



## THE END OF MAN: THE ANTI-ANTHROPOCENTRIC VISION IN ISHIGURO'S "NEVER LET ME GO"

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**Paper Received On:** 25 SEPTEMBER 2022

**Peer Reviewed On:** 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

**Published On:** 1 OCTOBER 2022

### Abstract

*The paper focuses on exploring Kazuo Ishiguro's novel 'Never Let Me Go' using the theme of posthumanism. The objective would be to make an analogy between humanism and posthumanism and concentrate upon the shifting of focus or decentering from the human to the other non-human entities and study through different perspectives other than the human. The persistent shifting of borders to include a greater number of beings in the network or web of existence is the key matter running throughout the paper. The ever-plying transcendence towards the frontier or periphery and no concrete demarcation between the ontological boundaries is the aspect that we need to give light to and make our subject of study. How Ishiguro's novel does so even without making use of the very term posthumanism is to be looked upon with an amazing sense of wonder. What draws more attention is how schools of thought resemble highlighting a similitude and cutting borders.*

**Keywords:** human, posthuman, analogy, soul, clone



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In Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go", the author brings to the fore the story of the clones who are humans who were previously thought to be without 'souls'. The purpose of encouraging these students to contribute drawings and poetry to the art gallery was to find out whether they had "souls" at all. This trend highlights the secondary position accorded to any individual deviating from the standard human even though it is only on the basis of mode of reproduction. The clones are considered to be nonhuman or subhuman or abhuman. These clone students are accorded a different level of treatment as opposed to human students. The 'Morningdale scandal' is a shock not only within the text but would also provoke a similar reaction in the world we inhabit today if the same thing were to happen. The purpose of cloning for organ donation is different. The same clones created with the aim of substituting "real" Copyright © 2022, Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language

human beings and proving to be better than the original due to technological use is a nightmare staring at us in our imminent future. Ishiguro in this text brilliantly depicts how clones and human beings ply as parallel entities with no essential difference except for the difference of the modes of their reproduction.

In Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go", the artwork created by the individuals – these are clones, created for the explicit purpose of becoming 'donors', to donate their organs to those in need, and eventually 'complete' ,i.e. , die when all their crucial organs have been harvested- in Hailsham , the school for clones, is collected for a mysterious gallery by a 'Madame'. Years later, the clones Tommy and Cathy turn up at the house of Madame to find out why she collected those paintings, and what she did with them. The Madame and her friend Emily, who was a teacher at Hailsham, tell the two clones that they took away the students' art because they thought it would 'reveal' their 'inner selves', their 'souls'. Their art, therefore, was an index of the humanity of the individuals in Hailsham: 'we did it to prove you had souls at all'. Ishiguro's novel asks: what does it mean to be human? Is a clone, derived from human DNA, a human, a person? What exactly is the soul that is taken to be the determinant of all things human? This question serves as the gist to the entire human and posthuman differentiation explored in the novel and shall be taken up later in this chapter.

In the modern society, human cloning has always been a controversial topic with the development of science and technology, at the same time, "post-human" as the inevitable trend of the progress of times, will also come one day. Therewith many works of art related to human cloning were published. In these works of art Mark Romanek directed *Never Let Me Go* as a very different film, adapted from Kazuo Ishiguro's novel of the same name, about the feelings between clones created for "dedication" and the stories of they were destined to meet their tragic fate.

Kazuo Ishiguro is a British novelist of Japanese origin. He started publishing his novels in 1983. His main works include *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*. He has won the 1989 Booker Award, the 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature, the British Empire Medal, the French Arts and Literary Knight Medal along with other awards. Kazuo Ishiguro along with Salman Rushdie and V.S. Naipaul is known as the "British literary immigrants' three males". Kazuo Ishiguro has described himself as a "serious cinephile" and the main thrust of his works has always been serious. Among them, Kazuo Ishiguro has repeatedly explored the theme of "misplaced efforts", and he thinks that what we think of ourselves is often not what we think, and many of the things we are proud of are actually based

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on a kind of evil. “I am interested in how people tried to do something good and useful in their lives suddenly find that they have misplaced their efforts”, he said.

