HUMAN BEHAVIOUR: AN EXPLORATION OF
REPRESENTATION, NARRATIVE, AND THE CLONE BODY IN
KAZUO ISHIGURO’S NEVER LET ME GO

Heather Bloor, B.A, Murdoch University

This thesis is presented for the Honours degree of English and Creative Writing at Murdoch University 2015.
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains, as its main content, work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution, including Murdoch.

Signed: ……………………………………………………………………

Heather Bloor
(30486536)
28 October 2015
COPYRIGHT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge that a copy of this thesis will be held at the Murdoch University Library.

I understand that, under the provisions of s51.2 of the Copyright Act 1968, all or part of this thesis may be copied without infringement of copyright where such a reproduction is for the purposes of study and research.

This statement does not signal any transfer of copyright away from the author.

Signed: …………………………………………………………………………

Full Name of Degree: Bachelor of Arts with Honours in English and Creative Writing

Thesis Title: Human Behaviour: An Exploration of Representation, Narrative, and the Clone Body in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go

Author: Heather Bloor

Year: 2015
In this dissertation I will be looking at the novel *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro, paying particular attention to the narrator, Kathy, and how her use of narrative representation distances herself from her bodily subjugation. Narrative representation does not only reflect experience, but also has an active role in constructing it. Our reliance on the narratives of others in constructing our own sense of ‘self’ tends to encourage a repetition or recycling of the social values contained within them, and present a model of ‘human’ life which is more reflective of our textual encounters than our bodily experience. In *Never Let Me Go*, the clones primarily read nineteenth-century literature, and the values and beliefs espoused by such texts, as well as the structural life models they contain, are evident in the clones’ attitudes towards their purpose as organ donors, as well as in Kathy’s structuring of her own life narrative. The value given to this represented, or narrative, self, at the expense of bodily agency, is supported by the notion of mind-body dualism, in which the ‘self’ is equated with the mind rather than the body. This can lead to the body being seen, and treated, as an object. But because the clones themselves are also taught to prioritise a representation of self over a bodily self, they do not rebel against their lack of bodily autonomy, and continue to base their narratives upon models of human lives that bear little resemblance to their own. In this dissertation I argue that the only way for the clones to be recognised as ‘human’ by their wider society is to be able to represent themselves and their bodily difference, in order to affect a change in social and historical narratives, as well as in the definition of what it is to live a ‘human’ life.
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.................................................................1

INTRODUCTION...........................................................................2

CHAPTER 1: REPRESENTATION AND REPETITION......................5

CHAPTER 2: SOCIETAL DUTY AND INDIVIDUAL PURPOSE IN THE
NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL.................................................14

CHAPTER 3: BODY AND SELF, ANIMALITY AND HUMANITY.... 30

CHAPTER 4: THE INCOMPATABILITY OF NARRATIVE AND
EXPERIENCE.............................................................................41

CONCLUSION...............................................................................54

REFERENCES...............................................................................57
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank David Moody and Brett Jenkins for agreeing to supervise my thesis this year. You have both been incredibly helpful and enthusiastic about my work, and have provided me with a positive introduction to the world of research.

I would also like to thank Lucy Boon for taking the time to read and discuss my work, and Tyler Kelly for bringing me cups of tea and words of encouragement.
Introduction

In the face of technological advancements that could radically change both our bodies and our minds, questions pertaining to human definitions, goals, and ethics are of immanent importance to the fields of philosophy and literature. In this dissertation I will look at how the notion of mind-body dualism has impacted on our definitions of ‘humanity’ by examining how the value placed upon the mind and narrative representations of the self, tends to lead to a devaluing of, and disengagement from, bodily experience. This has serious consequences for those who are either marked by bodily difference, or who are not in possession of bodily agency. Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel Never Let Me Go (2005) employs the figure of the clone to demonstrate how the use of inherited narrative models in narrating the self, coupled with an education that upholds the value of a represented self over a physical self, encourages a distancing from the subjugated body. In the novel, we see an alternative 1990’s England in which the main character and narrator, Kathy, is reminiscing about her life as she prepares to start donating her organs at the age of thirty-one. She and her fellow clones have been bred precisely to be organ donors – a practice which has been undertaken for decades in order to ensure a steady supply of organs to be used for transplantation into the ailing bodies of non-cloned humans. This scenario seems worthy of a typical science/speculative fiction dystopia, but Ishiguro resists the traditional science fiction tropes and instead focuses on Kathy’s representation of her life, which is a recognisably human narrative, structured in the style of a Bildungsroman. Kathy seems to model her own self narration on the values
and life trajectories espoused in the nineteenth-century literature she is exposed to at the boarding school Hailsham, and these narratives, with their emphasis on social duty and determinism, instil in her a willingness to comply with her role as an organ donor. For the clones, narrative and artistic representation seems to be the only way they can assert a ‘self’. However, whilst Kathy may have the freedom to narrate her experience, her life is also largely ‘co-authored’ by virtue of the genetic intervention in her birth, as well her lack of bodily agency determined by her status as ‘donor’.

