

Never Let Me Go - Kazuo Ishiguro

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Abstract

Japanese-born British author Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005 novel, *Never Let Me Go*, deeply criticizes the inhumanity of colonization with the story of a group of clone children bred specifically for the use of their body parts. While the concept of British empire is generally thought of in the context of the seizure of property, *Never Let Me Go* takes colonization to a disturbing and intimate level that encourages the reader to not only empathize with a loss of surroundings, but with the loss of bodily free will, equality, and the denial of authenticity. Further, Ishiguro challenges traditional post-colonial schools of thought that emphasize resistance by instead illustrating the ruthless method of colonization through pacification of its subjects.

A novel is a long, fictional narrative which describes intimate human experiences. The novel in the modern era usually makes use of a literary prose style, and the development of the prose novel at this time was encouraged by innovations in printing, and the introduction of cheap paper, in the 15th century. The novel is today the longest genre of narrative prose fiction, followed by the novella. However, in the 17th century, critics saw the romance as of epic length and the novel as its short rival. A precise definition of the differences in length between these types of fiction, is, however, not possible. The requirement of length has been traditionally connected with the notion that a novel should encompass the "totality of life."

"*Never Let Me Go* is a 2005 dystopian science fiction novel by Nobel Prize-winning British author Kazuo Ishiguro. A Dystopia is a community or society that is undesirable or frightening. It is translated as "not-good place". Dystopian societies appear in many artistic works, particularly in stories set in the future. Some of the most famous examples are George Orwell's 1984 and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Dystopias are often characterized by dehumanization, totalitarian governments, environmental disaster, or other characteristics associated with a cataclysmic decline in society. Dystopian societies appear in many sub-genres of fiction and are often used to draw attention to real-world issues regarding society, environment, politics, economics, religion, psychology, ethics, science, or technology. However, some authors also use the term to refer to actually-existing societies, many of which are or have been totalitarian states, or societies in an advanced state of collapse and disintegration. Postcolonial literature is the literature by people from formerly colonised countries. It exists on all continent's except Antarctica. Postcolonial literature often addresses the problems and

consequences of the decolonization of a country, especially questions relating to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people, and themes such as racialism and colonialism. A range of literary theory has evolved around the subject.

Migrant literature and postcolonial literature show some considerable overlap. However, not all migration takes place in a colonial setting, and not all postcolonial literature deals with migration. A question of current debate is the extent to which postcolonial theory also speaks to migration literature in non-colonial settings.

Kazuo Ishiguro is one of the most celebrated contemporary fiction authors in the English-speaking world, having received four Man Booker Prize nominations and winning the 1989 award for his novel *The Remains of the Day*. His 2005 novel, *Never Let Me Go*, was named by Time as the best novel of 2005 and included in its list of the 100 best English-language novels from 1923 to 2005. His seventh novel, *The Buried Giant*, was published in 2015. Growing up in a Japanese family in the UK was crucial to his writing, as he says, enabling him to see things from a different perspective to many of his British peers.

In 2017, the Swedish Academy awarded Ishiguro the Nobel Prize in Literature, describing him in its citation as a writer "who, in novels of great emotional force, has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world".

Andrew Garfield believes the story of *Never Let Me Go* is about humans, and exploring "what it is to have a soul, and how you prove what a soul is"; he says he enjoys the way the novel is a "call to arms" about the positives of life. He adds that its message could hopefully remind people that they have a choice when they arise in the morning whether to pursue their own choice of activities for the day, or to do what they should do or are obliged to do. Keira Knightley feels that the film's story is alarming, but has said that the novel is "more about humanity's ability to look the other way". "You know in fact that if your morals can go out the window if you think you can survive in a certain way, whatever your morals may be". Just imagine that you can clone a person for organs which is impossible for the clone to donate cause they do have a soul.

In biology, cloning is the process of producing similar populations of genetically identical individuals that occurs in nature when organisms such as bacteria, insects, plants or animals reproduce asexually. Cloning in biotechnology refers to processes used to create copies of DNA fragments (molecular cloning), cells (cell cloning), or organisms (organism cloning). The term also refers to the production of multiple copies of a product such as digital media or software.

Human cloning and its ethics are foundational themes in *Never Let Me Go*. Main character Kathy attends a special school for clones called Hailsham, where she's taught to passively accept her fate. Only later does she learn that the general population is debating whether or not clones have souls—a fact that she herself assumed to be obvious. Ultimately, every clone in *Never Let Me Go* meets the same fate: after undergoing too many "donations," or surgeries in which their organs are harvested, clones die in the hospital. Clones are informed of

their fates at an early age and taught to accept it, which makes death a mere matter of course in their world. The theme of art grows in importance as the novel progresses. In the beginning, the students at Hailsham prize artistic talent, with the result that Tommy, who lacks in artistic ability, gets teased by the other students. Only later do Kathy and Tommy learn that their art was used by the guardians at the school to argue that clones have souls—a subject of some debate. *Never Let Me Go* is set in a dystopian world in which human clones are created so that they can donate their organs as young adults. The novel follows the life story of Kathy, a clone who is raised at a boarding school for future “donors.” It is related in flashback: Kathy is now thirty-one and about to start her first donations. For the past eleven years, she has worked as a “carer,” a nurse and companion to clones who are in between donations.

