Crisis in Contemporary British Fiction

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

ANASTASIA LOGOTHETI

Crisis is a word with Greek roots. In the *Dictionary of the Ancient Greek Language*, renowned lexicographer and classical philologist Ioannis D. Stamatakos (1896-1968) explains that the noun '*krisis*' (from the verb '*krino*,' which means to assess and to form a judgement) is related to making a choice and taking a decision.[1] Therefore the term '*krisis*,' which is as old as the Judgement of Paris (that led to the Trojan war),[2] has always involved dilemmas and interpretations. Given its contemporary meaning in Stamatakos's *Dictionary of Modern Greek*, the term '*krisis*' is also related to a period of extreme difficulties, a period of economic, political and moral crisis.[3] From antiquity to this day the term continues to be used in a variety of settings wherever division of opinions creates conflict and the urgent need of resolution becomes apparent.

In the discussion of crisis in the section of the Introduction which immediately follows ("The Concept of Crisis," pages 1-4), Sarah Fissmer and Marthe-Siobhán Hecke suggest that a broad understanding of the concept of crisis is essential before we relate the term to literature and to the essays in this volume.

The Concept of Crisis

The concept of crisis has a long history. This brief discussion of crisis is not a comprehensive exploration of the concept but an introduction into specific aspects of the term as well as a consideration of the role of literature during crises.

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[1] Ioannis D. Stamatakos, *Lexikòn tis Arxaias Ellinikis Glossis* [Dictionary of the Ancient Greek Language] (1949, Athens: Vivliopromitheutiki, 1991).
[2] For the origins of the Trojan War, see Malcolm Davies' detailed discussion in https://chs.harvard.edu/chapter/1-the-origins-of-the-trojan-war/.
[3] Ioannis D. Stamatakos, *Lexikòn tis Neas Ellinikis Glossis* [Dictionary of the Modem Greek Language] (1952-1955, Athens: Vivliopromitheutiki, 1991).

Crisis as a term can be traced back to antiquity since it derives from the Greek '*krisis*;' the root of the word stems from '*krino*,' a Greek verb with a range of meanings.[4] Originally, crisis was a concept used in medicine, law and theology to indicate the necessity to choose between harsh alternatives that could lead to life and salvation or damnation and death.[5] Through the centuries, the use of the term expanded to different disciplines and has become an important contemporary cultural concept. As a consequence, crisis has taken on a range of metaphorical and multi-layered meanings, some lacking in clarity.[6] The *OED* defines the figurative use of the term as a "turning point" and as the "decisive stage in the progress of anything" in relation to "times of difficulty, insecurity, and suspense in politics or commerce." In use the concept describes "vaguely disturbing moods or situations" while synonyms for the term may be "'unrest,' 'conflict,' and 'revolution.'"[7] Therefore, crises are understood as "critical transition period[s] after which – if not everything, then much – will be different."[8]

Since crises today are deemed to be everywhere, some scholars even speak of a conceptual overuse.[9] Using the term in contexts ranging from "unavoidable, harsh and no-negotiable alternatives" to "imprecision and vagueness" is viewed as problematic.[10] According to Dan Hansong and Ewa Wojno-Owczarska, currently references to crises are made in the media so frequently that any crisis becomes "a postmodern spectacle;" consequently, our "contemporary consciousness of crisis is different" from that of the twentieth century.[11] As crisis has turned into "a staple of our everyday diet," we have become "crisis-addicted" so it is questionable whether any real social revolution that counters crises is still possible.[12] Scholars, like

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[4] Anna M. Brígido-Corachán and Ana Fernández-Caparrós, "Introduction: Imagining Crisis in Twenty-First-Century American Literature and Media," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 50.2 (Fall 2017), vi.

[5] Reinhart Koselleck, "Crisis," trans. Michaela W. Richter, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67.2 (April 2006), 358.

[6] Koselleck, "Crisis," 358, 397, 399.

[7] Koselleck, "Crisis," 399.

[8] Koselleck, "Crisis," 371.

[9] Anya Heise-von der Lippe and Russell West-Pavlov, "Literaturwissenschaften in der Krise. Einleitung." In *Literaturwissenschaften in der Krise*, edited by Anya Heise-von der Lippe and Russell West-Pavlov (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2018), 9.

[10] Koselleck, "Crisis," 399.

[11] Dan Hansong and Ewa Wojno-Owczarska, "Introduction: Global Crises and Twenty-first-century World Literature," *Comparative Literature Studies* 55.2 (2018), 248.

[12] Hansong and Wojno-Owczarska, "Introduction: Global Crises," 248.

Koselleck, claim that we are living in an "age of crisis," and that the term has been used so much that it has become inflated.[13]

Apart from negative connotations, some definitions also stress the potential for positive effects. Anna M. Brígido-Corachán and Ana Fernández-Caparrós, for instance, consider that while "crises disrupt our routines, plans, and practices," they also offer opportunities "to rethink the world we live in, to reflect on and reconsider who we are as communities, as societies, as individuals."[14] While Carsten Meiner and Kristin Veel define crises as "unstable" situations which expose and threaten norms, such unsettling events may also lead to "a renewed understanding of the past."[15] Therefore, scholars consider that crises "allow us to depart from familiar parameters and may inspire us, even force us, to move into untrodden territories, where energy, adaptability, and creativity become key skills for survival."[16] This is true for crises of every kind: those apparent on a national or international level and those that are individual, more personal crises. Thus, a connection exists between individual people and crises on a larger scale since "contemporary crises" do have the potential to "cross into the personal and the collective threads of national preoccupations."[17]

Crises are also a topic with which the humanities and creative arts engage. A crisis inspires intellectuals, artists and writers to develop and introduce alternatives to a crisis-affected way of life.[18] As Dan Hansong and Ewa Wojno-Owczarska point out, even though there are scholars who doubt "the power of writing to activate real change," others regard the "raison d'être" of literature today its ability "to engage with, intervene in, and if possible, help to alleviate" global crises.[19] Narratives related to crisis can be beneficial in offering different world views, framing thought processes, inducing reflection and confronting issues.[20] Stories can turn collective or subjective perceptions into discourse and help us cope with traumatic

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[13] Koselleck, "Crisis," 358, 381, 397, 399.