*Never Let Me Go*, which was published in 2005, is Kazuo Ishiguro’s sixth novel, describing the utility of human cloning as a donor of human organs and reflecting on the significance of this life, was well received in British and American literature. The novel is arguably the most touching work of Kazuo Ishiguro so far. Murakami once said : “Nearly half a century of books, my favourite is *Never Let Me Go*.” The film of the same name, adapted from it, was launched in 2010. It was a romantic and tragic film of the 2010 British dystopia, which was also favoured by many critics, the media and the audience after its release, and aroused deep thinking.

The novel *Never Let Me Go* also has immediately and extensively attracted widespread attention since its publication in 2005. The novel presents the story from the perspective of Kathy’s first-person recollection. Kathy’s life can be divided into three stages. At the first stage, childhood – clones seek their identity. Kathy and other clones lived in a boarding school called Hailsham, who lived in isolation under the care of “guardians”. With Miss Lucy’s arrival, the truth was revealed ahead of time. Hailsham’s ultimate goal was to cultivate these clones into organ donors, and they must devote themselves selflessly to everything until the flowers of young life wither. At the second stage deemed as teenagers the clones undergo self-cognition and seek self-cognition in emotional entanglement. At the age of eighteen, Kathy and the other clones left Hailsham and were assigned to different “cottages” and begin to touch the outside world that was completely different from Hailsham. They adapt to the surrounding in their own way, try to accept their own destiny, looking for their own meaning in life. Kathy accepted her identity and fate in her emotional entanglements with Tommy and Ruth and joined the care provider. At the third stage, young people self-prove and yearn for the meaning of life in the face of life and death. After having to accept the “donor” life, waiting for ‘notice”, that is, to start “providing” organs, dying struggle, no hope of living, no right to die clones such as Kathy, like every human being, want to find traces of themselves in the world and prove their existence. They will work hard for living, go together to pursue the possibility of delay, will be sad for death, after Ruth and Tommy completed, Kathy returned to the Hailsham which has been pushed flat and mowed into the fields and missed the time that has elapsed. The clones also look for their own traces, living proof, the meaning of existence.

In this posthuman society, the social identity of human cloning is obviously categorised as “nonhuman”. In order to cure disease, human beings want to clone themselves to provide  
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the necessary healthy human organs and so on. The complete compatibility with the ontology of the receiver and the donor makes the transplanted cloned human organs not appear repulsive, which greatly overcomes the major risks in previous transplant operations. Having a reliable clone with a human appearance has become a “non-human” backup “organ source”, and their value in life is to sacrifice themselves to continue the lives of their prototypes. Clones are deprived of their liberty from birth, without family, belonging or even a reasonable identity. As clones that were told when they were young that their future destiny was to donate organs until they died, so, wherever they are, every day in adulthood was faced with imminent death. This anxiety and fear of insecurity is accompanied by their brief life after they know their destiny. The identity of these clones has always remained a mystery, from the moment of their birth, because of their missing blood relationship, determining their identity ambiguity. After entering their youth, they have a certain understanding of their identity, and think that if they can find their own “possible prototype”, then they can comprehend their inner self, and perhaps predict their future. So they begin their “self-seeking journey” with hope. When Ruth saw her “possible prototype”, she realised, “We are copied from the scum of society. Drug addicts, prostitutes, alcoholics, homeless people. There may be criminals, as long as they are not mentally ill”. These clones have no family, no place to belong to, no past, no future, and when the procedure of donation is complete, they do not know where to go. So they are posthumans, very similar to humans yet sharing nothing in common with the lives of their prototypes, their supposed human counterparts. They are flung aside like kites drifting without a thread, aimlessly floating around waiting to fall any time. This reinforces the location of posthumans in a trophic level of a multi directional food web in ecological pyramids as opposed to a unidirectional food chain focusing on humans as the central trophic level. The scheduled mission, the fate that cannot be rewritten deprives clones of their right to self-fulfilment. They do not live for themselves. Thus, posthumans serve a utilitarian purpose in the lives of humans.

