited to identify with the novel's characters (not exclusively the clones) and the novel's setting. Secondly, what's highlighted is the narrative voice being given to a representative of a marginalized and oppressed group in order to show their hardship and suffering and evoke empathy in readers, as well as to examine the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressors, which also essentially incites the readers to examine such dynamics in their own environment. Finally, what the critics examine is the novel's challenging of certain constituents we regard as invariable and universal e.g., depending on their lens of analysis: empathy, childhood, heteronormativity, the definition of what makes humans human, life's purpose etc.

In particular, one of the critics of the novel, Shameem Black, examines humanness and empathy in the novel and how these constituents relate to their counterparts in our i.e., the readers' empirical reality, in her article "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics." Black argues an aesthetic innovation in *Never Let Me Go* in regard to our identification with the main protagonist and narrator and our empathy towards her i.e., she argues that the novel reinvents empathy for a posthumanist age. The novel does so, she illustrates, by being written in a way where the narrator Kathy, depicted as not fully human, an inhuman clone or an impersonator of humanness, assumes the readers to be her peers familiar with her lived experience, therefore being inhuman too e.g., "I don't know how it was where you were, but at Hailsham we had to have some form of medical almost every week" (Ishiguro 12). This way, the readers are invited to examine what is inhuman about them and their society i.e., what is manufactured, replicated, imitated, automated and mechanized about them and to empathize with Kathy, not by looking for what is human about her and her peers, but by relating to what is regarded as inhuman about them. To exemplify, the behaviour of the clones is automated in a sense that they do not rebel against the system that oppresses and exploits them, as they accept their fate and follow along with what they're supposed to do with resignation, such behaviour reflects for example the mechanization of humans as a consequence of technological development and capitalist production, thus Kathy illuminates the aspects of the readers' lives that are inhuman. Additionally, Black posits the novel as an allegory for global inequality, and precisely an allegory for the exploitation of workers in a multicultural Britain, highlighting once again the novel's aim to incite the readers' critical thinking, in this case in order to examine and recognize the dehumanization in our own world. Finally, Black critically approaches the novel's postulated empathetic purpose by raising questions about the viability of empathetic art, as even though empathy and identifying with others' experience is

deeply tied to humanness and human development, there's scepticism around works like *Never Let Me Go*, as they can turn out as exploitations of suffering and atrocities.

Similarly, critic Karl Shaddox examines humanness and empathy in the novel in his article "Generic Considerations in Ishiguro's 'Never Let Me Go'" but does so by considering the novel as a work of abolitionist and sentimental literature alongside SF. Shaddox compares the novel to the abolitionist writing of the early nineteenth century intended to evoke the readers' empathy towards the enslaved, as the novel's vital aim is to establish an emotional connection between the individual reader and the representative of the oppressed clones – Kathy, in order to sway the reader's viewpoint. Kathy's inviting first person narration in the novel parallels the "ambassadorial strategy" of abolitionist works, as she as a representative of an out-group speaks to the in-group with the goal of cultivating empathy for the out-group (Shaddox 459). Further comparison to sentimental writing stems from the themes of bonding and separating in the novel, as well as the prominence of sentimental memory when telling the story, where the strong desire for bonding comes about both between the clones and between the narrator and the reader, while the theme of separation comes about through various instances of losses and disconnections, such as the clones being orphans shunned by society or losing each other while being the only connections and loved ones they have ever had – the latter being the greatest threat in sentimental novels. Through these themes told in the form of sentimental memories, a calculated use of feelings like compassion and rage about the clones treatment appeals to the readers in a way a political movement cannot as this is an intimate, one person at a time approach where the readers are not shocked to learn that the clones are human but rather shocked that these emotional humans are clones. Another critic that argues the novel's critique of society and thus the change of the readers' outlook on everyday human injustices through presenting a similar parallel world, is Keith McDonald. In his article "Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's 'Never Let Me Go' as Speculative