The idea of free will is complicated by the emergence of clone narratives, and of genetic engineering more broadly, when the event of a pre-determined life leads us to question notions of agency in a wider context. By asking questions about Kathy’s ability to determine her life, the reader must also ask those questions of themselves. This novel shows that Kathy’s experience is not so far removed from our own, and that many of the social and linguistic structures we have created, in turn, create us, shape us, and determine us. The figure of the clone is particularly interesting when discussing a narrative or represented view of ‘self’ because the clone is a figure removed from a ‘natural’ biological lineage, as well as from social histories, and, in this way, is de-contextualised. This de-contextualisation makes it easier for the reader to view the clone from the ‘outside’, and to judge the self-making activities of the clone without bringing themselves into the world of the clone.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I will focus primarily on the act of representation itself, including the ways in which narrative representation both reflects and constructs our experience, as well as how we rely on imitation and
repetition of pre-existing narratives to inform our own sense of self. The second chapter will explain how the nineteenth-century narrative models that both Ishiguro and his narrator draw from uphold the ideals of duty, class, and purpose. This chapter will also discuss the role of literature as a vehicle for social values. The third chapter will discuss the idea of mind-body dualism and the tendency to ascribe value to both the mind, and artistic and narrative representations of the mind. This chapter will also demonstrate how the clone figure is aligned with the devalued body – as something which is both objectified, and deemed as ‘animal’. The fourth and final chapter examines how the clones’ lived experience is incompatible with the narrative models they look to in order to shape their own narratives. In this chapter I will also discuss the extent to which literature allows for differences in bodily experience.
Chapter 1: Representation and Repetition

Narrative representation is valued not only as a means to recognise the personhood of others, but also as a way in which we construct ‘meaningful’ lives for ourselves. As Roland Barthes explains, when discussing his theory of the death of the author, our ‘selves’ are largely textual constructions that work to create our experience rather than merely reflect it: ‘life never does more than imitate the book, and the book itself is only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred’ (Barthes 1981, 212). The split between mind and body, and, in turn, the idea that narration is additional to the bodily experience, overlooks the fact that narrative does not remain a detached description of physical events that occur independently of narration, but in many ways directs our lived experience. A problem then occurs when we recognise that if we rely on other narratives to build our own narrative representation of self, we may be structuring our ‘selves’ upon repeated models of life which largely ignore the physical, bodily experience of the individual. This chapter is focused on the role of artistic and narrative representation in both constructing and relaying the ‘self’. This idea that artistic representation is somehow evidence of an essentially human experience is something which is instilled in the Hailsham clones throughout their education, and it is a notion which remains with them, largely informing their actions and beliefs. However, they are perhaps not aware of the extent to which these representations are derived from other representations, and the implications that this repetition of forms can have on the construction of both the individual and society.
The Role of Art in *Never Let Me Go*

Anthony Kerby, in discussing the links between representation and a notion of the ‘self’, claims that ‘though language is perhaps the most important signifying system, it is clear, to take one example, that art in its various nonlinguistic forms can also express the subject’ (Kerby 1991, 101). Though my chief concern in this dissertation is literary narrative representation, I think it is important to mention the value placed on all artistic representation within *Never Let Me Go*. The priority given to artistic instruction during the clones’ education at Hailsham seems to be delivered at the expense of knowledge about their social position, almost as a means to distract the clones from their determined purpose as donors. Once Kathy and Tommy meet with their Hailsham guardians and gain a greater picture of their place within society, Kathy asks a question which has also been plaguing the reader: What is the point of educating the clones and directing them towards artistic pursuits? ‘Why did we do all of that work in the first place? Why train us, encourage us, make us produce all of that? If we’re just going to give donations anyway, then die, why all those lessons? Why all these books and discussions?’ (Ishiguro 2010, 254). In *Never Let Me Go*, the answer seems to be two-fold: to encourage the clones to produce art to represent their selfhood to others, and to forge a selfhood for themselves. A rumour circulates around Hailsham proposing that the clones’ art is representative of an ‘inner’ self, with Tommy explaining that Miss Lucy said their artworks ‘revealed what you were like inside. She said they revealed your soul’ (Ishiguro 2010, 173). Their art is assumedly used in Madame’s ‘gallery’ for precisely this purpose – to serve as
‘evidence’ of the humanity of the clones in order to justify the ethical treatment of them. Interestingly, this ethical treatment does not extend to sparing them from their eventual fate as organ donors, but instead focuses on providing them with a semblance of a ‘human’ life, the value of which, for the society within the novel, seems to be linked to education and a cultivation of the mental self, rather than to bodily agency. Miss Emily confirms this when she expresses her assessment of Kathy and Tommy upon seeing them as adults: ‘Look at you both now. You’ve had good lives, you’re educated and cultured’ (Ishiguro 2010, 256).

While the founders of Hailsham feel it is important for the clones to be able to represent themselves artistically so that their humanity can be recognised by others, it is just as crucial for the clones to recognise their humanity themselves. Miss Lucy suggests to Tommy that he should start putting more effort into his artwork, claiming: ‘You’ll get a lot from it, just for yourself’ (Ishiguro 2010, 106). In order to see themselves as human, and as having the kind of value we bestow upon the human, the clones must give their lives meaning in the same fashion as the non-cloned humans: through representation. Kerby explains that artistic representation is a particularly human act, and that an exterior rendering of an interior process relays that interiority to others through a process which attaches meaning to our experience: ‘our history constitutes a drama in which we are a leading character, and the meaning of this role is to be found only through the recollective and imaginative configuring of that history in autobiographical acts’ (Kerby 1991, 7). This interiority elevates the human above a mere physical existence in which they act, to an existence in which
they can reflect on their actions. But in order for others to recognise our human
capacity for reflection, we must be able to represent it to them, and, while the main
representation of an inner life in *Never Let Me Go* is expressed through Kathy’s
narrative, we also see it in Tommy’s drawings. Though these drawings look like
basic animals from afar, upon closer inspection they are intricate and detailed –
much like the clones themselves – and reveal a complexity and vulnerability of the
creatures that extends beyond a functional view of their bodies. These artistic
endeavours are valued as ‘human’ by the society within the novel. They are upheld
by the guardians as civilised, rational pursuits of the mind, rather than being
associated with the animality of the body. But this begs the question as to whether
the clones’ art is actually representative of an innate interiority, or whether it is more
a repetition of what is outside of themselves.