[14] Brígido-Corachán and Fernández-Caparrós, "Introduction: Imagining Crisis," viii.

[15] Carsten Meiner and Kristin Veel, "Introduction." In *The Cultural Life of Catastrophes and Crises*, edited by Carsten Meiner and Kristin Veel (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2012), 1.

[16] Brígido-Corachán and Fernández-Caparrós, "Introduction: Imagining Crisis," viii.

[17] Brígido-Corachán and Fernández-Caparrós, "Introduction: Imagining Crisis," v.

[18] Ana Fernández-Caparrós and Anna M. Brígido-Corachán, "Introduction: Re/presentations of Crisis in Twenty-First-Century US Literature and Culture," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 50.1 (Spring 2017), xvii.

[19] Hansong and Wojno-Owczarska, "Introduction: Global Crises," 252-253.

[20] Brígido-Corachán and Fernández-Caparrós, "Introduction: Imagining Crisis," vii; Fernández-Caparrós and Brígido-Corachán, "Introduction: Re/presentations," viii.

experiences, even offer solutions.[21] At the very least, "literature opens spaces in which to articulate the acute sense of anxiety"[22] that is brought on by crises.

One particular way in which such narratives can have an immediate effect during times of crisis is through offering readers a safe space and a degree of distance to reflect upon contemporary issues, such as climate change or the Covid-19 pandemic, crises which have the potential for global destruction, and which result in illness and even death. According to Robert Eaglestone, literature has "a crucial role in our thought about how we live as individuals and as communities because of its deep involvement with personal and communal identity and because it broadens and reflects on our ability to think, feel, and argue."[23] Fiction which "has the ability to make us look at the world in new ways when something unexpected like a global health crisis occurs, shutting down societies across the globe,"[24] allows people to create new, or rethink existing, connections to others. Therefore, contemporary crises which profoundly affect everyone feature in literary works. As this collection of essays on crisis suggests, events of global significance motivate writers in the twenty-first century to raise their public voices and act as commentators within the social and intellectual realm.[25]

The Concept of Crisis in this Collection

This collection of critical essays explores how contemporary British authors engage with the theme of crisis in their fiction. In this volume crisis

[21] Uta Fenske, Walburga Hülk and Gregor Schuhen, "Vorwort." In *Die Krise als Erzählung. Transdisziplinäre Perspektiven auf ein Narrativ der Moderne*, ed. Uta Fenske, Walburga Hülk and Gregor Schuhen (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013), 7; Isak Winkel Holm, "The Cultural Analysis of Disaster," in *The Cultural Life of Catastrophes and Crises*, ed. Carsten Meiner and Kristin Veel (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2012), 27.

[22] Bernard, Catherine, "'It Was the Worst of Times, It Was the Worst of Times. Again': Representing the Body Politic after Brexit," *Études Britanniques Contemporaines* 57 (2019), 1.

[23] Robert Eaglestone, "Introduction. Brexit and Literature," In *Brexit and Literature: Critical and Cultural Responses*, edited by Robert Eaglestone (Milton Park: Routledge, 2018), 2.

[24] Christian de Cock and Rasmus Johnsen, "Fiction Can Help Us Understand Ourselves in the Coronavirus Crisis," *Science Nordic*, April 16, 2020.

[25] Peter Ely and Sara Upstone, "Introduction: Rewriting Community in an Age of Crisis and Nostalgia." In *Community in Contemporary British Fiction: From Blair to Brexit*, edited by Peter Ely and Sara Upstone (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022), 9.

is investigated not only as a cultural concept involving socio-political systems but also as a mode of challenge to established power structures and modes of representation across narrative traditions. In *Contemporary Crisis Fictions: Affect and Ethics in the Moderns British Novel* (2014) Emily Horton argues that apparent in the works of authors like Ian McEwan, Graham Swift, and Kazuo Ishiguro is a "new crisis fiction genre" which explores "a mode of everyday social anxiety and unease," foregrounding "ethical concerns" and critiquing "neoliberal politics."[26] Horton's broadening of the reading of postmodern authors as not only experimentally bold but also ethically conscious in their use of "crisis scenarios" informs the exploration of crisis in this collection.[27] While Horton's discussion does not neglect the significance of experimentation in the works of authors like Swift, Ishiguro and McEwan, her purpose is similar to the essays in this collection: to reveal the social and ethical consciousness at the centre of these fictional worlds and "to appreciate the pressing socio-ethical anxieties raised."[28]

The essays in this collection focus on major contemporary British authors and works, such as Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending*, but an exception was made to include a significant European author, one of Hungary's leading twentieth-century novelists, Magda Szabó, whose work is available to English-speaking readers through translation. Apart from enriching the scope of this collection of essays and suggesting the significance of the theme of crisis internationally, the inclusion highlights the work of an award-winning British translator, Len Rix. Having taught himself Hungarian, Rix, the translator of *The Door* and *Katalin Street*, won the *Oxford Weidenfeld Translation Prize* for his translation of *The Door* in 2006 and in 2018 the *PEN America Translation Prize* for his translation of *Katalin Street*. In a similar spirit of international collaboration, scholars from Europe (Germany, Italy and Greece) join academics from the UK and the US to engage with the theme of crisis in the following essays.