The clones in *Never Let Me Go* never choose to escape in the face of an irrevocable fate, but silently accept the preordained arrangement. All the clones were taught from an early age about the important idea of donating organs. Even though young clones do not know what donation is, brainwashed forced indoctrination makes them deeply believe that donating organs until death is their innate responsibility and destiny, which is irresistible and must be undergone by every clone. They are ashamed of the fact that the first donation ended their lives, and are proud to be able to hold on to life till their fourth donation. Even though they know that the fourth donation is the most painful, they often comfort themselves and hope to find their own

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prototype to catch a glimpse of their future, knowing too well that they have no future. The biggest dream of their lives is simply the hope that the date of starting organ donation will be postponed for a few years. Clone couples getting deferrals in organ donation when they are in “true love” does not hold much ground. And what aspect of their lives makes these clones posthumans if they are in “true love” like humans. This kind of “silent victim” is a remarkable feature in Kazuo Ishiguro’s novels and he focuses on responsibility and fate, which is where his treatment is different. In this story, donating organs until death sounds a melancholic tune not only to human readers but also to posthuman characters. This usage of clones seems unacceptable but it is the only reason that clones come to this world, highlighting their innate responsibility and irresistible fate. Clones serve their purpose without any human right or ability.

The essential categorisation of humans and clones as posthumans can be surmised in the thought of how different the lives of clones and the lives of the people they save by donating their organs is. Is one’s life more important than others? Clones do not find an apt answer to this question in their brief lives’ time span/ but we as humans also fail to reach a conclusion. Till death, the clones do not understand why their lives are so different from those that they saved. They do not anticipate a gain as the status of a real human, nor do they dare to imagine that they can live forever or as long as humans do, but they just hope that their short life span can get enriched to a little extent where they can let themselves experience this beautiful world. In this pining posthumans are not very different from the humans.

The posthumans in *Never Let Me Go* can be roughly divided into two categories, in their attitude towards human cloning, namely, those who think that human cloning is merely a provider of organs for humans and clones are devoid of souls. The second category of posthumans comprises those who try to awaken and explore the clones' souls. This is the category that invites an analogy with humans. The former is the majority of posthuman people who are accustomed to accept the materialisation of human clones, while the latter is a small group of people who are different in this era, representing a small part of human nature. The second category represents the sense of guilt borne by human beings, which is of essential significance in this novel studied through the lens of posthumanism.

Kathy, Ruth and Tommy spent their childhood in Hailsham. As one of the small proportion of schools that caters to the cultivation of clones, Hailsham has offered different educational and artistic courses to cultivate the creative and communicative capability and acumen of clones. Miss Emily, Madame and other guardians tried their best to provide a better

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living environment for clone students. Hailsham has many activities such as “selling”, which is an important activity for clones, because it is an opportunity for them to get things from the outside or human world as well as for them to talk to people outside and capture information from outside. Therefore, this proves to be a window for contact between the human and posthumans. In addition to this, Hailsham offers several courses to develop students’ talents and hone their skills such as painting, sketching, pottery, prose and poetry. Clone students learn art through these courses and give full play to their creative acumen. Often how the clones are perceived and the measure of popularity and reputation of Hailsham is proportional to this creative tendency. If a clone student makes an awesome work exhibiting his or her creative talent, then it has the probability of being selected by Madame for display in the gallery for human judgement as to whether the clones have similar souls as human beings. When clones grow up, they leave Hailsham, and in order to familiarise or accustom them with later life, Hailsham offers an exchange course that simulates an outside environment of real life, such as a coffee shop, allowing clone students to practise dialogues. The educational methods of “sales”, “communication” and “art education” offered by Hailsham have inspired the creative and honed the sense of value inculcating in the clone students the essence of humanism, making them realise the potential importance of capability to create and also cultivate group identity. What they have learned makes them try to seek truth and try to recognise themselves.