Memoir," McDonald examines the novel by approaching it as an autobiographical memoir, arguing autobiographical works as an exchange between the writer and the reader where the reader agrees to accept the presented recounting of experience as the truth. He argues that the novel distances the author from the work through a feature of autobiography – meta referencing i.e., mimicking a sense of reality, thus leading the readers to imagine the novel's society as our own, hence echoing Delany's aforementioned argument of linguistic choices and interactions within the text leading the readers imagination to form a new perspective. Furthermore, McDonald argues the utilization of an autobiographical trope of retelling of childhood and schooling, and echoes Hollinger's and Freedman's argument of the defamiliarization of constituents regarded as static, invariable defaults, as he points out the novel's debunking of childhood and schooling as universal occurrences and their presentation as social constructs dependant on the surrounding culture, environment, time period etc.

Another critic discussing the novel's defamiliarization of constituents regarded as universal defaults and norms, including aforementioned schooling, is Rachel Carroll. In the chapter of her book *Rereading Heterosexuality: Feminism, Queer Theory and Contemporary Fiction* titled "Imitations of life: cloning, heterosexuality and the human in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go," Carroll approaches the novel through a queer interpretative lens and argues the novel's questioning of humanness by questioning contingencies of imitated humanness, and more specifically argues the defamiliarization of schooling through imitative schooling and of heteronormativity through non-normative heterosexuality. Moreover, Carroll rereads heterosexuality presented in the novel and interprets it as a narrative of performative passing within a heteronormative world and thus along with Freedman's applies Hollinger's theoretical approach i.e., of queer reading, noting the defamiliarization of heteronormativity and questioning what is default to humans. Precisely, Carroll proposes that the clones are schooled to imitate the "normal" humans, to imitate life and what it means to

be human, and to perform this culturally coded set of practices for the "normal," which includes performing to prove they have souls through art and love i.e., heterosexual coupledom, thus raising questions about heterosexuality as an integral default of being human and the performative nature of sexuality for the purpose of integration. Furthermore, what the critic proposes is that the clones' heterosexuality is non-normative, foremost due to heteronormativity as an institution being guided by the reproductive norm, which excludes clones who are genetically engineered to not be able to reproduce. Heteronormativity penalizes the clones' non-normative sexuality by denying them of heterosexual privileges such as heteronormative family and kinship structures and normative identity and culture, and by subjecting them to irrational prejudices, policing by unwritten rules and being compelled to pass as "normal." Consequently, due to the narrator's approach to the reader as a peer, the readers are invited to examine their own "imitative schooling" and performative behaviour in favour of integration, as well as to question the institution of heteronormativity.

Besides the former described approach to the nature of the clones' relationship to humans, another critic of the novel examines it through a theological and ethical lens of analysis. Tiffany Tsao proposes a palimpsestuous reading of the novel in her article "The Tyranny of Purpose: Religion and Biotechnology in Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go," positing the humans i.e., the creators of clones as gods and the clones as those gods' creations. Tsao discusses the novel's approach to biotechnological ethics from a theological viewpoint as the biotechnological advancements and their self-imposed possessions of souls, contrary to clones, elevate the humans in the novel to a status of somewhat immortal gods being capable of creating life, which raises questions about the clones' marginalization and mistreatment in such conditions, as well as the clones' life purpose. Reinterpreting the novel in this manner, and considering the novel being parallel to reality and the narrator's regard of the readers as peers, readers are incited to examine the raised questions about their own humanness in

regard to religion, religious experience and life's purpose (e.g., devotion to society and usefulness as life's purpose), the mistreatment of othered and marginalized groups, as well as questions about humanity's responsibilities in regard to the ethics surrounding biotechnology and the ethics itself (e.g., making usefulness the purpose of biotechnology).

Additionally, taking all of the above presented critical approaches and interpretations into account, what could thus be proposed as the novel's estranged elements i.e., novums are e.g.: the clones' attitude towards death, the afterlife and religion, the clones' relationships in regard to their hyper independence on each other when it comes to identity and mere existence as well as in regard to their non-normative sexuality, the contingencies of the clones' humanness, or the clones' childhood i.e., their imitative upbringing and performative behaviour.

