

**School and Schooling, and the Boundaries of the Human in
Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go***

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Abstract

Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go* presents an alternative history in which artificial reproduction is viable and human clones are mass produced. Even though they differ from other human beings only in their inception, the clones are perceived as artificial human beings, born and raised to be professional nonhumans at the service of natural humans. This article focuses on the novel's depictions of the alterations that humans will undergo as a result of radical technological advancement. The analysis will concentrate on Ishiguro's employment of the school as chronotope (in the sense of Bakhtin's conceptualization). School as a concept is a quintessential humanist institution, the purpose of which is to develop the individual's subjectivity to its full capacity. Hailsham School, however, represents the new discursive order of posthumanism that reveres technology but never considers the full extent of the ethical issues accompanying the new techniques. At Hailsham, the most advanced humanist discourse on human rights is ironically metamorphosed into a reactionary discourse of exploitation and exclusion.

Keywords: Posthumanism, clones, school, chronotope, children, dystopia

Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, a speculative novel set in England between the 1970s and 1990s, presents an alternative history in which artificial reproduction is viable and human clones are mass produced. Drawing on technological capabilities already available in today's reality, the novel envisions a world in which embryonic stem cells are grown and developed into "live" entities¹ for the sole purpose of exploiting these entities in the service of a healing technology. Scientists and lawmakers in this fictional world share an overriding ambition to alleviate the human suffering caused by diseases and injuries². To advance this goal, human clones are created and grown to serve as organ donors. Their lives end prematurely, as they are designed to exist only until reaching maturity, at which time the process of donorship begins. Donorship entails the harvesting of the clones' organs one after another, making all their organs available for curing human diseases³. Indeed, the clone's entire body is used to this end. Even though they differ from other human beings only in their inception, the clones are perceived as artificial human beings, "born and raised to be professional nonhumans" (Kakoudaki, 2014, p. 208), other than human, "as if humans" (Carrol, 2010, p. 63) and, therefore, less than humans, as Kathy, the novel's narrator, expresses it: "For a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think of you and if they did, they tried to convince themselves that you weren't really like us. That you were less than human" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 258).

In the world of Ishiguro's novel, society legitimizes the distancing and isolation of the clones and is indifferent to the fact that they face certain death near the end of their twenties. This imagined scenario is based on the challenges arising from biotechnological progress, which is driven by capitalist motivations and nurtured by human beings' fantasies of transcending the limitations of biology, illness, suffering, and death. These forces interact with biotechnological efforts to create an improved and empowered posthuman human being⁴.

Ishiguro's treatment of these issues in *Never Let Me Go* is within the framework of dystopia as content and as genre (Fricke, 2015; Lochner, 2015), insofar as the depicted future is alarmingly

¹ See Herbrechter (2013, pp. 113–135), who summarizes the debate over the cloning technique based on research on embryonic stem cells. This is a hypothetical dispute given that human cloning has never been exercised and that supervision over research on cloning is strict considering the ethical issues involved. Those who advocate for cloning state that it will battle infertility, enable a wider range of options for singles, such as giving birth to a substitute for a dead child, giving birth to an organ-donor child, and reproduction for those who cannot bring children into the world (homosexuals). Arguments against cloning include concerns regarding the individuality and unique identity of human clones, its negative impact on the family structure, the objectification of humans, and a new eugenics. Currently, there is a consensus against human cloning for reproductive purposes given that it is unethical and dangerous.

² The 2010 film adaptation of the novel, directed by Mark Romanek and starring Carey Mulligan, Andrew Garfield, and Keira Knightley, adds to the written text an exposition, which appears as a caption at the beginning of the film. It serves to clarify the ground rules of the narrative that will unfold by explicating the hegemonic conceptual infrastructure. It reads: "The breakthrough in medical science came in 1952. Doctors could now cure the previously incurable. By 1967, life expectancy passed 100 years." The caption is based on page 256 of the novel.

³ Donors, Carers, and Guardians are all euphemisms that serve as the linguistic infrastructure of the institutional handling of the clones. The institution takes measures to come up with lexical substitutes to camouflage and obscure negative actions and to lead to the misunderstanding of their true meaning. As McDonald (2007) points out (p. 78), the euphemisms are "a jarring reminder of their [the clones'] sole purpose in the eyes of society, and of the ways in which language can normalize atrocities deemed necessary in a given ideology."