**Narrative Construction**

There is a sense in which, because a large amount of the clones’ encounters with
human models is through representation, their performance of their own humanity
comes from mimicking text rather than physical reality. But, for Jerome Bruner, this
is constitutive of what we communally agree on as being ‘human’ reality: ‘There
seems indeed to be some sense in which narrative, rather than referring to “reality”,
may in fact create or constitute it’ (Bruner 1991, 13). Narration, then, seems to be
something that is used both to describe reality and to construct it, as part of a
reciprocal process which leaves us unsure as to what can be said to be wholly outside
of representation. Bruner suggests that this representation of our ‘selves’ as narrative
can lead to a confusion between the experiencing self of action, and the representational self of story, claiming that ‘in the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we “tell about” our lives’ (Bruner 2004, 694). A linguistic representation of ourselves is so entwined with our notion of ‘self’ that it can become difficult to recognise that what we take to be our own personal values and beliefs are in fact not necessarily a reflection of what is within us, but are rather reflective of our narrative environment. Kerby claims that often there is a failure to recognise the constructive role of narratives in our society, and that ‘the real reason for this may well be not a lack of narratives but simply our embeddedness in them and the myopia this lack of distance often leads to’ (Kerby 1991, 58). A failure to recognise that we are products of our social environment, and the values and beliefs held therein, means that we have little objectivity when evaluating our social norms, especially in relation to ourselves.

An interesting aspect to Ishiguro’s narrator in *Never Let Me Go* is that she often tells her story as if it were in some sense predetermined, or is recollecting it as if the events were ‘destined’. It is as if Kathy expects a certain plot to unfold, and her expectation of narrative elements seems to shape both how she approaches, and how she recollects, her life. The clones’ awareness of their ‘ends’ from the start seems only to add to this sense of expectation of a structured life, as this knowledge affords them the peculiar experience of seeing their lives as a ‘whole’ from the outset. Throughout the novel, Kathy often makes remarks such as ‘Then of course I found it’, or ‘I realised I wasn’t surprised by it at all; that in some funny way I’d been
waiting for it’ (Ishiguro 2010, 169, 275). She speaks as if she recognises herself as a character in a novel; as if her story pre-exists her and she is merely enacting it. And, in a sense, this is true, if we take her genetic determination, carefully cultivated upbringing, and planned donations as evidence of her life trajectory being authored by others. However, this expectation and subsequent representation of the self in narrative form is one way in which Kathy can present herself as living a particularly human existence; a way in which she can perform her humanity for both an audience and for herself.

Performance and Repetition

The only access the clones have to the lives of ‘normal’ humans is through representation. As such, they use these textual representations to shape their own behaviour. In fact, most of the clones are shown to attribute the actions of the other clones to something they have seen or read, as if the only way they can act is by performance, or mimicry of others. An example of this ‘performative’ behaviour is evident when Tommy is having a tantrum and the school girls suggest that he is ‘rehearsing Shakespeare’ (Ishiguro 2010, 10). Krystyna Stamirowska suggests that Kathy addressing the reader is not as self-serving as it is for some of the narrators in Ishiguro’s other novels such as The Remains of the Day (1989), in which the narrator, Stevens, seems to use his narrative to justify his actions. Instead, Stamirowska claims that ‘Kathy’s discourse refuses to play their narcissistic game of pretending to address others while they are really talking to themselves. It therefore possesses an ethical dimension impossible to achieve by those other selfish figures’
(Stamirowska 2011, 64). But Kathy’s narrative performance seems to be as much for herself as for any potential reader, if, in fact, the text is meant for a reader at all. It appears to be an uncalculated performance of humanity, presented in the narrative medium in which she has encountered other performances of humanity.

The clones in *Never Let Me Go* are not only ‘copies’ of someone else by virtue of their genetics, but they also work hard to be copies of human archetypes that they encounter through the literature and film they consume. They have limited exposure to models of normal human life and behaviour, given that the only non-cloned humans they encounter during their childhood are their teachers and the occasional delivery driver. In this way, their conception of a human life is cobbled together from impressions of their teachers, their heavily-censored education, the sometimes misguided information passed between the students themselves, and perhaps most importantly from textual representations of human lives. The novels that they read and films they watch are the only means by which they can see a life as a perceived unity – as a ‘whole’.

Bernard Williams argues that the primary way we make sense of ourselves is in relation to the stories of others: ‘narrative is a fiction, the power and plausibility of which lies in such things as its resemblance to familiar stories, its capacity to help us make sense of some larger set of events, or its reassurances that there can be some immanent meaning’ (Williams 2009, 313). Kathy observes her fellow clones imitating representations of ‘normal’ humans when they move to the Cottages in
their adolescence. The clone couples in particular seem to take their cues from couples on the television shows that they watch (Ishiguro 2010, 118). Kathy recognises the absurdity of mirroring human behaviour from a representation when she notices Ruth adopting this ‘couple’ behaviour: “‘It’s not something worth copying,” I told her. “It’s not what people really do out there, in normal life’” (Ishiguro 2010, 121). However, Kathy is just as indebted to textual representations of humans for her own socialisation. This is made evident through the old-fashioned civility of her narrative style, which is reminiscent of the Victorian novels she chooses to study. Kathy’s narration is a subtler mimicry of her narrative environment than Ruth’s, and because of this she seems to remain unaware of how much of her sense of self is reliant on these repeated narratives.