3.2. *Close reading analysis of cognitive estrangement and novum in* Never Let Me Go

To be concise, I will concentrate my reading on only a few passages. Applying Hollinger's call for including a queer reading approach and questioning the defaultness of heteronormativity when approaching sexuality in science fiction literary works, as well as echoing Carroll's work on the matter, the clones' heterosexuality can be argued as one of the novums of *Never Let Me Go*. Precisely what can be argued as the novum i.e., a novelty differing from our empirical reality hence differing the novel's world from our own, is Ishiguro's positioning of heterosexuality as the universal default in human sexual practices and the clones' heterosexuality being treated as queerness by the humans in the novel. Firstly, when it comes to the issue of heterosexuality as an invariable default Ishiguro posits heterosexuality as the only possible and natural outcome, as an inherent one, when it comes

to the clones' sexuality, which differs from our empirical reality in which being heterosexual is not an inherent trait, the only possible outcome, universal across all of society, universal to everyone. Since the clones' sexuality, their romantic relationships and heterosexual coupledom (and e.g. rumours about donation-delaying deferrals being only about a boy and a girl proving their love, or the fact that they are excluded from the rest of society and the possibility of compulsively learning behaviour while growing up, but are regardless still inherently exclusively heterosexual) play a significant role in their identities and lives in the novel, and a significant part in the novel as a whole, it would be important to also provide a reading that includes an analysis through a queer theory lens.

Additionally, it is important to challenge the imposed heteronormativity and heterosexuality as default, as all of the exemplified novel's critics pointed out, because of the narrator's i.e., Kathy's approach to the readers as peers who share her experience, in this sense if the clones' sexuality is implied as a universal default, that imposes further reinscribing of heteronormativity onto the readers and onto the real world. Furthermore, if the novel, as argued by its critics, explores the contingencies of fabricated humanness, which raises the question of what makes humans human, the novel again further implies a harmful discriminative notion of heterosexuality being an essential part of humanness.

The following quote can serve as one of the examples of how, on a linguistic level, it is implied that the heterosexuality of the clones is not in question, making heterosexuality inherent, thus making the notion of inherent heterosexuality (as opposed to inherent variety in human sexuality in our empirical reality) a possible novum; "That's why I decided to tell her about the one nighters. I told her how they'd happened without my really wanting them to; and how, even though we couldn't have babies from doing it, the sex had done funny things to my feelings, just as Miss Emily had warned. Then I said to her: Ruth, I wanted to ask you. Do you ever get so you just really have to do it? With anybody almost?" (Ishiguro 60). In this

particular quote where Kathy confides in Ruth, inherent heterosexuality is implied with the words "even though we couldn't have babies from doing it" as well as with implying that this was their education on the topic, thus suggesting to the readers that "anybody" means any male clone. The understanding of "anybody" as any male clone in this quote is also impacted with the wider context of the novel, as e.g.: all relationships amongst clones are heterosexual (e.g. all veteran couples at the Cottages like Susie and Greg or Chrissie and Rodney) (54), all rumours about deferrals are about a boy and a girl proving their love (e.g. "What they said," Chrissie continued, "was that if you were a boy and a girl, and you were in love with each other, really, properly in love, and if you could show it, then the people who run Hailsham, they sorted it out for you. They sorted it out so you could have a few years together before you began your donations." (…) "When we were in Wales," Chrissie went on, "the students at the White Mansion. They'd heard of this Hailsham couple, the guy had only a few weeks left before he became a carer. And they went to see someone and got everything put back three years. They were allowed to go on living there together, up at the White Mansion, three years straight, didn't have to go on with their training or anything. Three years just to themselves, because they could prove they were properly in love") (70), all the couples are interested in the heterosexual couples' deferrals:

> Then, I think it was around April, Alice F. became the first of our Hailsham bunch to leave, and not long after that Gordon C. did too. They'd both asked to start their training, and went off with cheerful smiles, but after that, for our lot anyway, the atmosphere at the Cottages changed forever. Many veterans, too, seemed affected by the flurry of departures, and maybe as a direct result, there was a fresh spate of rumours of the sort Chrissie and Rodney had spoken about in Norfolk. Talk went around of students, somewhere else in the country, getting deferrals because they'd

shown they were in love—and now, just sometimes, the talk was of students with no

connections to Hailsham, (86)

as well as some other particular statements e.g., Ruth referencing Kathy's "one nighters"

while telling her that Tommy would never date her as she has been with other men (95).

The notion of the inherence of heterosexuality amongst clones is also implied later in

the novel when Ruth references the conversation, exemplified with the initial analysed quote,

by stating that she admits she had felt the same way as Kathy, while again using the word

"anybody," and by stating the normality of such feelings amongst clones at the cottages;

"When you used to tell me, back then, how sometimes it got so you wanted to do it with

virtually anyone." (…) "I knew how it worried you," she said. "I should have told you. I

should have said how it was the same for me too, just the way you described it" (107-108).

Within the listed quotes, utilizing Shklovsky's, Delany's and Freedman's premise on the

interaction of science-fictional motifs with the non-science-fictional ones, through the

interplay of the notion that the clones represent fabricated humanness and the notion that they

are all inherently heterosexual, the conclusions of heterosexuality being an innate component

of what it means to be human (particularly implied with having to prove having souls to

regular humans at deferrals by proving heterosexual coupledom) and of heterosexuality being

an invariable default for everyone arise, hence defamiliarizing the versatility of human

sexualities present in our empirical reality. This also attests to Freedman's and McDonald's

premises on the ability of estranging nonscience-fictional motifs that are regarded as

unchangeable, so as to incite the readers to rethink such matters. In this particular case, the

readers are incited to, through the estrangement of human sexuality as monolithic and

invariable, incited identification with the characters and view of the clones as mechanized

beings doing what they're "supposed" to be doing or even impersonating humanness (as

theorized by the novel's critics), examine the implication of default heterosexuality, the

enforcement of heteronormativity in their empirical reality and the implication of heterosexuality being a trait or proof of humanness.

Secondly, when it comes to the issue of the clones' heterosexuality being treated as queerness by the humans in the novel, what it refers to is the clones' non-normative heterosexuality being penalized by humans. The issue represents another possible novum of the novel, a novelty differing the novel's world from reality, as heterosexuality is not ostracized and marginalized in any form in the real world. In the novel, as theorized by Carroll, the clones' sexuality is regarded as non-normative based on the reproductive norm of heteronormativity i.e., the clones are genetically modified to not be able to reproduce ("even though we couldn't have babies from doing it") (Ishiguro 58) thus making their heterosexuality non-normative and penalized for being such. The following quote from the novel, where Kathy recalls one of her guardians – Miss Emily's lecture, exemplifies the described issue:

> We had to be extremely careful about having sex in the outside world, especially with people who weren't students, because out there sex meant all sorts of things. Out there people were even fighting and killing each other over who had sex with whom. And the reason it meant so much—so much more than, say, dancing or table-tennis—was because the people out there were different from us students: they could have babies from sex. That was why it was so important to them, this question of who did it with whom. And even though, as we knew, it was completely impossible for any of us to have babies, out there, we had to behave like them. We had to respect the rules and treat sex as something pretty special. (39)

The quote shows how the reproductive norm of heteronormativity differentiates the clones' (the students') sexuality from the "regular" humans' sexuality i.e., the clones' heterosexuality

from the humans' heterosexuality with the following words "because the people out there were different from us students: they could have babies from sex," thus making the clones' heterosexuality non-normative. The quote also demonstrates how the clones' non-normative heterosexuality makes the humans perceive it in the same manner queerness is perceived, by regarding theirs as special in comparison – based on their ability to reproduce. This is shown by stating that the humans' sexuality carried a lot more meaning ("Out there people were even fighting and killing each other over who had sex with whom. And the reason it meant so much—so much more than, say, dancing or table-tennis...") and by regarding the humans' sexuality as special ("sex as something pretty special"), which are, in reality, the talking points and arguments used to dismiss queerness as sexual deviance in place of acknowledging queer sexualities as valid and meaningful in spite of not meeting the reproductive norm.