⁴ With regard to the theme of the dark side of scientific technology it is worth noting that Kazuo Ishiguro hails from the atom-bombed city of Nagasaki, Japan, where he lived until the age of five.

upsetting. Yet it is significant that the events unravel outside the context of the apocalyptic,⁵ since this speculative England is not annihilated by catastrophe. Rather, it is a fictive future that reflects our own progressive world⁶. The fact that society and civil structures have not been usurped by futuristic reactionary forces exacerbates the dystopian implication and foregrounds the extent to which advanced ideas of the posthuman exist in the present⁷.

This discussion of Ishiguro's novel takes place in the context of the collapse of borders that demarcated the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, borders that seemed to be fortified and unbreakable before our era of radical technological advancement. Ishiguro's novel grapples with the ethical implications of biotechnology: the possible ethical and moral ramifications of life-intervening techniques made possible by technological advancements, including the prospect of artificial reproduction becoming the origin of life⁸ and how these are forged by the posthumanist discourse. I argue that Ishiguro employs as the main poetic device the *school* as chronotope and I attempt to elucidate how Hailsham School, where most of the autobiographical narrative takes place, is the spatio-temporal arena for this contemplation to reside.

Humans and Clones

In *Never Let Me Go* the clone is neither a citizen nor a human being endowed with rights, nor is the clone considered part of the “state's population.” As children, the clones are transferred from one breeding camp to another until they reach maturity. Reaching maturity, however, does not mean becoming independent adults. Rather, adulthood means that they have become mature enough to begin fulfilling their role as an instrument for achieving specific ends. Not only do humans repudiate the clones, they are also repulsed by them, as Kathy recounts when describing the rare encounters with Madame, which are always accompanied by visceral manifestations of repulsion:

She just froze and waited for us to pass by. She didn't shriek, or even let out a gasp.... As she came to a halt, I glanced quickly at her face... and I can still see it now, the shudder she seemed to be suppressing, the real dread that one of us would accidentally brush against her (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 35).

Notwithstanding, even though biotechnology opens new avenues for nonhuman actants, humans in *Never Let Me Go* have an instinctual sense of the clones' fundamental transgression. To natural humans, the clones are monsters – genetically engineered bodies that are a new kind of monstrosity produced by science. Anna Powell (2015) maintains that “from the humanist point of view, cloning is the most repellent and frightening aspect of GE [genetic engineering]

⁵ See Michel Houellebecq's *The Possibility of an Island* (2005) and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), novels that were published around the time of *Never Let Me Go* and are narratives that deal with genetic engineering and cloning within the framework of apocalyptic literature.

⁶ Mark Currie (2009) notes that in the novel, which takes place during the last three decades of the twentieth century, there is a sense of atemporality, which Ishiguro achieves by, for example, rarely mentioning historical locations and including only sparse references to time.

⁷ As John Mullan (2009) notes, Ishiguro is not interested in science, but rather in ethics, and never dwells on the technological processes of clone production.

⁸ See Dominique Lecourt's (2003) discussion of the bioethics of modes of artificial reproduction, biomedicine, cloning, and eugenics. Lecourt argues that between biocatastrophe and euphoria the genetic transformation of the human is justifiable but insists that the ethical and moral limits of this transformation have yet to be drawn.

in its uncanny human replicants, yet it also destabilizes the dualism of “othering” (p. 80)⁹. She adds that posthuman epistemologies are fluid in nature, and challenge the “natural” order and carry radically destabilizing potential (Powell, 2015, p. 78). Koji Yamashiro (2016) points out that artificial humans have always been a caricature of the human being, a distorted reflection (p. 77), a deformed mirror image of humans in that they lack the capacity to reproduce and they serve as slaves to their creator.

The Concept of Posthumanism

Consider the following list of opposite characteristics attributed, respectively, to the human and the nonhuman, where the nonhuman refers to nonhuman machines (i.e., robot, artificial person):

Natural/artificial, organic/inorganic, alive/inanimate, free/unfree,
 unpredictable/predictable, rebellious/obedient, autonomous/controlled, flexible/rigid,
 graceful/lumbering, intelligent/unintelligent, conscious/nonconscious,
 spontaneous/programmed, sensitive/unfeeling, emotional/unemotional,
 intuitive/algorithmic, passionate/apathetic, playful/serious, sexual/asexual,
 empathic/callous, moral/amoral, appreciative of beauty/oblivious to beauty,
 artistic/practical, poetic/literal, spiritual/material (Shanahan, 2014, p. 30).