In Chapter One Paola Partenza considers the description of a world of power and manipulation in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005). Within the theoretical context of Foucault's concept of "biopolitics," Partenza reflects on the misuse of science in *Never Let Me Go* and considers how the novel explores the subjection of human life to, in Foucault's term,

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[26] Emily Horton, "Introduction," *Contemporary Crisis Fictions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1-3.
[27] Horton, "Contemporary Crisis Fiction: Constructing a New Genre," *Contemporary Crisis Fictions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 32.
[28] Horton, "Contemporary Crisis Fiction," 32.

"mechanisms of power" that devalue it. This chapter argues that Ishiguro queries the legitimacy of gene engineering and critiques science's treatment of the human body as an object in a society that creates, in Guattari's terms, "serial beings."

In Chapter Two Suzanne R. Black explores constructions of history and narrative trajectory in Julian Barnes' novella *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), a work which systematically problematises the reliability of multiple forms of record-keeping. This chapter discusses how Barnes depicts a crisis in record-keeping, which leads to a crisis in literary form, that is exacerbated rather than ameliorated by the information processes of the digital age. In the novella the inclusion of contemporary epistolary elements, such as emails, in constructing records points to the impossibility of ignoring the impact of digital technologies in the twenty-first century.

In Chapter Three Anastasia Logotheti explores four of Ian McEwan novels, namely, *Sweet Tooth*, *The Children Act*, *Nutshell*, and *Machines Like Me*, all published in the 2010s, which explore various crises in the contemporary world. Logotheti traces a common theme which connects these works to a world in crisis. This chapter claims that McEwan creates in his work an uncomfortable but recognizable "troubled home" for his characters, a metaphorical term which appears on the last page of McEwan's *Machines Like Me* (2019). Logotheti argues that the "troubled home" constitutes an apt metaphor for a thematic focus on complex crises related to familial relationships and societal contexts, implying the decay of the modern family and the corruption of human bonds.

In Chapter Four Sarah Fissmer and Marthe-Siobhán Hecke focus on three specific crises present in Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet*. Analysing Smith's specific way of dealing with these crises in the four novels of the quartet *Autumn*, *Winter*, *Spring*, and *Summer*, which were sequentially published (2016-2020), the authors emphasise how crises that create division among people could be overcome through understanding and compassion. Focusing on the human experience, the authors argue that the *Seasonal Quartet* sends a hopeful message at a time of crisis.

In Chapter Five Laura Alexander explores how literary works available in English through translation enrich our understanding of trauma. Through Rix's translations of the works of Magda Szabó (1917-2007) western audiences become acquainted with how Szabó examines the traumatic consequences of the Second World War and the Communist occupation of Hungary. Her novels explore the theme of crisis through the psychological effects of displacement, death, and destruction. Alexander's chapter examines *Katalin Street* and the effects of trauma on the main characters through

Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (2016).

Through the examination of a variety of authors and texts this collection highlights the significance of social and ethical concerns in contemporary British fiction by foregrounding the theme of crisis as a critical commonality emerging among vastly different stylistic expressions of local and global concerns.

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CHAPTER ONE

BIOPOLITICS IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S
NEVER LET ME GO (2005)

PAOLA PARTENZA

Abstract

Foucault's concept of "biopolitics" combines biological life and politics, interpreting human life within an ordered community. A combination of Foucauldian biopower, theories of genetic engineering and genetic modification leads to a pessimistic view of society. In *Never Let Me Go* (2005) Kazuo Ishiguro shows the effects of genetic engineering on human beings. The subordination of the individual and the utilitarian transformation of bodies suggest the distortion of human nature by science. Ishiguro's description of a world of power and manipulation, and his querying of the legitimacy of gene engineering, critique science's treatment of the human body as an object in a society that creates, in Guattari's terms, "serial beings." Within the theoretical context of Foucault and Baudrillard, the aim of this chapter is to reflect on the misuse of science in *Never Let Me Go* and consider how the novel explores the subjection of human life to, in Foucault's term, "mechanisms of power" that devalue it.

Introduction

The concept of *biopolitics,* the connection between "biological life and politics,"[1] has been used to interpret human life in an organized community and is widely considered as a means of further exploring systemic power over the individual. The impact of social and political forces on life have

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[1] Marco Piasentier, *On Biopolitics* (New York-London: Routledge, 2021), 1. See also Timothy Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

thus become a central preoccupation for theorists. Since Michel Foucault's first use of the term "biopolitics" in *The Birth of Biopolitics*,[2] its implications have been the subject of scholarly debate. In his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), Giorgio Agamben points out that Foucault places a strong emphasis on "the growing inclusion of *man's natural life in* the mechanism and calculations of power."[3] Agamben notes that Foucault insists that society's "threshold of biological modernity is situated at the point at which the species and the *individual as a simple living body* become what is at stake in a society's political strategies."[4] From a philosophical point of view, the idea of "the individual as a simple living body" raises questions that foreshadow societies doomed to fragmentation and failure.

This issue of societal instability and distortion is particularly acute in Kazuo Ishiguro's sixth novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005),[5] a dystopian fiction set against the backdrop of a "governmental program"[6] to treat disease through therapeutic cloning. Ishiguro weaves into his work the notion of Foucauldian "anatomo-politics:" the term is "centred on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces […] its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls."[7] The novel describes a world determined by the dynamics of power in which multiple and complex intervening factors, such as illness, need and cure, lead to the manipulation of the body and the control of the individual. Therein lies the arrogance of science to overcome every problem through the application of technology. Within the theoretical context of Foucault and Baudrillard, the aim of this chapter is to reflect on the misuse of science in *Never Let Me Go* and consider how the novel explores the subjection of human life to, in Foucault's term, "mechanisms of power"[8] that devalue it.

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[2] Michel Foucault*, The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 4.

[3] Foucault, qtd. in Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 58.

[4] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 58.

[5] Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005). All references to this novel are to this edition.

