

Look closely at the article by Kamruzzaman Saif below. Formulate your own responses to it. Do you agree with Saif's ideas? Do you disagree? Justify your arguments and present them to the group.

Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro Critical Analysis: Dehumanization of Humanity and Racial Metaphor

By Kamruzzaman Saif
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“Never Let Me Go” is one of the best novels from the 21st century which has been awarded multiple honours including Nobel Prize and Kazuo Ishiguro remains one of the most influential novelists of our time. As the story implies, we apparently discover the dehumanization of scientific clone humans for the purpose of harvesting organs. On the other hand, this novel can also be considered as one of the metaphorical masterpieces that bring out the racial discourse which can also be seen in the point of imperialistic conflict. Though the characters are not Asian yet underneath the story, it sites an incisive nonwhite life experience which is depicted brilliantly.

It is never easy to critically analyse a novel as authors hide countless facts and meanings in their intellectual property and as readers, this is the ultimate challenge. To understand the underlying story, critics, researchers and readers need to give a hard look beyond the surface story rather we need to understand the unseen voice of the writer and Never Let Me Go provides an interesting yet highly intellectual story shouting their reality through the story, facts, characterization, settings, etc.

Brief of the Story

At first glance, the youngsters studying at Hailsham Boarding School are just like any other group of teenagers. They play sports or have art classes where their teachers are dedicated to stimulating their creativity. It is a hermetic world, where the pupils

have no other contact with the outside world than Madame, as they call the woman who comes to take away the most interesting works of adolescents, perhaps for an art gallery, or a museum. Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy were wards in Hailsham and they were also a love triangle. And now Kathy K. allows herself to remember how she and her friends gradually discovered the truth. The reader of this splendid Gothic utopian novel will discover that in Hailsham everything is a performance where young actors do not know that they are the clone of other people who are waiting to take away their organs.

Critical Analysis of Never Let Me Go

Never Let Me Go is a dystopian book very different from all the other dystopias. It is a rather peculiar dystopia that is melancholic and sad at the same time.

The use of the writer's masterful perspective and his ability to bring an unusual narrative voice to life is impeccable. In a similar manner, the emotional power of his suggestions and concealments through a sibylline language at the service of a perfectly articulated and defined complex narrative structure is capable of gradually propelling itself from the apparently inconsequential to the moral reflection on the transcendental of life, make this fantasy-scientific novel a *rare* high-flying bird worthy of deep analysis.

The main reason for the confusion is that, apparently, when we start reading, we are faced with a type of known narrative text. The narrator, Kathy H. remembers her memories of youth. She lived together with other young adolescents in Hailsham, an exclusive educational centre closed to them but from which they cannot leave either. However, with the maturation of the plot and the progress of the plot, Hailsham, its residents, and its workers, is taking a more precise form and, with it, also the social and cultural scheme in which it fits, thus increasing stupefaction. Because it is not a penitentiary centre, nor is it a high-standing school, but rather a detention centre of the many scattered throughout England where the clones are there over time.

The author's writing style contributes a lot to the feeling of the entire story and it is peculiar and melancholic at the same time just like the rest of the book and the story. It is yet unexpected of a novel that remains silent of many questions raised by readers.

Similarly, *Never let Me Go* does not remark on the question like, *where did these children come from? Was there a before Hailsham? What about the outside world? How can these children not ask themselves questions? Where do the other veterans come from?* Probably this happens because all the characters live in ignorance of all the time.

Depiction of Dehumanization of Humanity through Cloning

Science fiction suffered an extraordinary moment of catharsis in 2005 with the publication of *Never Let Me Go*. With this novel, the foundations were laid for the reissue with a new vigour of the old debate on the borders of the genre that, to this day, continues without anything being clarified yet. Still, the contribution of the Japanese author Kazuo Ishiguro will remain indelible on the shelves of the genre for its ability to provoke emotions, stimulate reflections, and show new paths.

In addition, his masterful use of perspective, his ability to bring an unusual narrative voice to life, the emotional power of his suggestions and concealments through a sibylline language at the service of a perfectly articulated and defined complex narrative structure capable of gradually propelling itself from the apparently inconsequential to the moral reflection on the transcendental of life, make this fantasy-scientific novel a *rare* high-flying bird worthy of deep analysis.

All in all, the precise handling of the narrative tone and the perfectly chiselled profile of the characters, although at first, it seems to us to give voice to a humanistic demand for the clone, also manages to sow in us the shadow of a doubt. None of the main characters harbours ideas or thoughts of departure or rupture regarding their situation beyond the established official channels. It is true that formulas are sought to extend the homeostasis reached in Hailsham, and value is given to the repeated rumours about the existence of certain requirements or formulas to extend the arrival of the moment when they must choose to be “donors” or “caretakers”. However, from our point of view, the appearance of logical emotions such as fear or terror, aggressiveness, or violence is missed. Everything seems so melancholic.