The distance between recycled representations and lived experience suggests that what the clones are copying is not ‘natural’ human behaviour, but also that to construct one’s represented self from the representations of others is, on the other hand, a ‘normal’ human practice. Repetition and reiteration of the narratives of others perpetuates the understanding of self as representation. If we are to accept that we repeat what is outside of ourselves, then the guardians of Hailsham, with their claims that artistic representations will reveal the ‘souls’ or interiority of the clones, is surely misguided. The art of the clones is then reduced to a mimicry of what we have communally agreed upon as ‘human behaviour’. Jean Baudrillard sees this repetition of forms and ideas as another type of ‘cloning’, one which leaves little
room for bodily or experiential difference in its reducing the ‘human’ to a set of
definitive and normative traits:

It is culture that clones us, and mental cloning anticipates any
biological cloning. It is the matrix of acquired traits that, today, clones
us culturally […] and it is all the innate differences that are annulled,
inexorably, by ideas, by ways of life, by the cultural context. Through
school systems, media, culture, and mass information, singular beings
become identical copies of one another. (Baudrillard 2001, 25)

However, basing a concept of self on oft-repeated representations of others often
ignores real bodily and experiential differences. And the question is begged as to
where along this line of repeated representations does the representation refer
directly to a lived experience; or do past representations now constitute present lived
experience? The issue then becomes: what narratives are the clones looking to for
their depictions of human existence, and are these narratives compatible with their
own experience? In the following chapter, I will look in detail at the nineteenth-
century narrative models the Hailsham clones look to in order to gain a picture of
‘normal’ human life.
Chapter 2: Societal Duty and Individual Purpose in the Nineteenth-Century Novel

The clones of Hailsham look to textual representations for models of ‘life’ which they can emulate. Kathy’s claim that the clones had access to ‘a lot of nineteenth-century stuff’ (Ishiguro 2010, 97), coupled with her choice of Victorian literature as her main topic of study, elucidates many aspects of the clones’ formation. In this chapter, I will discuss how the nineteenth-century novel, and, in particular, the *Bildungsroman*, works to shape Kathy’s narration of herself both in its structure and in the values and beliefs that drive her thought and action. For comparison, I will use Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) – a classic *Bildungsroman* text – to highlight the similarities and differences of the two novels’ structure and themes. Many aspects of nineteenth-century society seem to make themselves manifest in Kathy’s narrative, and the emphasis on education, determinism, and purpose found within *Never Let Me Go* echo much of the literature of that period. The literature that the clones read, coupled with their education, seem to shape them into individuals who are willing to submit to their social order at the expense of a bodily autonomy.

The *Bildungsroman*, Society, and Education

The classical English *Bildungsroman*, a popular form in nineteenth-century literature, tends to see its protagonists through the formative years of their lives, and into their eventual integration into their society. Franco Moretti claims that the *Bildungsroman* aims to harmonize the individual’s goals with larger societal norms,
to settle ‘the conflict between the ideal of self-determination and the equally imperious demands of socialization’ (Moretti 1987, 15). Often the protagonist must forego a sense of individualism in order to achieve a societal ‘end’ which has been upheld throughout the education of the individual as endowing their lives with meaning. Such ends generally take the form of a marriage or an occupation – something which requires a synthesis of personal and societal narratives. Moretti suggests that it is education which instils the values necessary for an individual to willingly accommodate such a synthesis, stating that it is ‘necessary that, as a “free individual”, not as a fearful subject but as a convinced citizen, one perceives the social norms as one’s own. One must internalize them and fuse external compulsion and internal impulses into a new unity until the former is no longer distinguishable from the latter’ (Moretti 1987, 16). He explains that any incompatibility of social aims and individual will is dissolved by the internalisation of these social aims, such that the individual believes that their will coheres to the normative life models and functions found within their society.

Education plays a significant role in the Bildungsroman, with the protagonist generally being transformed into a more ‘civilised’ individual through the process. This education is focused on refining the mind, and on the notion that one’s value can be attributed to their artistic and intellectual achievements, coupled with a genteel and moral comportment. Indeed, in Jane Eyre such an importance is placed on civilising the mind and ‘spirit’ of the children at Lowood Orphanage, that it is often undertaken at the expense of their bodily needs: ‘When you put bread and
cheese, instead of burnt porridge, into these children’s mouths, you may indeed feed their vile bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls’ (Brontë 1999, 53). During the nineteenth century it had become a popular notion that education, particularly education in the arts, had the effect of elevating individuals above their bodily experience. This can be seen through the character Pip in *Great Expectations* (1861), who is given the opportunity to become a ‘gentleman’ in place of his life of toil as a blacksmith. Another example can be seen through the creature in *Frankenstein* (1818). Although *Frankenstein* is not an example of a Victorian *Bildungsroman*, it does exemplify the role of education in determining the ‘value’ of a person, with the creature only achieving a recognition of his humanity in connection to his mind once it has been properly ‘schooled’. In 1837 George Rennie, a sculptor, said that it was ‘gratifying to observe the influence of the fine arts, in thus calming those passions, which on other occasions break out in angry conflicts; whilst they have here joined in peaceful harmony, to promote the instructive recreation of the people, through the contemplation of the fine arts’ (Foggo 1837, 12). Not only would this education in the arts ‘civilise’ the student, but it would also provide an avenue through which educators could influence public opinion.