“But these days, of course, there are fewer and fewer donors left who I remember, and so in practice, I haven’t been choosing that much”

Kathy reminisces about her time at Hailsham. Her two most important friends were Ruth, a charismatic but manipulative and dishonest “queen bee,” and Tommy, a kind boy with a bad temper who is disliked by the other students. Kathy relates a number of anecdotes about how her relationships with Ruth and Tommy change over time.

Hailsham places a great emphasis on art, writing, and other forms of “creativity.” A mysterious woman named Madame comes periodically to take the students’ best artwork away to an off-campus “Gallery.” Tommy is not particularly good at these things and never gets pieces into the Gallery, which is part of why he is ostracized. One day when he is thirteen, Miss Lucy, a teacher and guardian, informs Tommy that it is all right if he has trouble being creative because it does not matter anyway. Kathy is shocked by this.

“Why Should I Care?”

Kathy relates several anecdotes about Ruth’s pathological lying. At one point, Ruth pretends to be talented at chess when she does not actually know how to play. At another, she pretends that a pencil case was a gift from her favorite teacher when in fact she bought it for herself. Nevertheless, Kathy becomes good friends with her, and when she loses her favorite cassette tape—which features a song called “Never Let Me Go,” —Ruth tries to help her find it.

One day, Miss Lucy tries to explain to the students about how tragic and difficult their lives will be once they become donors. However, the students are unable to process the information. Around age sixteen, Tommy and Ruth begin dating each other. Kathy is slightly jealous but tries to hide her feelings for Tommy. A few months after Tommy and Ruth get together, the students graduate from Hailsham and go to live at the Cottage, a more relaxed holding facility where the students are free to drive and otherwise act as they wish.

At the Cottages, Ruth becomes fixated on impressing the older students, or ‘veterans.’ Two of these veterans, Chrissie and Rodney, take Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy on a trip to Norfolk because Rodney believes he has found Ruth’s “original,” the person from whom she was cloned. On the trip, Chrissie and Rodney confront the younger students about a rumor that if two Hailsham students are truly in love, they can get their donations deferred so they might have a

few years together. No one has heard of this program, but Ruth pretends that she knows all about it.

Tommy and Kathy split from the rest of the group. At Tommy's suggestion, they look in secondhand stores for the favorite music tape that Kathy lost so many years ago. They find it and have an emotional moment together. Ruth begins to notice the growing affection between Kathy and Tommy and does what she can to sabotage the budding relationship. She tells Tommy that Kathy dislikes his drawings and tells Kathy that Tommy could never fall in love with someone who has had casual sex, as Kathy has.

Kathy is saddened by the situation, so she voluntarily leaves the Cottages to begin her career training. Acceptance is one of the stronger themes in Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go*. It is also one of the more annoying themes, according to many critics. Several years later, rumors begin to circulate that Hailsham has closed. One day, Kathy encounters an old friend from Hailsham who informs her that Ruth has begun her donations and is doing poorly. Despite their tumultuous relationship when they were young, Kathy volunteers to become Ruth's carer.

Ruth asks Kathy to take her to see an abandoned boat several hours away. Kathy agrees, and they stop to visit Tommy, who has also begun his donations. Tommy's "recovery center" is near the boat, and Kathy suspects this is why Ruth wanted to make the trip. When the trio is back together, Ruth apologizes for keeping Kathy and Tommy apart. She encourages them to apply for a deferral so they can have a few years together, and gives them the address of Madame, whom she believes will be able to help.

Shortly after this, Ruth dies. Kathy becomes Tommy's carer. By this point, Tommy has made three organ donations and is approaching his fourth, which clones generally do not survive. Kathy and Tommy go to visit Madame, who kindly tells them that the deferral program never existed. She explains that Hailsham was a "progressive" school, and that she and the other guardians were actually activists for the humane treatment of clones. The emphasis on artwork was to show the public that the clones had souls. However, the humane-treatment movement has petered out and Hailsham has lost its funding.

"Ruth wanted the other thing for us", Tommy repeated

On the way back to the recovery center, Tommy is overcome with emotion and throws a tantrum. However, he gets past this and comes to accept that he will die soon. Because he is suffering from increasingly gruesome medical problems, he asks Kathy to stop being his carer. Kathy reluctantly agrees, and she bids farewell to Tommy as he gets ready to make his fourth donation.

"Say you'll never let me go might be the last cry for tommy".

Back in present day, Kathy is about to make her first donation herself. She is calm and even happy about this, because it will give her a chance to reflect on her life. She has only permitted herself one "indulgence": a few weeks after Tommy dies, she goes to mourn him in a field in Norfolk. There, she imagines that all the things she has lost—most importantly, Tommy—

–will return to her. The lines between love, sex, and friendship are often blurred in *Never Let Me Go*.

The experience of diving into an Ishiguro novel becomes a process of excavation, of uncovering memories that the narrator has meticulously buried over a lifetime. But don't expect any big reveal; instead, we must be satisfied with fragments of truth. The author's gift lies in his ability to use those fragments to construct a portrait, which, in the end, resembles something more of a mirror. That truth implicates us as much as it does the characters in their fictional realm.

References

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