This list expresses the ways in which we tend to think of human beings: as natural, free, autonomous, intelligent, conscious, moral, sexual, sensitive, and empathic. From the 1960s onward, however, these binaries, or walls separating the human from the nonhuman, have been attacked from two main directions. The first came from scholars of postmodernism and poststructuralism, such as Derrida (1970), Foucault (1994 [1970]), Deleuze (1977), and Butler (1990), – thinkers who problematize the anthropocentric and foreground the constructed cultural and historical nature of the human, emphasizing the construction and performativity of the human. Their mission was to destabilize, debase, and deconstruct the humanist idea of man as the center of the universe, along with such basic ideas as individuality and subjectivity. The argument is that the individual, as an essential entity who possesses psychological continuity and coherence, and a unified self, is an invention dating back to the Enlightenment, and perhaps even earlier than that – to the Renaissance. It was Foucault who concluded his seminal tract, *The Order of Things*, with the statement that “one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea” (Foucault, 1994 [1970], p. 387) – and a wave is approaching to erase it. The human is little more than another contingent entity, and what is ostensibly irredeemably anthropocentric is in fact merely a cultural construct.

The other attack emerged out of the tremendous technological advances of recent decades. Technology exists invisibly, inevitably, and ubiquitously. As the human becomes interlaced with the machine, the question arises of how technology leaves its indelible mark on the human. For instance, screens that enable a person to be present in more than one place simultaneously create a reality in which the subject is no longer limited to his physical body. It goes without saying that technology opens new avenues for thinking about the human, as Latour (1993), Hayles (1999), and Haraway (1985) have shown. Scott Bukatman (1993) argues that the modifications of the human result in a new subjectivity that he defines as *terminal identity*,

⁹ Powell (2015) argues that film representations of posthuman monstrosities demonstrate an incremental shift from their depiction as villains to heroic, sympathetic creatures, and that “the cinematic horror shifts to the neoliberal misuses of a medical science that harvests cloned organs for the wealthy and the powerful” (p. 80).

referring to the computer terminal (p. 9). Under the aegis of technology, we are becoming more than human, as the body is infiltrated by technology: the prolongment of life, anti-aging, organ transplantation, and xenotransplantation. Thus, the traditional conception of a unified self-body is no longer relevant, given the immense power of technologies that permeate the human mind and body and have implications for selfhood and subjectivity.

Posthumanism is the articulation of this cultural moment, reflecting a nonanthropocentric vision of the human, an articulation of transcending the binary human/nonhuman, of surpassing the human condition and a contemplation of the existential stance in which technology plays a critical role. Posthumanism is an umbrella term that encompasses a panoply of significations, embracing an entire range of forms and mindsets: enthusiastic or critical, infatuated or alarmed (Herbrechter, 2013; Mahon, 2017; Hauskeller et al., 2015). From signifying a biotechnological utopia to critical posthumanism, the term may be body-centered and seen as self-formation, or a critical approach that considers the impact of the human interface with technology¹⁰. In both cases, posthumanism is a subjective concept open to alternative perspectives and alternative stances that remove the human from its central position. It challenges the wall separating the human from the nonhuman.

Hailsham as Chronotope

The central trope the text employs is to place the Hailsham boarding school at the center of the narrative as a specific configuration of time and space – thus utilizing it as a chronotope. Coined by Mikhail Bakhtin, the term designates a working of time and space that has a structural and constitutional role in a novel. It contributes to the development of the events and opens narrative possibilities, and in it the clashes and conflicts are “interwoven into visible reality” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 47):

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84).

Hailsham is the spatio-temporal arena invoked by the narrative; most of the story takes place at Hailsham, where the childhood story unfolds. Kathy, the narrator, relates the story of the formative childhood years, a time when the school is naturally a central arena in which a human being’s individual and social development occurs¹¹. Moreover, Hailsham is much more than a school, as the clones have no home other than the boarding schools in which they are raised. Not a mere boarding school where students live during the school year and from which they return home for holidays, Hailsham for them is, in fact, home. Indeed, only after being transferred to the cottages as young adults does Kathy acknowledge that “until that point we’d never been beyond the grounds of Hailsham” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 116). As a chronotope, Hailsham constitutes a site where the sociocultural revolution that humans undergo is revealed. If, as Tzvetan Todorov (1994) argues, chronotopic analysis is related to the conception of man revealed in them (p. 93), Hailsham can be analyzed as domain of ethical concern where the

¹⁰ The euphoric transhumanism has been interpreted by Jean-Claude Guillebaud (2011) as a new puritanism, where the fallibility of the body makes it an obstacle to immortality.