Literature, in particular, was a useful medium through which to impart social values, and provide life models to shape the formation of impressionable minds. Karl Morgenstern, credited with first using the term *Bildungsroman*, explains that the form is one which lends itself to the development of the reader. This is something
which is demonstrated by the often avid readers who are the protagonists of such novels, as well as readers outside of the text:

It will justly bear the name *Bildungsroman* firstly and primarily on account of its thematic material, because it portrays the *Bildung* of the hero in its beginnings and growth to a certain stage of completeness; and also secondly because it is by virtue of this portrayal that it furthers the reader’s *Bildung* to a much greater extent than any other kind of novel. (Quoted in Swales 1978, 12)

It would seem this privilege of an education would come at the price of being guided towards a particular life trajectory, and in *Never Let Me Go*, we can see precisely how influential the narrative form of the *Bildungsroman* is for its reader.

*Never Let Me Go as Bildungsroman*

The setting of the boarding school, the emphasis on education, and the melding of individual will and societal duty all lend themselves to *Never Let Me Go* being recognisably similar to this style. Ishiguro not only uses the *Bildungsroman* form – separating childhood, adolescence and adulthood – to shape this novel, but also investigates how the *Bildungsroman* is both a novel of formation for the character within the text, and for the reader engaging with the text. Kathy’s own values, beliefs, and sense of self are, in part, guided by the literature she reads, and her extensive reading of nineteenth-century literature in particular upholds the faith in education, civility, and social duty that is also espoused by her guardians at Hailsham. She not only emulates the social morals and values championed by such texts, but also the life trajectories and narrative models that frame them. In view of this, it is unsurprising that literature is one of the educative tools discussed most frequently in *Never Let Me Go*, given its propensity to convey particular attitudes
and meanings to its readers. Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck, in discussing the ways in which ideology is transmitted through literature, suggest that ‘narrative is the main form of cultural production to embody normality and establish or maintain […] hegemony – that is, the absolute and unquestioned dominance of a particular view or group’ (Herman and Vervaeck 2007, 218). The clones being encouraged to read thus not only occupies their time and directs their attention away from their fate, but also instils in them a sense of civility and a compliance with the values supported by their curriculum. Near the end of the novel, Miss Emily discusses how Hailsham was founded upon the idea that raising clones in ‘humane, cultivated environments’ would create ‘educated and cultured’ individuals, and greatly enhance the clones’ experience of their lives (Ishiguro 2010, 256).

The education the clones receive, however, is selective. What is taught and what is omitted provides the clones with a very structured view of the world, and ultimately produces students who parrot the particular views and values they have become accustomed to. They are ‘told and not told’ (Ishiguro 2010, 79) about the world they live in and their role within it. So while the Hailsham guardians encourage their students to learn and create, they prevent the clones from gaining a fuller understanding of their place in the world, believing this would negate the value of the education they provide for them:

‘You wouldn’t be who you are today if we’d not protected you. You wouldn’t have become absorbed in your lessons, you wouldn’t have lost yourselves in your art and your writing. Why should you have done, knowing what lay in store for each of you? You would have told us it was all pointless, and how could we have argued with you?’ (Ishiguro 2010, 263)
And this seems to be true, as once Kathy and Tommy have had any uncertainty over their place in the world cleared up by their former guardians, they both seem solely focused on their respective ends, with Tommy showing less enthusiasm for his art, and both of them finding less pleasure in each other’s company as they both wait to be called on to donate. Though the idea of a deferral from their donations – their impetus for meeting with their former guardians – seemed an event to steer Kathy and Tommy from a determined path towards their donations, they, like typical Bildungsroman protagonists, return to the road that has been set for them – their will cohering to their social duty once more.

Moretti suggests that the Bildungsroman encompasses a negotiation between individual and social aims; that it is an ‘exchange, and one in which something is gained and something is lost’ (Moretti 1987, 17). For the clones in Never Let Me Go, what is lost is their freedom to choose their own ends, and what is gained is that their ends have a social utility which gives them a sense of purpose. When Kathy and Tommy visit with Madame and Miss Emily near the end of the novel, Miss Emily explains to Kathy how this negotiation of individual and social aims has brought about advancements for humans, but only at the expense of the clones:

‘I can see […], that it might look as though you were simply pawns in a game. It can certainly be looked at like that […]. You have to accept that sometimes that’s how things happen in this world. People’s opinions, their feelings, they go one way, then the other. It just so happens you grew up at a certain point in this process.’ (Ishiguro 2010, 261)
The ‘people’ Miss Emily refers to are the powerful ‘majority’ of society – a majority that does not include the clones. Because of this, Kathy’s attempt to reconcile her individual will with her social role is pointless, except as a comforting lie, one which is drawn from a desire to lead a purposeful life. The fact that the clones in *Never Let Me Go* so willingly subscribe to the typical *Bildungsroman* ideal of a life having a unity and purpose ensures their compliance with their eventual fate as organ donors. The way that the clones follow the normative narratives they encounter and uphold the values gained through their education, in many ways makes them complicit with their own social determinism. And this determinism is ironically the product of an education which is administered in order to give the clones the opportunity to cultivate themselves and improve their experience. The internalisation that Moretti explains is essential for the synthesis of the individual with society can perhaps be recognised most keenly in the pride the clones exhibit near the end of the novel towards their status as donor. Their behaviour suggests that it is *they* who have chosen their function, rather than society.