On the other hand, the insinuation regarding the human being, the society capable of granting such unworthy treatment to a way of life, is revealed to us here as the most powerful narrative technique. The use of the veil allows us to clearly show what we want to remain evident while, at the same time, different possibilities are left open for its development and interpretation. And by making use of not a few veils, arranged in coherent layers in terms of their meaning and interest, they end up imposing a precise rhythm and clear ideas both about who the clones are and their destiny and, ultimately, about humanity capable of such outrage. In fact, almost from the beginning, we perceived fear in the Hailsham custodians, the fleeting or reserved character of those “normal people” who have any dealings with them,

In such a way human panic is felt before the clones that even, in a show of maximum moral degradation. It even uses art as a form of supervision and mental control. The pictures or drawings in the “Gallery”, a sample of mental representations that serve as a formula for exchanging access to resources from abroad, become a way to gauge moods, mental representations of unconscious ideas. Works on philosophy or literature, already in the next stage of maturity, and they work more like a formula of suggestion or control of mood at a time already imminently closer to the final stage of their lives. Artworks in *Never Let Me Go* like a double-edged razor: capable of channelling the most beautiful emotions as well as serving the most abject control.

Another critical position with humanity is shown in the selection of subjects to carry out the cloning process. At one point in the novel, the characters reflect on why they choose prostitutes or drunkards or other types of declassified people as the basis for the cloning process, blaming themselves for their problems – real or perceived – regarding this origin also considered by them worthless. The reflection that is not in itself but a reification of the human being, a reduction of his condition from subject to object, simplifying his existence to a solely material and / or materialistic dimension, reducing the body to the condition of interface and life to the condition of the accident.

This moral analysis insinuated in the first two parts of the novel, where the plot is structured under the scheme of the *bildungsroman* with hints of a gothic novel. The seclusion schools are the place not only for the narrator's intellectual but also for her personal maturity. She acquires a true depth in the third part upon assuming the role of "caretaker" of her childhood friend, Ruth, and also remembers his special friendship relationship with her partner, Tommy.

The veils drop suddenly to show us the clone in its final stages of life when she makes the decision to be a "donor" or "caretaker". In any case, she has to remain confined to the walls of that category of dehumanized and declassified, as a form of non-life only valid to be with other forms of non-life, "ghettoized".

However, we can feel their pain, that pain devoid of radical and pure emotions, *Never Let Me Go*, exposes us to these clones and forces us to take sides. Moreover, there is a perfectly calculated ambiguity, and a plot capable of presenting us with the many dilemmas contained in this question end up leading us, little by little, towards the definition of a position. Are these clones a form of life or not? And if they are, could it be considered a form of human life? And regardless of whether it is human or not, would any form of life deserve a destiny like our own? Humanity has written for them?

Kazuo Ishiguro achieves in this novel a pure sample of science fiction, since, without technical devices of any kind, he crudely exposes a moral dilemma of the imminent future that, not by trying to avoid, will end up being essential to answer.

Never Let Me Go as an Imperialistic and Racial Metaphor

As the story progresses, the portrayal of the dehumanization of cloned humans is deepened and characters remain in ignorance. The existence and identity of the narrator and her friends turn out to be helplessly pathetic and the hope for an extension of providing a longer life depending on creative capability proves the hypocritical nature of humanity.

Until now we have seen the apparent story which is garnering a theme of imperialistic and racial metaphor. '*Never Let Me Go*' does not provide any background and racial commentary of the characters which is leading us to identify these characters as non-white entities. The writer is often confined within the social condition and this 2005 novel might have focused on the post-9/11, post-colonial

time contemplating racial and imperialistic discourse in a metaphorical way. Ishiguro's novels are not less than an excavation.

There is another potential reasoning behind this racial understanding which is theorized by Ruth saying, "We're modelled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos. That's what we come from." Ruth's theory makes sense if we look closely at the western depiction of the east. In reality, the oriental and ethnic minorities from the east live in poverty comparison to Western and white people which makes this case even more strong figuratively and literally.

Human cloning and treatment of this less than human characters are typically leading us to the inhuman act of organ trafficking. The cloned soulless donors are only recognized as an object that is used for harvesting organs. In the reality, organ trafficking has become a highly profitable business in the eastern non-white countries including China, India, Vietnam, and Thailand. This organ trafficking is one of the forms of modern-day slavery which is real. This novel can be considered as a carrier of modern-day enslavement process hidden in the science fiction story. The latest enslavement process is called commercial surrogacy and indentured servitude, an immigration law that dehumanizes the entire system like the colonial period.

Every literary masterpiece like *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro conveys multiple messages from their comfort zones. This noble winning fiction is beyond the story of cloning and their life and carrying more meaningful facts and stories of the real world. In many ways, the dehumanization of clone people is the contemplation of the real world subjugation of non-white people from east. Overall the story is wonderfully portrayed by all the characters who are living a pathetic life that creates a catharsis. Ishiguro has been able to provoke emotions, stimulate reflections that show us new paths in the literary genre.