¹¹ See Carrol (2010) on the novel as placed within the tradition of the boarding-school narrative (pp. 62–63), and on the narrative modeled specifically on the English boarding school see Fricke (2015) and Dzhumaylo (2015).

fraught category of the human is intratextually explored. At Hailsham, the two discourses – of humanism and posthumanism – collide and humanist epistemologies ostensibly dissipate. And, of course, unbeknownst to the narrator for most of her narration, Hailsham is a heterotopic space, designed to confine individuals who are deviant by nature to keep them excluded from society¹². The use of first-person narration contributes to the authenticity of the trope and to Hailsham's simultaneous role as a realistic site and a chronotope.

School as a concept is a quintessential humanist institution, the purpose of which is to develop the individual's subjectivity to its full capacity, with humanism being understood as “the philosophical champion of human freedom and dignity” (Davies, 2008, p. 5). School is a key institution for a future society and its purpose is to educate future citizens. As an institution, school is built on the acknowledgment of human beings' essential values and human rights and founded on ideals of justice, equality, and every human being's right to an education. Even as education has become more “industrialized” and responsive to economic and social needs, its humanist core remains. In addition, school is a social instrument for constructing the future or the foundations for the future through socialization (Kashti, Arieli, and Shlasky, 1997). This role corresponds with the notion of the child as a future citizen, at whom the full array of the state's institutions is directed. The nation is obligated to these citizens-in-waiting through “state intervention in shaping healthy minds and bodies of future citizens” (King, 2016, p. 394). By protecting and nurturing the young, the state is investing in its future strength.

Decent Lives

Chapter 7 in part I (Ishiguro, 2005, pp. 76–87) contains a scene that is central to the unfolding of the events and their conceptual significance. It shows Miss Lucy's determination to discard the mask of falsification and tell the children the truth about their future after she overhears a conversation between the boys in which they share their dreams for their futures. This leads Miss Lucy to say that she can no longer “keep silent” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 79):

The problem, as I see it, is that you've been told and not told. You've been told, but none of you really understand, and I dare say, some people are quite happy to leave it that way. But I'm not. If you're going to have *decent lives*, then you've got to know and know properly.... You'll become adults, then before you're old, before you're even middle-aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs. That's what each of you was created to do. You're not like the actors you watch on your videos, you're not even like me. You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided.... You'll be leaving Hailsham before long. And it's not so far off, the day you'll be preparing for your first donations. You need to remember that. If you're to have decent lives. You have to know who you are and what lies ahead of you, every one of you. (pp. 79–80; emphasis mine)

Hailsham's strategy is covert and obscure; its modus operandi is tell-and-not-tell, thus keeping the children in a state of constant awareness of being told and not being told¹³. As a result of

¹² In Foucauldian terms, Hailsham is a heterotopia of deviation, much like the prison or psychiatric hospitals, where individuals whose behavior is deviant compared to the required norm are confined (Foucault, 1984).

¹³ Gungör (2015) explains that telling and not telling is an interchange between “telling by not telling” and “not telling by telling,” that is, “the first alternative “telling by not telling” covers those instances where the guardians take advantage of deliberate silence to let the clones absorb a matter only indirectly, while the second one “not telling by telling” involves the extremely detailed explication of one point only to obfuscate another, more essential point” (p. 113).

their obscured consciousness due to such education, the clones can no longer fully comprehend what they are indeed told. Kathy admits on numerous occasions as she recounts her life story that

certainly, it feels like I *always* knew about donations in some vague way, even as early as six or seven. And it's curious, when we were older and the guardians were giving us those talks, nothing came as a complete surprise. It *was* like we'd heard everything somewhere before (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 81).