**Social Determinism and Nineteenth-Century Literature**

The role of society in shaping the life trajectory of the individual was a subject of great interest in the nineteenth century, with many theorists recognising the influence of political ideology as a tool for creating and maintaining a social order. This ideology was largely guided by a changing economic and scientific landscape in the nineteenth century. Hayden White explains that the nineteenth century saw major cultural changes that have had a lasting impact on our social structures, including,
the establishment and integration of the nation-state, the transition from an ‘estate’ to a ‘class’ organization of society, the advent of corporate capitalism, and the transformation of the masses from subjects into citizens capable of taking their place as functionaries in a system of production and exchange for profit rather than use. (White 2010, 294)

This landscape was also influenced by new discoveries in genetic and evolutionary science, which led to a distancing from religion, and a greater interest in the idea of social determinism and the biological origins of the human. Just as the clones in *Never Let Me Go* are largely associated with ‘animality’ by their wider society, so too were the working class in the nineteenth century. The similarities between the clones and the working class are many, with both having worth attributed to what their bodies can do for a second party. Maurice Larkin discusses the influence of genetic and evolutionary science on the way humans and society were viewed over the nineteenth century, suggesting that the pointed interest in class apparent in much of the literature of the time, is linked to the popularity of such developments:

Self-consciously aware of the animal origins and the animal nature of Man, it was not surprising that a number of the later Realists should look to the manual classes as fruitful ground for their investigations. Living nearer to subsistence, the worker and the peasant shared the danger, toil and insecurity of animal life; their hard existence, and lack of education and possessions, largely limited their activities and pleasures to the simple gratification of the senses […]. The middle and upper classes, by contrast, were seen as too thickly coated with the veneer of civilised behaviour for the animality within them to be so easily portrayed. (Larkin 1977, 132)

Larkin points to the split maintained between the upper and lower classes by the opposing forces of animality and civility – a division which I will return to in the following chapter.
The idea that one is shaped by one’s genetic and societal circumstances from birth worked to uphold the idea that everything had its natural place, though the lack of education available to those in the lower classes was evidently a systematic way of maintaining a social hierarchy. This social hierarchy was upheld as aiding the smooth functioning of the whole of society, and the revolutionary activity seen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had disillusioned many to the idea of being able to affect real social change. Larkin demonstrates that social disparity was criticised but ultimately upheld within many authors’ works, with much literature displaying ‘the archetype of the parasitical intellectual who is able to live on the labour of other people because, in their innocence and admiration, his benefactors imagine that they are serving science and humanity in providing for his material wants’ (Larkin 1977, 167). This attitude is apparent in the protagonist of Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day*. Stevens, a butler to an English lord, believes that his servitude is of the utmost importance to his master, and undertakes his role with the pride in knowing he is aiding his employer. In *Never Let Me Go*, this attitude is more subtly evident in the way the clones perceive their donations. When Kathy reunites with Ruth, who has started her donations, Ruth explains: ‘I was pretty much ready when I became a donor. It felt right. After all, it’s what we’re supposed to be doing, isn’t it?’ (Ishiguro 2010, 223). These kinds of affirmations are suggestive of the self-regulation that the clones demonstrate within their own society, as well as the determinism imposed upon them by wider human society. They serve to convince the clones that their wishes align with a path determined by others.
Though the idea of social mobility was aided by economic change during the nineteenth-century, for the vast majority of people, their social trajectory was determined at birth. Mieke Bal, in discussing how theories of narrative are influenced by society, suggests that these deterministic views were upheld in literature also: ‘In many so-called “realistic” nineteenth-century novels the class structure of bourgeois society is decisive – one is determined for life by one’s social background’ (Bal 1985, 28). In *Jane Eyre*, Jane, like Ishiguro’s Stevens and Kathy, readily submits to what she perceives to be her ‘station’ in life. Even when she wishes to leave Lowood and embark on a new life, she still recognises the limits of her situation, and seems to bend her desires thusly:

> A new servitude! There is something in that […] I know there is, because it does not sound too sweet; it is not like such words as Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment: delightful sounds truly; but no more than sounds for me; and so hollow and fleeting that it is mere waste of time to listen to them. But Servitude! That must be matter of fact. Any one may serve: I have served here eight years; now all I want is to serve elsewhere. (Brontë 1999, 73-74)

Jane willingly resigns herself to a life of servitude, and this servitude is even set to continue upon marrying Rochester once he has become blind and dependent on her, a circumstance she seems quite comfortable with, stating: ‘I love you better now, when I can really be useful, to you, than I did in your state of proud independence’ (Brontë 1999, 394).

The class inequality that was once supported as a ‘God-given’ order, was now also defended as ‘social determinism’, noting that persons are products of their environment. But rather than attempt to change the environment to better the
outcomes for the people, Terry Eagleton suggests that the social order was rather ‘naturalised’ by the ideology at the time, and this ideology was particularly evident in the literature of the day (Eagleton 1994, 135). He explains that literature worked to aid not just a view that class distinctions were natural, but also as a process of social denial: ‘The actually impoverished experience of the mass of people, an impoverishment bred by their social conditions, can be supplemented by literature instead of working to change such conditions […], you can vicariously fulfil someone’s desire for a fuller life by handing them Pride and Prejudice’ (Eagleton 1994, 26-27). These ‘social conditions’ are evident in the literature that Kathy reads at Hailsham and the Cottages. In George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda (1876) – one of the Victorian novels Kathy studies at the Cottages – the character Gwendolen shows a certain contempt both towards those lower than herself, and towards the idea of a life being determined by one’s society: ‘Other people allowed themselves to be made slaves of, and to have their lives blown hither and thither like empty ships in which no will was present’ (Eliot 1971, 36). This ‘being made slaves of’ is indicative of the new worker of the nineteenth century, one which surrendered themselves to their profession. Moretti discusses this division of the worker into a private individual and a public utility when he states that,

the modern world has produced [a division] between ‘life’ and ‘profession’ (science, politics, economics, art: it makes no difference). In the latter field, rationalization and specialization have gone so far that whoever engages in it must accept the biblical sacrifice of his subjective yearnings to its unyielding laws. (Moretti 1987, 217)

His sentiments are suggestive of the loss of individuality in the workplace. The rigidity and conformity that were largely the results of industrialisation, produced a
depersonalised workforce – one that perhaps typifies the traditional idea of ‘clones’. As for the actual clones of *Never Let Me Go*, whose lives and function are condensed into one, they have neither the opportunity, nor the breadth of political and social knowledge, required to convince people that they are anything but a hoard of nameless, soulless creatures waiting to fulfil their function in service of their employer.