Now look at this review from *The Guardian* by M John Harrison. How does this compare with Saif's?

Never Let Me Go

Kazuo Ishiguro

Sat 26th February 2005 – Review from *The Guardian*

The children of Hailsham House are afraid of the woods. In the days when their guardians were much stricter, the school myth goes, a boy's body was found there with its hands and feet removed. Sometimes that dark, threatening fringe of trees can cast such a shadow over the whole school that a pupil who has offended the others might be hauled out of bed in the middle of the night, forced to a window, and made to stare out at it.

When not applying peer pressure in this curious way, Hailsham children seem to have a nice life. The school places considerable emphasis on self-expression through art and, especially, on staying healthy. There are frequent, exhaustive medical check-ups. Smoking is a real crime, because of the way it can damage your body. Yet despite the care lavished on them, their world has a puzzlingly second-hand feel. Everything they own is junk. Teaching aids are rudimentary. Sometimes you get the feeling they're being taken care of on the cheap.

Never Let Me Go is the story of Kathy and Tommy and Ruth, and of the love-triangle they begin at Hailsham. Ruth is the controlling one, Tommy is the one who used to find it hard to keep his temper: they hope that love will save them. They've heard that love - or art, or both - will get you a deferral. Kathy - well, Kathy is a carer by nature as well as profession: she watches her friends break themselves against the inevitable, but never lets them go. After Hailsham, they grow from puzzled children to confused young adults. They live in a prolonged limbo, waiting for the call to donate. They're free to wander. They write essays, continue with their artwork, learn to drive, roam Britain looking for their "possibles" - the real human beings they might have been cloned from.

Their lack of understanding of the world is funny and touching. They stare into the window of an ordinary office, fascinated by the clean modern space. "It's their lunch break," Tommy says reverently of the office workers, "but they don't go out. Don't blame them either." The clones look in at the society that made them, failing to understand its simplest social and economic structures.

As readers we're in a similar position. What Kathy doesn't know, we have to guess at. This sometimes excruciating curiosity propels us along; meanwhile, Ishiguro's careful, understated narration focuses on the way young people make a life out of whatever is on offer. Nothing is more heart-breaking than received wisdom, and Hailsham students, carefully sheltered not just from any real understanding of their fate but from any real understanding of the world in which it will be acted out, have nothing else to go on.

Their sense of suspension, in a present where they neither make nor understand the rules, is pervasive. Childishly snobbish about the proprieties, they're as puzzled by what's proper as anyone else. Small fashions of behaviour come and go. Far into adulthood Kathy, Tommy and Ruth dissimulate and bicker and set teenage behavioural traps for one another.

Inevitably, it being set in an alternate Britain, in an alternate 1990s, this novel will be described as science fiction. But there's no science here. How are the clones kept alive once they've begun "donating"? Who can afford this kind of medicine, in a society the author depicts as no richer, indeed perhaps less rich, than ours? Ishiguro's refusal to consider questions such as these forces his story into a pure rhetorical space. You read by pawing constantly at the text, turning it over in your hands, looking for some vital seam or row of rivets. Precisely how naturalistic is it supposed to be? Precisely how parabolic? Receiving no answer, you're thrown back on the obvious explanation: the novel is about its own moral position on cloning. But that position has been visited before (one thinks immediately of Michael Marshall Smith's savage 1996 offering, *Spare*). There's nothing new here; there's nothing all that startling; and there certainly isn't anything to argue with. Who on earth could be "for" the exploitation of human beings in this way?

Ishiguro's contribution to the cloning debate turns out to be sleight of hand, eye candy, cover for his pathological need to be subtle. So what is *Never Let Me Go*

really about? It's about the steady erosion of hope. It's about repressing what you know, which is that in this life people fail one another, grow old and fall to pieces. It's about knowing that while you must keep calm, keeping calm won't change a thing. Beneath Kathy's flattened and lukewarm emotional landscape lies the pure volcanic turmoil, the unexpressed yet perfectly articulated, perfectly molten rage of the orphan.

By the final, grotesque revelation of what really lies ahead for Kathy and Tommy and Ruth, readers may find themselves full of an energy they don't understand and aren't quite sure how to deploy. *Never Let Me Go* makes you want to have sex, take drugs, run a marathon, dance - anything to convince yourself that you're more alive, more determined, more conscious, more dangerous than any of these characters.

This extraordinary and, in the end, rather frighteningly clever novel isn't about cloning, or being a clone, at all. It's about why we don't explode, why we don't just wake up one day and go sobbing and crying down the street, kicking everything to pieces out of the raw, infuriating, completely personal sense of our lives never having been what they could have been.