[6] Richard F. Storrow, "Therapeutic Reproduction and Human Dignity," *Law and Literature* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 257–274, 258.

[7] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume I, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 141.

[8] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics,* 75.

The combination of Foucauldian biopower, theories of genetic engineering, and the alteration of genes leads to what sociologist Jean Baudrillard defines as an "inverse movement […] an involutionary movement of the species."[9] This process paradoxically leads to a kind of human decadence, a return to lower and less evolved forms, "a retreat from the revolution of sex and death, a massive revisionist movement in the evolution of living things."[10] From this perspective, Baudrillard's pessimistic vision of society is realised in Ishiguro's work. Genetic manipulation, in its evolutionary presumption, can reverse the process and reduce man to an object. In the novel, Ishiguro makes visible the effects of genetic manipulation on human beings and its implications for society. The author's view of a distorted humanity is reflected in the subjugation of the individual and the utilitarian transformation of the body. If Foucault interprets the growing power over the human body as an expression of broader discourses on society and subjectivity, Baudrillard's focus on the manipulation of the body (as in cloning) is interpreted instead as a "technological desire for immortality."[11] In his influential work *The Vital Illusion*, Baudrillard observes: "The question concerning cloning is the question of immortality. We all want immortality."[12] As Jay Clayton points out, "the boundary between science fiction and fact is often at issue in contemporary debates over posthumans,"[13] so the dialectic of genetic engineering and cloning raises complicated and perplexing aspects of science that the novel confronts.

Science and Humanity

Never Let Me Go explores the fragility and finiteness of life in a technology-driven society. Presented as an autobiographical memoir,[14] the novel is narrated by Kathy H. who traces her own life, and that of the other two main characters, Tommy and Ruth, since childhood. Kathy recounts her experiences as a "carer," someone who looks after clones after their vital organs have been "unzipped" and before they die: "the idea was that when

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[9] Jean Baudrillard, "The Final Solution: Going Beyond the Human and Inhuman," in *The Vital Illusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 9.

[10] Baudrillard, "The Final Solution," 9.

[11] Baudrillard, "The Final Solution," 27-28.

[12] Baudrillard, "The Final Solution," 3.

[13] Jay Clayton, "The Ridicule of Time: Science Fiction, Bioethics, and the Posthuman," *American Literary History* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2013), 318.

[14] Keith McDonald, "Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as Speculative Memoir," *Biography* 30, no.1 (Winter 2007), 75–83.

the time came, you could just unzip a bit of yourself, a kidney or something would slide out and you'd hand it over."[15] The story provides a detailed account of thoughts, actions, and reactions of the clones who live at Hailsham, a boarding school in the English countryside. From an early age, a strong friendship develops among the three protagonists. Without parents, they grow up with their classmates, looked after by a group of non-clone guardians who are responsible for their education. One of the benefactors of the boarding school, whom the children call "Madame," behaves strangely towards the children. The other supervisors also sometimes overreact when the children ask seemingly simple questions, such as what will happen to them in the future, or what the words "donor" and "carer" mean, and why their drawings and poems, which Madame has collected in a secret place, are so important. Ambiguity permeates the students' lives; Kathy, Tommy, Ruth, and all the others like them, know only a partial truth: "you've been told and not told," as a guardian notes.[16] Nevertheless, the clones' lives, planned by a hidden power, are accompanied by emotions that they gradually learn to feel.

If in *Never Let Me Go* the author is concerned with the ethical problems of cloning and the use of biotechnology, he is equally interested in the complexity of human relationships[17] that characters develop in a world in which human values and a sense of humanity have been lost. The clones are deprived of free will, of the ability to make their own decisions or to choose differently; they do not enjoy the status of citizens or of normal members of the society which has created them. Incapable of procreation, they are at the mercy of technology. In this society the needs of those who fall ill determine the existence and social function of the clones. Yet, they are human beings in every respect: genetically, intellectually, rationally. The clones' social utility, that is, their social price, depends on their ability to fulfil the mission of donating organs or whatever else is needed or demanded. Having no power over one's own existence is similar to being a slave, without human rights or dignity. It is impossible for the clones to escape technology since they depend on technology for their existence and on human biology for their survival.

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[15] In the novel the word "unzip" is used to allude to the act of removing organs. Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go,* 86.
[16] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 79.
[17] For further discussion see Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes, "Your Words Open Windows for Me: The Art of Kazuo Ishiguro" in *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, edited by Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes (London: Continuum, 2009), 3.

The novel depicts a system—with Hailsham as the locus of power—that is beyond ethical control, leaving the individuals involved with a profound sense of powerlessness. The novel focuses on the ethical implications of the medical use of technology to which the novel's characters are subjected. The clones cannot escape, or make a different choice, since they are forced to interact with technology and what it creates. Central to Ishiguro's reflections is a society of "structural oppression."[18] As in Ishiguro's most recent novel, *Klara and the Sun* (2021), technology takes over both the will and the life of the individual. An android, Klara, who is created as an Artificial Friend, takes on an important role as companion of lonely adolescents within a social context where values and human relationships are increasingly mediated by the presence of technology. The underlying theme of *Klara* is the unbalanced interaction between humans and androids. Ishiguro shows the dangers of replacing nature with science,[19] and underlines how scientists are deluded into believing that their medical and technical knowledge has given them the power to control life. In *Klara* the creation of an android not only to befriend but even to replace a child in the event of her death represents the degradation of what is human and its replacement with what is artificial. Although science's promise of improving the human condition is at the centre of this powerful process of manipulation, the author sees it as a perversion of science, suggesting that a system that controls or alters human biology creates the conditions for the domination of future generations.