This obfuscation is underscored in this chapter particularly through wordplay in the semantic context of light and darkness and intermittent flickers of awareness. The selection of words constructs interchanges and dualities of covert and overt; light and darkness; clear and blurry; and, in metaphorical terms, sunshine and rain. The interplay of light and dark is both literal and figurative, in the sense that it embodies the slipperiness of language and disavows the truth. This is also underpinned by the full weight of Kathy's appropriation of this duality in recounting her life experience, where her language and choice of collocations and idioms is laden with literal and metaphorical linguistic signals that reside on light and darkness:

In my memory my life at Hailsham falls into two distinct chunks: this last era, and everything that came before. The earlier years – the ones I've just been telling you about – they tend to *blur* into each other as a kind of *golden* time, and when I think about them at all, even the not-so-great things, I can't help feeling a sort of *glow*, but those last years feel different. They weren't unhappy exactly – I've got plenty of memories I treasure from them – but they were more serious, and in some ways *darker*. Maybe I've exaggerated it in my mind, but I've got an impression of things changing rapidly around then, like *day moving into night* (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 76; emphasis mine).

Paradoxically, the more Kathy's text uses brighter, clearer, and more lucid tropes, so too is the content more somber, because of the reality it conceals, and vice versa: the more the text is murky, so too is it brighter, in the sense of reality becoming apparent. Notably, Kathy's last image in the paragraph above of "day moving into night" signifies the unveiling of truth. Finally, Kathy relates Miss Lucy's termination of her exposé with a double-entendre sentence, claiming light and shadow both realistically and metaphorically: "'It's not so bad now,' she said, even though the *rain* was as steady as ever. 'Let's just go out there. Then maybe the *sun* will come out too'" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 80; emphasis mine).

The most strident component of Miss Lucy's revelation is her explanation that she seeks to tell the truth so that the children can live "decent lives." This reference then prompts the question of what a "decent life" means. The word "decent" suggests something satisfactory, respectable, good, and proper. Although not a legal term, "decent" pertains to the quality of life to which all human beings are entitled. Indeed, helping create a decent life is perhaps the ultimate objective of education. Education is meant to promote the values of individuality, freedom, progress, rights (Mahon, 2017, p. 3), justice, and upward social and economic mobility, as well as to encourage the development of and to nurture human agency, all of which are required for leading a decent life. These goals of education are not met at Hailsham, where the school's methods destroy the children's agency and prevent them from leading decent lives. Veritably, Hailsham is a preparatory school for the subsequent "organ-donation gulag" (Robbins, 2007, p. 292) and is designed to segregate the clones during childhood. Even before the Hailsham students' first days of school, their genetic programming obliterated their rights as humans. Because the clones cannot have children, they have been denied the right to parenthood, and

their status in society has denied them their right to life. In concrete terms, they lack a future. The purpose of Hailsham, therefore, is not to help create a decent life for its children, but rather to guarantee the internalization of life without rights and civil status. In fact, it is a simulacrum of a school, designed to provide merely “imitative schooling” (Carrol, 2010, p. 67) by which the clones are taught to pass as “normals,” transforming education into social control.

Hence, as chronotope, Hailsham serves a compositional role, referring to the importance of the motif of the advanced society that is moving backward in terms of humanist epistemology. The posthumanist discourse claims to free mankind of any misery stemming from illness and death. It preaches that transactions between humans and nonhumans can enhance human agency and insists that our bodies can reclaim their essence through technology, enabling us to become more than human. However, posthumanism simultaneously engenders the unjust distribution of human legitimacy. At Hailsham, the most advanced humanist discourse on human rights is ironically metamorphosed into a reactionary practice of exploitation and exclusion¹⁴. Thus, Hailsham is a prefiguration of the new epistemology that reveres technology but never considers the full extent of the ethical issues accompanying the new techniques. Hailsham serves as a trope that demonstrates how the notion of humanism upon which school is predicated gives way to the resurgence of the distinction between those deemed worth living and those deemed expendable. The posthuman paradigm of a biotechnological utopia, able to redefine the possibilities of the human body, usurps the old humanistic one and forces it out of use. As Despina Kakoudaki (2014) argues, the novel demonstrates that the distinction between the human and the nonhuman is not an essential one but a matter of expediency and convenience (p. 197). Humans swiftly and decisively resort to retaining the master-slave relationship with the clones (Nayar, 2015, p. 385). Hailsham allows us to value the nonhuman in and of itself and estranges the human from its own “humanity.” The clones exist as a means to human ends, serving irredeemably anthropocentric notions, predicated on the human/nonhuman binary.