Altogether, the issue of heterosexuality being treated as queerness is another example of estrangement being created by the interplay of science-fictional motifs and nonscience-fictional ones in *Never Let Me Go*, as the genetically modified clones alter the imposed norms of heterosexuality i.e., heteronormativity, thus estranging heterosexuality and its status in the empirical reality. This estranged view on heterosexuality and its norms through the lens of queerness and its marginalization depicts another example of the possible defamiliarization of constituents being regarded as unchangeable, as the novel depicts a sort of "queer heterosexuality". With this type of a queer rereading of the novel, that raises questions about heteronormativity, heterosexual prerogative to reproduction and marginalization of queerness, the readers are incited to examine the institution of heteronormativity, heterosexuality as a normative identity and the mistreatment of queer people through the empathic identification with the clones, stemming from Kathy's intimate narration where she regards the reader as a peer. The stated conclusion establishes and argues the novel as a form

of empathetic art that promotes rethinking humanness and questioning mistreatment, thus echoing what Black, Shaddox and Tsao pointed out about the novel.

In short, the estrangement of heterosexuality in the novel creates a new outlook on the matter in the readers' experienced reality, as theorized by the critics of the science-fictional genre, making the novel, as Suvin postulated, an anthropological work reflective of reality and on reality, tied to the oppressed and dominated, and a tool for critiquing society and conveying a message to it. In accordance with Suvin's reconceptualization of the novum, both of the above argued novums are in service of changing the world for the better.

4. Analysis of cognitive estrangement and novum in *Black Mirror*: "Men Against Fire"

The issues of dehumanization and marginalization, and the basis on which people are willing to commit atrocities, lead me to analyse another example of science-fictional work, which also utilizes the science-fictional devices of cognitive estrangement and the novum, but in a different manner in comparison to Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go*. Thus, the following section analyses the usage of cognitive estrangement and the novum in the science-fictional television series *Black Mirror*, precisely in the creation of the episode titled "Men Against Fire," while drawing on the theoretical work on the inner workings of the science-fictional genre presented earlier in the thesis. In said episode,

written by Charlie Brooker, directed by Jakob Verbruggen, and based on S.L.A. Marshall's book about men's willingness to kill in World War II titled *Men Against Fire*, we first see a soldier Koinange (nicknamed Stripe) being woken up from a dream in order to go on his first "roach hunt" as there's news of said roaches breaking into a store to steal food supplies. Upon arriving to the village where it had happened, the villagers whom the food was stolen from say that "the roaches" have destroyed their leftover food supplies by even coming into contact with them. The villagers then inform the soldiers that the roaches ran away in the direction of Parn Heidekker's house, whom the soldiers refer to as "a religious freak" ("Men Against Fire" 4:40), as well as saying that he has "some interesting views on roaches" (5:00). The data on Heidekker and his house is then sent to the soldiers "Mass system" i.e., a technological system implanted in the soldiers that enables downloading data into the soldiers' brains and laying it out in front of their eyes in the form of a hologram. In the following scene, the soldiers enter Heidekker's house and as they search the house looking for the roaches and their commander talks to Heidekker and questions him about where he is hiding them, symbolically, shots of crosses on the walls are shown, as well as a shot of a painting titled "A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary from the Persecution of the Druids," by William Holman Hunt. The commander then says to Heidekker: "Cross on the wall there. You got principles. Think all life is sacred. And I get it. I agree. All life is sacred so...you even got to protect the roaches. Right? It's not their fault they're like that. (…) Every roach you save today, you condemn God knows how many people to despair and misery tomorrow. You can't still see them as human. Understandable sentiment, granted, but it's misguided. We gotta take them out if humankind is gonna carry on in this world. That's just the hard truth. Gotta make sacrifices." (9:04-10:55) The scenes of the commander's speech are intertwined with scenes of the soldiers finding the roaches' hiding spot i.e., "a