Both *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* explore the power of science to intervene and alter fundamental structures of human life; in other words, both novels show the dangerous way in which science may take over human life. However close it may come to supposed perfection, technology will never be able to replicate the neural flows involved in formulating human thought. Neither will any artificial intelligence be able to replace its creator. A simulacrum of human life, that is, the nexus of survival as a replica, will never have any memory of the past. It will not be able to write the future as the person who is no longer alive would have done. The

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[18] In Iris Marian Young's seminal work *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, 41-42), the author notes that "specific groups are beneficiaries of the oppression of other groups, and thus have an interest in their continued oppression. Indeed, for every oppressed group there is a group that is privileged in relation to that group."

[19] For further discussion, see Paola Partenza, "Beyond a 'Body Without Organs:' Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*" in *Different Voices: Gender and Posthumanism*, edited by Paola Partenza, Ozlem Karadag and Emanuela Ettorre (Gottingen: Brill / V&R Unipress, 2022), 174.

machine cannot fully learn and replace the complex decision-making mechanism of human and biological rationality. It may be able to rebel, but that will be the beginning of its end, the end of humanity and artificial intelligence. In both cases, however, the desire for healing and curing becomes the ostensible justification for "a technical necessity of birth"[20] and manipulation.

A fundamental question in *Never Let Me Go* is whether the purpose of genetic/technical engineering is the creation of life or the imitation of the natural process of life. In the novel the body is reduced to nothing more than a reservoir of biological material and organs.[21] The word "donation"—semantically linked to the word "donor"—is equivocal. The donations come from living creatures, not dead people. The act of donating therefore involves a sacrifice that the clones do not realise until they have grown up enough to begin to act as donors. Ishiguro highlights the moral ambiguity by presenting the function of the clones as determined from the social system and, above all, the impossibility of determining their own end themselves. Within this unequal system, a distorted view of the meaning of life emerges: the life of a donor does not have the same value as that of the recipient. The value of life depends on the different status people have within the social system: those who can be sacrificed and those who are essential. Thus, the discourse on the ethical use of biogenetics is related to the enhancement and the healing of a privileged part of humanity, an inequality which undermines values of social justice and equality.

The questioning of sameness/difference is a consistent theme in *Never Let Me Go*. Ishiguro shares a pessimistic view of *m*edical practices which bring into existence creatures that serve a purely *utilitarian* view of life.[22] Such utilitarian ideas are the basis for the establishment and development of market consumerism. They can only be understood in the context of a system governed by the logic of exchanging organs, albeit, as Miss Emily explains at the end of the novel, for therapeutic purposes. Although people are "uncomfortable" with the existence of clones,[23] they accept the practice for the sake of their loved ones who would otherwise be doomed to suffer and die for lack of treatment; once cloning was established, she notes, "there

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[20] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go,* 138.
[21] Baudrillard, "The Final Solution," 4.
[22] According to Dónal P. O'Mathúna in "Movies," "developments in genetic manipulation, cloning and implants make the boundaries between human and non-human species difficult to defend." In *Beyond Humanism: Trans-and Posthumanism*, edited by Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 289.
[23] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 258.

was no way to reverse the process."[24] Donors are individuals who make empathy a force that drives action but, in the novel, "donor" is not a positive word and it does not present a donation as a selfless and voluntary act. In the novel this force is not operative but a formal and factual constraint established by laws that dehumanise those who enact them, not those who suffer from them. On the contrary, the donors in the novel are obliged to donate because they are created to do so. The system they serve is a form of dictatorship: the dictatorship of science.

The crisis in the society of the novel is due to the development of technologies that reinforce and increase social inequalities. Questioning the principle of equality also means jeopardising individual autonomy. Cloning does not allow self-determination so cloning enables reflection on the differences and the denial of possibilities that lie at the heart of a society of which Hailsham is the sad prototype: a system of those who make the rules and those who obey them, the rulers and the ruled. In *Leviathan* Thomas Hobbes suggests that in order to get out of the state of nature, human beings made pacts to overcome the conflict.[25] In Ishiguro's novel, the conflict lies in the rejection of the limits that the laws of nature have imposed on human beings, showing their relativity. Such a conflict exists on a much larger scale than the one Hobbes set up, but it illustrates the arrogance of human rationality when it comes into conflict with the laws of nature. This conflict could be resolved by the acceptance of constructs: the norms and laws that regulate the pacts made which should be respected. Above all, the pact with nature, which regulates humanity in all of its manifestations, should be respected. Ishiguro describes a world of power, of multiple and complex interactions, of manipulation and influence, and questions the legitimacy of human engineering, how the body is treated as a mere "prosthesis."[26] An example of this use of the body, the engineering of the body, can be found in the novel *Klara and the Sun*, in which the android Klara is constructed as a set of *prosthesis*. Instead, in *Never Let Me Go*, what seems to be created is a "serial being," in Felix Guattari terms.[27]

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[24] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 257.
[25] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[26] In *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, 3) Hayles observes: "The posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born."
[27] Guattari's definition of Sartre's notion of "serial being" in *The Three Ecologies* (translated by Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, London: The Athlone Press, 2000, 74, note 10) is the following: "The members of a series are united in being turned towards an exterior object, in which they have a common interest, without having a

The novel suggests that ethical awareness should impose limits on science since the clones are human, albeit without the ability to reproduce due to the manipulation of their genes. They lack the unifying concept that identifies them as individuals, as subjects, as agents, free and responsible.[28] The focus on genetic manipulation, and thus on the body, reduces the construction of the person or of the individual to a purely material state, losing the specific definition that relates to every conscious human being, who is responsible for his or her own actions. In other words, to conceive of the human being as composed of a material body and an immaterial spirit. According to Emmanuel Mounier, a person is the expression of a "living activity of self-creation, of communication and of attachment, that grasps and knows itself, in the act, as the movement of becoming personal."[29] This concept is not taken into account in the cloning project in *Never Let Me Go*. The creation of beings reduced to a thing, or reified, is the result of the complete elimination of human prerogatives, that is, the distinctive qualities, the specific characteristics of the person. Eugenics places the clones at a disadvantage compared to the rest of humanity, but Ishiguro shows how the protagonists gradually learn to understand themselves and to cultivate emotions as they become acquainted with themselves.