Clone Lives Matter

Hailsham is a school that takes pride in being an advanced institute, as opposed to other schools for less fortunate clones. Kathy remarks that those clones are commonly “awestruck about our being from Hailsham” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 143), and Madame comments that “all around the country... there are students being reared in deplorable conditions, conditions you Hailsham students could hardly imagine” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 255). The school participated in an experiment designed to prove the clones’ creativity and, hence, their humanity, but even so, the students’ instrumental purpose was certain. Thus, the question of whether the clones are human was not presented as a moral question, nor as a question of human rights law. It was merely a question of semantics. Had it been a moral or legal question, its answer would carry moral and legal obligations for the state toward the clones, as well as the clones’ right to life, or as Miss Lucy coins it, to a *decent life*. Later in the novel, the mature clones go to the home

¹⁴ *Never Let Me Go* has been interpreted as an allegory about the issue of human rights, and as a narrative about exploitation and injustice told through the voices of different excluded and weakened social groups struggling in the margins of developed democratic societies, raising the paradox between human rights and societal exigencies (Levy, 2011), as dealing with the reproduction of the logic of heteronormativity, and as an allegory of the welfare state, in which class origin determines and predicts one’s future (Robbins, 2007). Along the same lines, *Never Let Me Go* has been seen as a narrative of trauma (Currie, 2009) or pathography (McDonald, 2007), as well as an allegory of social engineering and programming (Kakoudaki, 2014), and as a consideration of ethical limits (Fricke, 2015), especially the ethical limits of technology (Lochner, 2015).

of Miss Emily, the former principal of Hailsham. Ultimately, she claims that human beings will refuse to revert to the “dark days” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 257), when they were vulnerable to different types of terminal diseases, regardless of the causes. Therefore, whether these posthuman human beings, which differ from natural humans only in that they were born through artificial reproduction, will lead decent lives remains an unasked question, as educators, lawmakers, and scientists continue to maximize their ability to prolong life and prevent aging, terminal diseases, and deformations.

As Miss Emily observes,

However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease. So for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren’t really like us. That you were less than human.... Here was the world, requiring students to donate [organs]. While that remained the case, there would always be a barrier against seeing you as properly human (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 258).

In his book *Critical Children*, Richard Locke (2011) suggests that adult novels that focus on children and adolescents use the younger voices to function as critics of their worlds, as “vehicles of moral and cultural interrogation” (p. 4). Such novels often employ children to highlight certain ideas more effectively. The images of children caught in atrocious situations are especially effective in delivering powerful ethical messages to the readers, since “they invite us to follow the story of a child’s imperiled growth and development and thereby to participate in a process of discovery... an attempt at liberation or the restoration of a just order” (Locke, p. 5). Similar to realistic novels that use children to address contemporary dilemmas, such as *Oliver Twist*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and *Portnoy’s Complaint*, the speculative *Never Let Me Go* showcases Kathy as a child representing the people-to-come, a prefiguration of future human beings and consequent future dilemmas that await us soon. Kathy retains all our sympathy for the very fact that she is a child, and through her imagineering Ishiguro deploys his critical engagement with the consequences of the burgeoning posthumanist epistemologies¹⁵.

Conclusion

Never Let Me Go plays a significant role in shaping our imagination regarding the collapse of the walls of the Anthropocene. As Manuela Rossini (2017) argues,

Rather sooner than later, cyborgs and other hybrids, androids, and technologically enhanced humans will people the earth (and maybe other planets). Imagineered in “sciencefictive” texts ... such embodied subjects can be seen as cultural prefigurations of future human beings in the real world. (pp. 164–165)

Never Let Me Go speculates on how the clones constitute but a stand-in for the human and are denigrated as a commodified replacement. By utilizing the chronotope of Hailsham, Ishiguro challenges the posthumanist discourse, as at the very heart of the key institute of humanism,

¹⁵ The term “imagineered” (yoking “imagination” and “engineering”) is employed by Manuela Rossini (2017) in her argumentation of the representation of posthuman entities (cyborgs, hybrids, androids, etc.) in literature, and science fiction in particular (pp. 164–165).

the humanist epistemic warrant to attribute value to the individual, to confirm individual integrity, and to foster self-created agency is undermined. When it comes to human moral development and the gradual acknowledgment of the rights of minorities, women and children, homosexuals, and animals, it is obvious that not only does the population gaining rights and the protection of society profit from it but all of society becomes more enlightened, inclusive, and receptive. But in *Never Let Me Go* the new posthuman mindset has incited an ongoing backward process.

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