roach nest" (10:14). Stripe encounters the roaches for the first time, and we see disfigured humanoids with sharp teeth who hiss and screech as they're holding some type of a makeshift flashlight device, which they're trying to point towards the soldiers' faces. As Stripe is being attacked by one of the roaches, the roach is trying to use the device on him, and after Stripe stabs him to death, he grabs the device to inspect it, while pointing the flashlight towards his eyes, he starts hearing high pitched whistling noises. In the following scene, one of the soldiers threatens to kill Heidekker, but the rest disagree with killing "a civilian", and Stripe says it would stay with them for the rest of their life (14:22). Before torching Heidekker's house, the soldiers set free of the bird living inside the house, thus showing they had sympathy for the bird and the civilian, but not the roaches. As they leave they brag about how many roaches they had just killed or "popped" (15:37) and how they did it, then one of the soldiers, Raiman, says that Stripe will have sweet dreams, implying that he will get rewarded for his killings that night; "Sweet dreams for this asshole. Gonna get a treat tonight." (15:56) That night Stripe dreams about the girl from the beginning of the episode, but the dream glitches and is intertwined with shoots of blood. The following day, while the soldiers are in training, Stripe keeps hearing the aforementioned high pitched noise, making him distracted and irritated, so the commander motivates him by repeating: "Strong and pure. Strong and pure." (19:21) Stripe later reports to "the sick bay" (19:57), and his holographic system and his "Mass implant" get examined. Following the examination, Stripe is told to talk to Arquette, the Army's psychologist, and as Stripe tells him what had happened at Heidekker's house, Arquette marks that the roach Stripe had killed is to be referred to as "it" not a "he" (23:05), as well as questions how Stripe felt about killing the roach and whether he felt any regret afterwards. Stripe voices his concerns about his Mass system glitching and says that he feels "like something was up with it" (24:44), to which

Arquette responds with: "it'll pass" (25:03) and "let's get you a good sleep tonight, okay? A real good sleep" (25:07). That night Stripe is rewarded with an erotic dream, but the system glitches again and wakes him up, he then sees all the other soldiers' eyes and hands twitching in sync, thus realising they're having dreams as rewards as well. As Heidekker revealed another hiding spot for the roaches to the Army, Stripe is sent to examine it, upon arriving his Mass system completely malfunctions, and he stops seeing what others, the commander and Raiman, see through the implant and the hologram, which is depicted by his eyes looking different from theirs and his sense of smell functioning again. At that moment, commander Medina is killed by the roaches, and in the scene that follows, Stripe and Raiman go into the roaches' hiding spot and find the flashlight looking devices that the roaches use, as well as the blueprints for the devices depicting how they impact the eyes and the brain. Upon further inspection of the building, Stripe encounters a civilian looking woman and reassures her that he is not going to hurt her. As he lets her leave the room and tells her to get away from the roaches and go somewhere safe – Raiman shoots her. Stripe is upset about Raiman killing a civilian, and sees her killing even more of them. At that moment, the viewers realize that what Raiman sees as monstrous looking roaches, Stripe sees as regular looking civilians and villagers i.e., regular uninfected humans. Later in the episode, Stripe learns how the Mass implants affect the soldiers' perception of "the roaches" from one of them, as well as how the roaches' devices impact the implants, as shown in the following dialogue:

"Catarina: Your implants. Your army implants. Stripe: The Mass system? Catarina: They put it in your head to help you fight, and when it works, you see us as something other. One of us, Luka, was making a... a machine. Light flashes. Said it can interfere with the implant. Stripe: You're roaches? But I've seen roaches. I've seen them, they're

fucking... They're like, uh... Catarina: Animals? Stripe: No, they're monsters. I've seen

them. Catarina: The implant made you see this." (41:22-42:04)