Objectification and Control

Never Let Me Go focuses on the political control of biological life, a critical issue which leads to loss of values and "the alienating effects of commodification."[30] In this way the novel illustrates a process confirmed by Baudrillard's theory: "After the great revolution in the evolutionary

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project in common and without necessarily being aware of one another. The unity of the series is not active, rather, it is passive and contingent because it is prefabricated."

[28] See John Martin Fischer, "What Moral Responsibility Is Not," in *Thick (Concepts of) Autonomy: Personal Autonomy in Ethics and Bioethics,* edited by James F. Childress and Michael Quante (Cham: Springer, 2022); Marcia Cavell, *Becoming a Subject: Reflections in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[29] Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism* (Paris: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 8.

[30] Teresa De Loughry, *The Global Novel and Capitalism in Crisis* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 142. Moreover, Achille Mbembe, in "Necropolitics," points out "*the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*" (emphasis in the original). In *Foucault in an Age of Terror: Essays on Biopolitics and the Defence of Society,* edited by Stephen Morton and Stephen Bygrave (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 154.

process—the advent of sex and death—we have the great involution: it aims, through cloning and many other techniques, to liberate us from sex and death."[31] Similarly, Baudrillard's "involution" seems to have an echo in Ishiguro's fictional society in the form of the aforementioned "governmental programme"[32] for the harvesting of organs from human clones as a means of treating disease. The failure and collapse of an entire system whose degeneration is due to the alteration of law and the reckless use of genetic technology which is "far beyond legal boundaries," as one of the guardians, Miss Emily, states,[33] is exemplified by the critical connection between science and law. As Miss Emily explains to the clones, "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."[34] This leads to the objectification of human beings since characters become agents of an evolved biology. They are not presented as the progenitors of a new species but as the result of a purely mechanical process. The clones embody the "excess of biopower,"[35] or, as Miss Emily says, they are "shadowy objects in test tubes."[36]

Ishiguro's hypothetical scenario may be seen as a manifestation of Baudrillard's theory: "We are in the process of building a perfect clone, an identical copy of our world, a virtual artifact that opens up the prospect of *endless* reproduction."[37] Contrary to Robbins, who believes that "*Never Let Me Go* might be considered a novel about the welfare state and its caring administrations,"[38] the possibility of removing death from the human condition is reinforced in *Never Let Me Go* by the depiction of a political system that creates perverse and unethical expectations in relation to life extension. But the threat of death is always on the horizon and illness is a symptom of that threat. In a framework that sees clones and normal people[39] as binary—in that clones are not like humans—sentient consciousness is the

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[31] Baudrillard, "The Final Solution," 8.

[32] Storrow, "Therapeutic Reproduction and Human Dignity," 258.

[33] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 258.

[34] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 258.

[35] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, edited by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 254.

[36] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 256.

[37] Baudrillard, "The Final Solution," 8.

[38] Bruce Robbins, "Cruelty is Bad: Banality and Proximity in *Never Let Me Go*," (*Novel* 40.3, 2007), 297.

[39] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 69.

only criterion by which the reader can understand the clones' inner world. The fundamental problem with this approach is how to measure consciousness and the emotions of the clones. In light of the above considerations, there are legitimate questions to be asked about the extent to which the clones are unaware of their situation, or the extent to which the emotions they feel will strengthen their sense of self. In fact, characters display a dual personality. On the one hand, they adhere to the closed system of Hailsham, the college where the clones are raised and educated. On the other hand, they question their origins and their role within the same system, asking themselves what they are.[40] As Arne De Boever observes, Hailsham is "a world that can only exist on the condition that one does not ask too many questions."[41] Hailsham is a place of maturation but also as an institution it is presented as an expression of societal progress cloaked in an alleged humanity. As Miss Emily notes, "Hailsham was considered a shining beacon, an example of how we might move to a more humane and better way of doing things."[42]

Gradually, however, Kathy, Tommy and Ruth realise that, against their will, they are involved in a mechanism whose purpose is initially beyond their comprehension: the adoption of complex manipulations to solve therapeutic problems.[43] Clones are, by definition, temporary realities in the service of science: "for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you," Miss Emily remarks. [44] Their acquired humanity is of little relevance to their function and to the progress of science. Although their lives cannot be prolonged, and despite depriving them of their freedom as self-determination, Kathy, Tommy and Ruth cultivate feelings and memories: indeed, the emotional depths they reach and the qualities they display suspend them from the transience to which they are inevitably subjected. As Jurgen Habermas notes, "the 'just society' ought to leave it to individuals to choose how it is that they want to 'spend the time they have for living.' It guarantees to each an equal freedom to develop an ethical self-understanding, so as to realize a personal conception of the 'good life' according to one's own abilities and choices."[45]

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[40] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 243.

[41] Arne De Boever, "Biopolitics in *Never Let Me Go*," *Narrative Care: Biopolitics and the Novel* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 63.

[42] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 253.

[43] On this aspect see Shameem Black, "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics," *Modern Fiction Studies* 55.4 (Winter 2009), 785–807.

[44] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go,* 258.

[45] Jurgen Habermas, "Are Postmetaphysical Answers to the Question: What is the 'Good Life'?" *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 2.