However, when Madame obtained the art of human clones as evidence that human clones have souls, she was afraid of them. This apprehension is due to the emergence of the possibility that clones resemble humans and defy clear cut categorisation into the category of posthumans. Those outside the world of Hailsham who sponsored those art movements in Hailsham proved their point that clones are not developed merely to act as tools to harvest organs for humans but to fulfill a purpose larger than that. They organised such campaigns to establish their point. Afterwards the success in Hailsham reinforced that if clones are raised in humane and cultured environments, then they are likely to grow up as sensitive and intelligent ‘normal’ human beings. The human fear of clone awakening and uprising to the detriment of human beings caused them to cease their plan. Hailsham’s closure marks the community’s complete abandonment of the beneficial cause in favour of human clones. Since then, human clones have become a commodity and materialised the clones as “organ source”. Human beings were well aware of clones being organ providers but it was wrong to use them as only so. However, when the whole human society is accustomed to the fact that “cancer is curable”, this awareness of misuse becomes minimal. When human children, loved ones, family

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members suffer from cancer, humans only hope to receive organ transplant surgery as soon as possible to save human lives, and no one will care about those clones who provide organs, no one will give a thought about the life of the clone being of same value as human life. Human beings also worry that once cloning technology is more advanced, clones will prove to be more intelligent and far superior and even occupy the position of human beings in society. Humans harm posthumans by seeing them as machines that benefit them.

At the end of the novel, the author uses Madame's words to convey feelings and worries about the post-human age : “ I saw the rapid arrival of a new world, more scientific, more effective. There are more treatments for past diseases... It's a very ruthless and cruel world”.

This paper interprets and analyses Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* in depth. With a plain and calm narrative style and writing technique, Ishiguro outlines the posthuman picture of the coexistence of the humans and clones as posthumans. There is no direct struggle, no denunciation, but as the story slowly progresses it shows the clones' inevitable desolate fate. The novel serves the purpose of being a metaphor for the survival of human society using the framework of science fiction, using the “post-human” or “clones”to contradict human beings.

Why did not the clones choose to escape? Why don't the clones kill themselves? This confusion led most readers to think that the work was too dark, pessimistic and fatalistic. In fact, it is the choice that the clones silently bear that makes the theme of the novel gradually rise, higher than the level of ordinary science fiction. The contemplation here is regarding not only the rights and wrongs of bioengineering and moral ethics, not only the exploration of human nature, but the theme is also to sigh at the fragility and brevity of life, as well as the inevitable, inherent fate and responsibility.

Although the novel is set in the future, the details of daily life described in it are no different from reality. Under the cloak of science fiction, *Never Let Me Go* reveals ordinary human life, human soul, human sex, love, creativity and innocence of childhood, which is a metaphor for human living condition.

The clones, such as Kathy, have seen themselves as “humans”from the beginning of conscious independent thinking. Although Hailsham has limited the scope of these poor clone children's activities and brainwashed them, they are no different from normal children. They have friendship, jealousy, teasing, deception, they have independent thinking, rich and delicate feelings, their own understanding of the world – they are “human”too. The novel acts as a metaphor for the very grid of existence. Every one whether donor or recipient would go on to the end of life. And on the way to selfless donation and dedication in fact, in real society,  
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everyone is a “donor”. The clones in the novel were taught a set of theories about their responsibilities in life from an early age: they lived to provide organs to humans in the outside world, and after giving them over and over again, they became weaker, and finally died with honour. Just as humans in real society are being taught that the value of our lives depends on how much we contribute and donate by giving to this society. In one society, people seem to have found no other way to realise their self-worth than to live in the way set by the values of that society. The setting of the theme of inevitable fate of the clones is very similar to fatalism in the human world. Both the humans and post-humans choose not to escape or run away from their precarious situation, but choose to live like “human beings”. They take on their own mission and strive to find the meaning of the lives they lead, hoping to leave traces of their own existence. The brevity of life does not matter much if they leave some imprint of their existence. Life is measured through deeds not duration or longevity. The dilemma of life presents the same challenges both for humans and post-humans, it is up to each individual to counter the situations or circumstances in life.

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