**Teleology and Purpose**

These discourses of utility and function are made manifest in the way the clones construct their own narratives – in how they make sense of their lives both individually and within society. We see this in each of the characters in *Never Let Me Go*: Tommy is seen as having no value because he does not make art for the school children’s market; Ruth is viewed as a ‘bad’ organ donor because she could not survive through two donations; Kathy prides herself on being a good carer; and ultimately the clones are valued for the organs they donate. Their value is not intrinsic to them; rather, it is found in their output – what they can do for a second party. Mark Jerng discusses this utilitarian purpose of the clone when he looks at the life span of the clone as being defined by their function: ‘the life trajectory is governed by the functionality of being a clone, moving from childhood to “carer”, to donor, and finally to “completion”. Rather than being defined by internal states of development, the clones are defined through the status of their functionality’ (Jerng 2008, 384). Both the clones themselves, and the humans who depend on them, value the clones for their utility. Ruth echoes this sentiment when she explains to Kathy
that at Hailsham, the children are taught to attribute self-worth to what they can produce: ‘It’s all part of what made Hailsham so special […] the way we were encouraged to value each other’s work’ (Ishiguro 2010, 16). But the clones’ ultimate purpose is to donate their organs and die, and the values that have been instilled in them through their education cause them to embrace this purpose as something that gives their lives a sense of meaning and teleology, rather than something to be feared. Kathy’s end as character in the text coincides with her end as a subject within the world of the text. Once she has reached her donations, she has reached her goal – there is no imagining the rest of Kathy’s story after she has reached this purpose, as one may in a traditional *Bildungsroman* text. The clone’s purpose is death – completion – as is the character’s.

Death, then, becomes both the socially defined ‘ends’ or purpose of the clone body, as well as the individual, meaningful end that the clone looks to in order to shape their life narrative. Frank Kermode suggests that in our narration of a life, we are prone to look towards our ‘end’ to temporally frame and give significance to our existence: ‘All such plotting presupposes and requires that an end will bestow upon the whole duration and meaning’ (Kermode 2000, 46). Due to the authored nature of the clones’ biological and social existence, the clones have their lives mapped out in a similar fashion to the character of a text, lending to a much more apparent determinism than is evident in the life of a non-cloned human. Kermode, in discussing the links between literature and life, states that: ‘In a novel the beginning implies the end: if you seem to begin at the beginning, […] you are in fact beginning
at the end [...]. This [...] distinguishes novels from life’ (Kermode 2000, 148). But
the clone life is the exception: if you have been engineered for a particular end, your
end is also concurrent with your beginnings. Nineteenth-century realism, and, in
particular, the *Bildungsroman*, are literary models largely concerned with their ends;
that is, with an expectation of a resolution and the meaning and coherence which
accompany it. Thomas Docherty describes this when he discusses ‘ends’ in realist
fiction:

> Such an account is sufficient to much Realist fiction, when we wish
the character to be a single unified centre to which we can refer all
(and possible deviant) actions performed by that character. The centre
of the character becomes the end-point, the telos, or ‘meaningful self’
which explains the character. (Docherty 1983, 128)

The realist character and clone are teleological: all of their actions cohere to this final
meaning which is made evident at their respective ends – the end of the novel or the
end of their life. The typical ending of the *Bildungsroman* sees the protagonist
relinquish a part of their individuality in order to ‘merge’ with their society.

In *Jane Eyre*, like many other texts of its time, this ‘merging’ comes in the form of a
marriage. When Rochester proposes marriage, he asks Jane ‘to pass through life at
my side – to be my second self’ (Brontë 1999, 223). Rochester intends for Jane to
give up her occupation, as well as an independent income, upon marrying him. And,
although Jane wishes to retain some independence, she does submit to the idea that
her life will become an aspect of his: ‘I thought of the life that lay before me – *your*
life, sir – an existence more expansive and stirring than my own’ (Brontë 1999, 247).
The selfhood of the wife seems to be subsumed by the husband in this traditional
view of marriage, and with this loss of individuality comes the sense that she is merely an appendage of her husband, just as the clones of *Never Let Me Go* will be of the recipients of their organs. While marriage is generally seen as the eventual purpose of the character in the *Bildungsroman*, one that fulfils the individual’s social role, death is the event that reconciles the individual clone with their social function in *Never Let Me Go*. Death being the ultimate purpose of the clone only serves to inflate the sense that meaning is attached to the expectation of ‘ends’ espoused by Kermode and Docherty. The narrative of purpose and utility that has driven the clones to their donations – or their ‘ends’ – seems so embedded in them that when Kathy and Tommy are given the opportunity to possibly delay further donations, they do not immediately take the opportunity. The hesitancy from Tommy seems in part due to the fact that if he is not donating, he is unsure how to occupy his time: ‘Suppose she lets us have three years, say, just to ourselves. What do we do exactly?’ (Ishiguro 2010, 240). Ultimately they delay going to see Madam because admitting to wanting a deferral from their donations is to veer from their predetermined course and deny their purpose. Tommy’s final ‘animal’ outburst in the field after their visit to Madame seems to be a venting of frustration over a fact he already knew: that he has no choice in his ‘purpose’, and that this visit has shattered any notion of free will they had constructed for themselves by adhering to this narrative of social duty. It is far nicer for the clones to feel they are donating of their own volition, rather than as the tools of others. However, not recognising their status as ‘tools’ of their wider society ensures that the clones’ bodies remain objectified. While most non-cloned humans have a sense of bodily agency in addition to the mental freedom to construct
a narrative ‘self’, the clones – much like the working class of the nineteenth century – are caught between the ‘self’ they have been conditioned to represent, and the body which is prey to the motivations of others. Over the following two chapters I will turn to the issue of the clone body itself, discussing how the body comes to be devalued, and how the repetition of received narrative models both hinders and aids the clones’ access to a recognition of their personhood.
Chapter 3: Body and Self, Animality and Humanity