In order to characterise this process of objectification and show its effects, Ishiguro focuses explicitly on the body, reducing these creatures to the status of things, a process on which Foucault comments: "we could describe the modern forms of governmental technology as control of government by pegging it to rationality."[46] Clones are inextricably bound to the "power of external control," an "external control"[47] that serves to dehumanise anyone who knows of their existence and might find usefulness in their bodies. Yet, according to Myra J. Seaman, not the clones but ordinary people "are the nightmare posthumans, not because of their bioenhancements but because through their attempt to extend their own lives, they have inhumanely destroyed the lives of others purely for their own benefit and in order to sustain that, they must refuse to risk an affectivity that would allow them to feel for the clones."[48] In such a dystopian context the alienation of the clones becomes instructive. The reader realises that the elimination of the essential qualities of individuals reduces them to objects. This hints at the idea of the market, of the exchange of the lives of clones for money since only the clones are donors. For this reason, the author stresses the importance of the cultivation of feelings, that is, of the inner world of each individual.

Although the clones are genetically identical to their prototypes, or "possibles,"[49] this resemblance is not in itself proof that they are human beings; their wholeness can only be achieved through a productive inner life. Because of this alleged lack of depth, or soul, they are seen as purely functional. They are identified by what they were "created to do," that is, "donate" their "vital organs."[50] The emphasis on the clones' utility, and the fact that they are sterile and therefore excluded from procreation, reinforces the sense that Kathy, Tommy, Ruth, and all the other donors, are mere elements of a mechanical-economic order leading to predetermined self-sacrifice. The implication of this dimension of radical subjugation is that there is no process that can guarantee the survival of the clones. As Rachel Carroll notes, "in its exploration of the 'imitation of life' *Never Let Me Go* prompts essential questions about the discursive reproduction of the human as a contested category of identity."[51] Clones can be serially reproduced by

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[46] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 311.

[47] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 58.

[48] Myra J Seaman, "Becoming More (Than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37.2 (Summer 2007), 267.

[49] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 136.

[50] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 80.

[51] Rachel Carroll, "Imitations of life: Cloning, Heterosexuality and the Human in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go,*" in *Rereading Heterosexuality: Feminism,*

technology, as many as necessary and for as long as necessary, but they cannot reproduce themselves. They are denied the right to self-determination and self-recognition. Reified and sterilised, they can be compared to objects with price tags in an organ market. For donors, unlike "normal people," even having sex is a requirement. As Kathy remarks, "Hannah had the theory that it was their [guardians'] duty to make us have sex because otherwise we wouldn't be good donors later on."[52]

By consistently hinting at the ethics related to biopolitics, Ishiguro suggests that ethics should be present in the relationship between politics and science. If the legal normativity, based on the interpersonal relations that make up society, must regulate human behaviour and be the guarantor of a stable order and correct procedures in society itself, the individual's conscience should act as a guide to correct behaviour, encouraging a person's moral sense of right and wrong. Although the clones are defined by a number of variables, what emerges is that they are a biologically meaningful category of pseudo-humans. They are a by-product of humanity. Nevertheless, their categorisation as pseudo-humans begins with the idea of their production; it begins when the socio-political system does not prohibit the practice of therapeutic cloning but approves it. The natural principle of continuity between living beings does not include the clones who become increasingly aware that their bodies do not belong to them but to the system. They are manipulated and their bodies, reduced to mere organs, are part of a massive project. Madame has in mind when she wonders, "Poor creatures. What did we do to you? With all our schemes and plans?"[53] With these words she declares her complicity with a distorted political system to which she has devoted her life. In this moment of empathetic participation in the plight of the clones, Madame finally confronts the tyranny of science and its terrible effects on the destinies of the people it touches, even with seemingly positive intentions.

Perhaps the most important aspect about Ishiguro's reflections on scientific knowledge and practice is that he makes the reader consider that the ethical problems arising from scientific decisions affect all people, not just scientists. As Amit Marcus remarks, "all ethical issues discussed in bioethics concerning clones originate in the ambiguity between sameness and alterity, which is amplified in literary representations."[54] The novel

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Queer Theory and Contemporary Fiction (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 133.
[52] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 94.
[53] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 249.
[54] Amit Marcus, "The Ethics of Human Cloning in Narrative Fiction," *Comparative Literature Studies* 49.3 (2012), 430.

makes the reader aware of the danger of the denaturalisation of man and the dangers of science when it rules over nature. This denaturalisation affects both normal people and clones. Clones and human beings are similar and share a comparable existential condition. While the latter use science for their own benefit, voluntarily ignoring the consequences of their choices, the former are a consumer product of humanity with no choice. The clones are deprived of their specificity and are thus transformed into laboratory products: as one of the guardians states, normal people "tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn't matter. Here was the world, requiring students to donate. While that remained the case, there would always be a barrier against seeing you as properly human."[55]

"Possibles" as Origin

Subjugation to the system is not what makes the clones anomalous, but rather the fact that they belong to a dimension that is beyond any possibility of human acceptance. Nevertheless, most of the clones keep their hopes alive until the end. Hope is the nourishment of the clones' minds, and the search for a "possible" is a search for identification and empathy. They are under the illusion that the discovery of the truth about their origins could offer them a future life similar to that of other human beings and thus enable them to escape from their state of exception: "We all of us, to varying degrees, believed that when you saw the person you were copied from, you'd get some insight into who you were deep down, and maybe too, you'd see something of what your life held in store."[56] Despite the difficulty of conceptualising the donors' existence in terms of individuality and identity, the reader is constantly confronted with doubts and questions as to whether the clones' true situation has been banished from their consciousness, or whether the guardians have trained them to accept their condition unquestioningly. As Kathy recalls, "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."[57]

For the clones searching for "possibles," or "models," becomes almost an obsession—one that preoccupies Ruth: "One big idea behind finding

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[55] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 258.
[56] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 137.
[57] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 81.