Upon his Mass system malfunctioning and learning the truth, Stripe ends up in the Army's

asylum and learns the full truth behind the Mass system and "the roaches" from Arquette:

"It's a lot easier to pull the trigger when you're aiming at the bogeyman, hmm? It's not

just your eyes, though. Takes care of your other senses, too. You don't hear the

shrieks. You don't smell the blood and the shit. (…) Do you have any idea the amount

of shit that's in their DNA? Higher rates of cancer. Muscular dystrophy. MS. SLS.

Substandard IQ. Criminal tendencies. Sexual deviances. It's all there. The screening

shows it. Is that what you want for the next generation? Don't feel bad about doing

your job. The villagers won't do it. The folks back home won't do it. They don't have

Mass. Mass lets you do it. You. You're protecting the bloodline. And that, my friend,

is an honour." (50:29-51:40)

In this episode, which is partially described here, the creator took the normalized

common political practice of dehumanizing, villainizing and deeming inferior the opposing

side (i.e., certain group of people) put in use to justify attacking them, and estranged it by

introducing the Mass implant as the novum. Dehumanization is estranged by depicting it as a

product of a reality augmenting technological advancement, rather than a product of

villainizing, deeming a group of people as inferior and instilling fear of the group in others, as

well as by being quite literal and visible, as the villainized group of people is dehumanized,

not only metaphorically and cognitively, but also physically, as they are physically being

seen as aggressive monstrous humanoids with disfigured faces and sharp teeth who only

communicate through hissing and screeching. This unfamiliar dehumanization is achieved by

the means of a technologically advanced reality-altering device, which can be argued as

familiar to the viewers and not a completely unfamiliar concept as e.g., reality augmenting

headsets with holograms do exist in our empirical reality and artificial intelligence is actually being fed our social biases and bigoted views in our empirical reality, therefore the novum of the episode can be argued as a form of an accelerated novum, which means that the novum is not a complete novelty different from our lived experience, but rather an extrapolated element of the present in its exaggerated form, shown in its full developmental potential in order to depict what it might lead to, as Steven Shaviro theorized in his essay on accelerationism titled *No Speed Limit* (Shaviro 2). The episode thus, does use a science-fictional motif as its novum, as Suvin had initially theorized the novum to be, but it in order for it to have estranging properties it employs and interplays with accelerationism, hence creating a novel type of the novum, an accelerated novum. Moreover, the episode's novum and estrangement echo Freedman's postulates on the matter, as the technological device - the Mass implant and its Mass system, estrange emotions and perception i.e., the interaction of the science-fictional motif and the non-science fictional motif creates estrangement, precisely an estrangement of a matter considered to be of invariable framework of functioning regardless of the context – of emotions and perception. The said familiar element i.e., augmented reality and its bias fed artificial intelligence, is both cognitively estranged and accelerated, shown as an unfamiliar futuristic technological product in which our faulty bigoted perceptions are encoded, thus revealing the hidden norms and premises already existent in our empirical reality. The episode thus echoes Brecht's premise on defamiliarization: "a representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar" (Brecht 192). Cognitive estrangement serves as the narrative's critical attitude towards this dehumanizing and othering practice and towards prompting understanding of the oppressed and dominated. Conclusively, cognitive estrangement in the series' episode is achieved by taking the familiar and realized matters (that are to be criticized) and estranging them, while simultaneously extrapolating them to reveal their hidden norms and premises (James and

Mendlesohn 118), which is often accompanied by another device of the genre – accelerationism i.e., such elements of the present are extrapolated in order "to consider what they might lead to if allowed to reach their full potential" (Shaviro 2). Consequently, the series attains a reflective approach of reality and on reality, and acts, like Suvin puts it, as not only a reflecting mirror for the audience and society in general, but also a transforming one (Suvin 5). In comparison with the cognitive estrangement and novum in *Never Let Me Go*, the novel's novums are non-science fictional motifs, as argued by Freedman and McDonald, estranged by the interplay of science-fictional motifs and nonscience-fictional ones, while in "Men Against Fire," the novum is a science-fictional motif, as argued by Suvin, estranged by the same interplay of opposing motifs, as argued by Shklovsky, Delany and Freedman, but with the addition of accelerationism. Although stated only briefly here, the idea of an "accelerated novum" could be an interesting contribution to the scholarly debate.