your model was that when you did, you'd glimpse your future."[58] Yet Ruth's "future" corresponds to the image of a "woman working in a nice glass-fronted office" that Kathy and Ruth found in a magazine advertisement.[59] This imagined future creates a new sense of temporality. For Ruth, the idea of a future is a necessary illusion because, even if it is temporary, it can give meaning to her life. Furthermore, most of the students believe that in addition to the genetic traits, the models could also reveal many of the intrinsic behavioural traits of the clones. As Kathy points out, "The basic idea behind the possibles theory was simple…. Since each of us was copied at some point from a normal person, there must be, for each of us, somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life."[60] The "Possibles theory" become necessary to give meaning to their real future of organ harvesting. Ruth's persistent quest for her model is the result of her hope that she can understand what her life could be. As Josie Gill comments, "*Never Let Me Go* challenges the contemporary idea that the question of who you are can be answered genetically, that tracing your (racial) genetic ancestry is a way of discovering an authentic, lost identity."[61] Although the clones know that their life is subject to external determinants, searching for their "possible" means giving life a *télos* and thus legitimising their existence.

Many students are convinced that if they find their models, they will eventually have a better understanding of their own lives and futures. However illusory, the experience of the present could contribute to the continuity of generations. Unfortunately, as Kathy observes, they are deluding themselves: "Our models were an irrelevance, a technical necessity for bringing us into the world, nothing more than that."[62] Kathy's words exemplify Foucault's idea of "power over life,"[63] in which "biopower appears to function through dividing people into those who must live and those who must die."[64] Eventually the clones must accept their difference. Free individuals do not exist to serve anyone, but the clones existence serves a function. As Achille Mbembe notes, "This power over the life of another takes the form of commerce: a person's humanity is dissolved to the point where it becomes possible to say that the slave's life is possessed by the

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[58] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 137.
[59] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 140.
[60] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 137.
[61] Josie Gill, "Written on the Face: Race and Expression in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 60.4 (Winter 2014), 847.
[62] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 138.
[63] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics,* 23.
[64] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 156.

master."[65] Consequently, the value of the clones lies, as one of the guardians, Miss Lucy, notes, precisely in their mechanical purpose: "You'll become adults, then before you're old, before you're even middle-aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs."[66] Miss Lucy explains that to be under the control of a system, to be a living instrument of a power, is very different from being free and able to decide for oneself: "That's what each of you was created to do," she continues, "you're not like the actors you watch on your videos, you're not even like me."[67] They do not have the power of self-determination, this guardian concludes: "You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided."[68]

These words are a denial of the clones' freedom of action. None of them can negotiate anything; none of them is an undisputed ruler of themselves but they are "born into non-personhood and valued for [their] vital parts."[69] As Foucault suggests, this is the "radicalism of utility," which, "on the basis of the distinction individual utility/collective utility, will also be led to emphasize general utility over individual utility and infinitely reduce the independence of the governed as a consequence."[70] The clones' cognition—the mental act of acquiring knowledge and understanding through experience and the senses—depends on their growing awareness of the situations they encounter. But change in consciousness has an effect both on the clones' understanding of the situations and on their emotional response to them. By the end of the novel, the clones' sense of reality, derived from their ability to understand facts, and their conscious sense of identity give them a distinctiveness that they would not otherwise possess. Ishiguro is depicting an anomalous society governed by a system in which ethical principles are incapable of undermining the status quo. Ethics is left without the means to realise its intrinsic purpose of undermining the system described in the novel.

Although the final purpose or function of the clones is almost identical to the initial one, and "even if they are not accorded the status and rights of citizens within the dystopian political system that has brought them into being,"[71] they eventually become whole characters, a wholeness based on a

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[65] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 161.
[66] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 79.
[67] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 80.
[68] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 80.
[69] Nancy Armstrong, "The Affective Turn in Contemporary Fiction," *Contemporary Literature* 55.3 (Fall 2014), 451.
[70] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, footnote, 43.
[71] Anne Whitehead, "Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*," *Contemporary Literature* 52.1 (Spring 2011), 54–83.

sense of inner identity. This essential aspect connects the two worlds described in the novel: that of normal people and that of the clones. As Keith Otley observes, "human societies and human lives are based on relationships with others, and relationships are based on emotions."[72] The universality of feelings is a principle which, in this context, challenges any difference between normal people and clones since both are beings whose essential qualities are expressed through an inner world which is enhanced by love, fear, sadness, and other emotions. The emotional relationships between Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth expose the defeat of a system that did not take empathy into account and categorises the clones as different from normal people: "It had never occurred to us to wonder how *we* would feel, being seen like that, being the spiders."[73] As Lynn Hunt notes, "the capacity for empathy is universal because it is rooted in the biology of the brain; it depends on a biologically based ability to understand the subjectivity of other people and to imagine that their inner experiences are like one's own."[74] The clones' relationships at Hailsham allow them to experience the intangible world of emotion and empathy.

Conclusion

Ishiguro's novel provides important insights into the consciousness of the clones; through emotions and feelings the novel emphasises that the clones are not insignificant laboratory products. They are not mere figures subject to the political system. Ishiguro gives the clones a positive role in the process of regaining their dignity. Emotion, such as the feelings Tommy and Kathy acknowledge for each other near the end of the novel, offers proof of their inner world: "we've loved each other all our lives."[75] Feelings are the embodiment of the complex intersection of the soul and the body for clones and ordinary people alike. Despite Ruth's death and the impossibility of changing Tommy and Kathy's fate, Kathy and Tommy have finally acquired something that belongs to human beings: the ability to love. Ultimately, the characters exemplify the "implosion of death into love."[76] Ishiguro considers love the only response to the vulnerability of the individual, to the manipulation of the body and of death, to the crisis of

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[72] Keith Otley, *The Passionate Muse: Exploring Emotions in Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 18.
[73] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 35.
[74] Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (New York-London: Norton, 2007), 39.
[75] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 277.
[76] Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1989), 233.