5. Conclusion

Through the analysis and interpretation of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* and an episode of the series *Black Mirror* - "Men Against Fire," while utilizing theoretical and critical work on the concepts of cognitive estrangement and novum and on the novel itself, both the novel and the series' episode reveal to give new interpretations of what the novum could be and how it could be defined. In the novel, the estrangement does not arise from the mere presence of science-fictional motifs, such as clones, organ harvesting and a dystopian

setting, rather it is created by the interplay of science-fictional motifs and non-science fictional ones, on the level of linguistic and stylistic choices in writing. What is estranged in the novel, are nonscience-fictional motifs usually regarded as universal invariable defaults that remain unchanged in any given context. The novel thus creates an interpretation of the novum as an estranged version of a nonscience-fictional motif regarded as a default in the empirical reality. In the series' episode, the estrangement does arise from a science-fictional motif, but the said motif is not a completely unfamiliar novelty, instead it is an accelerated version of a motif extrapolated from reality, exaggerated in order to explore its full developmental potential. Thus, the episode does employ a science-fictional motif as its novum, but in order for it to have estranging properties it interplays with accelerationism, hence creating a new version of the novum i.e., an accelerated novum. Another particularity about the episode's novum is that it estranges nonscience-fictional motifs regarded as invariable defaults regardless of the context in the empirical reality. The episode's novum can conclusively be interpreted as an exaggerated version of a science-fictional motif familiar to the audience from their empirical reality created by accelerationism in order to have estranging properties. In comparison, *Never Let Me Go* then utilizes an estranged nonscience-fictional motif regarded as an invariable default as the novum, while "Men Against Fire" utilizes what I call an "accelerated novum." Aside from both works creating new interpretations of estrangement and the novum, they also both, firstly, incite the audience to examine their perspective on the matters discussed in the works, questions raised from the works and matters depicted in the works parallel to their empirical reality, secondly they both reflect of reality and on reality, and finally they both serve as tools of conveying a message to society.

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Summary

This BA thesis paper analyses and compares the utilization of science-fictional concepts of cognitive estrangement and novum in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* and an episode of the *Black Mirror* television series titled "Men Against Fire", according to different theoretical and critical approaches to the science fiction genre and said concepts, and argues that the novel and the episode's narrative produce new interpretations of the concepts of estrangement and novum.

Key words: science fiction, cognitive estrangement, novum, *Never Let Me Go*, *Black Mirror*

Sažetak

Ovaj završni rad donosi analizu i usporedbu načina korištenja znanstveno-fantastičnih koncepata kognitivnog otuđenja i novuma u romanu Kazua Ishigura *Never Let Me Go* i epizodi televizijske serije Black Mirror naziva "Men Against Fire", na temelju različitih teorijsko-kritičkih pristupa znanstvenoj fantastici kao žanru i navedenim konceptima istog te postavlja tezu da spomenuti roman i radnja spomenute epizode stvaraju nove reinterpretacije koncepata kognitivnog otuđenja i novuma.

Ključne riječi: znanstvena fantastika, kognitivno otuđenje, novum, *Never Let Me Go*, *Black Mirror*

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Split, 22.09.2023.

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Znanstveno područje: *Humanističke znanosti*

Znanstveno polje: *Engleski jezik i književnost*

Vrsta rada: *završni rad*

Mentor/ica rada:

izv. prof. dr. sc. Brian Daniel Willems

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