Thus far this paper has been largely focused on the represented self, but as I have suggested, this representation seems to privilege those who do not experience bodily hardship; those who *can* conceive of themselves as somewhat of a ‘disembodied mind’ without surrendering a freedom over their bodies. Over the last two chapters I shall argue how prioritising a represented self over a bodily self can ignore and perpetuate the bodily suffering of those whose bodies are seen as instrumental; those who are viewed as just bodies to be used for the ends of others. In *Never Let Me Go*, the clones seem to be viewed by many in their society as being ‘just’ a body, and are at pains to prove themselves otherwise: a condition that could perhaps apply equally to non-cloned humans. The philosophical theory of Dualism, in terms of the separation of mind and body, has had a significant impact on how we conceive of the self and how we view humans in relation to the world at large. It has led to our distancing ourselves from nature more generally, but also distancing our ‘selves’ from our bodies, as we tend to associate our ‘self’ with our mind. This gap between mind and body is only enlarged by our use of language, and our narrative tendencies to conceptualise the self in retrospect, rather than privilege the present experience of the body. In this chapter, I will discuss how ideas of dualism can lead to an objectification of the body, as well as a distancing of the ‘human’ from the mortal or ‘animal’ body.
Dualism

The idea of the separation of mind and body has been circulated for many hundreds of years, but is perhaps most popularly understood through the phrase attributed to René Descartes: ‘cogito ergo sum’. I do not aim here to discuss the validity of Cartesian or substance dualism as a theory, but instead to show how the separation of the concepts ‘mind’ and ‘body’, and the subsequent privileging of the mind, have influenced both the way we define the human subject, and the way we conceive of a ‘self’. Descartes argues that a ‘self’ is to be equated with an immaterial mind, which, though it has an effect on the physical body, is not part of that physicality: ‘I am therefore, precisely speaking, only a thing which thinks, that is to say, a mind, understanding, or reason [...]’. I am not this assemblage of limbs called the human body’ (Descartes 1968, 105). If we are to agree that selfhood is attributed to the mind alone, this causes numerous problems relating to what we can and cannot call a ‘person’. William Jaworski discusses the separation of personhood and the body when he claims that,

if substance dualism is true, the human organisms you see around you are not persons. Those organisms might be attached to persons, but they are not persons themselves. Organisms are bodies, physical beings, and according to substance dualism persons and bodies are distinct: the former are purely mental beings, the latter purely physical ones. (Jaworski 2011, 37)

To separate the mind and body completely suggests a privileging of one over the other; and the valuing of one ‘substance’ as being wholly attributable to personhood is problematic for those who are thought to be ‘just’ bodies.
Descartes’ project entailed trying to locate his own ‘self’, but to recognise the selfhood of others one must rely on the ‘self’ as not merely being attributed to a mind, but to representations of a mind. Maurice Merleau-Ponty challenges Descartes’ position by claiming that to reduce the ‘self’ to the mind requires a conceptualisation in language – something which comes to us from outside of ourselves: ‘The cogito at which we arrive by reading Descartes is […] a spoken cogito, put into words and understood in words’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 402). This internal process of locating the ‘self’ relies then on external constructs and inherited models of thought that tend to remain, in some sense, peripheral to the body. We are left with a privileging of a represented self which we take to be reflective of an inherent self, but which is, in actuality, influenced by external factors. This can have negative effects on those who are deemed not to have such an interiority, or who are unable to represent themselves. Karen Barad suggests that bodies which cannot represent themselves in a recognisably ‘human’ way, such as animal bodies, posthuman bodies, and even some human bodies, are often left in a position in which they are represented and objectified by others: “there are assumed to be two distinct and independent kinds of entities – representations, and entities to be represented” (Barad 2003, 123). In being represented, these bodies become an object spoken of, rather than a subject speaking. Being seen as a body, rather than as a person, links one to a mortal ‘object’. Cartesian dualism is grounded in the religious belief that ‘persons’, or ‘subjects’, are instead aligned with an immaterial and immortal soul, and representation of this immortal ‘self’ in many ways seems to be an attempt to render this immortality in a more material form.
The Double and Death

To this notion of the separation of body and mind also belongs the separation of a ‘lived’ and ‘represented’ self. Representation in many ways serves as a ‘doubling’ of the self, and literature in particular is a medium which exemplifies both the split of mind and body, as well as ‘lived’ and ‘represented’ self, often both structurally and within its content. Genie Babb discusses how the Cartesian legacy has made its mark on literature by suggesting that the body is often what is ignored in a medium which, by its very design, is focused on the cognitively represented self: ‘Narratology has by and large privileged those aspects of character that represent interiority and consciousness; character's bodies are negligible’ (Babb 2002, 210). That we so readily correlate text on a page with a subject, whereas we might disregard the selfhood of a body incapable of representing itself, suggests our willingness to locate the ‘self’ in such textual representations of cognition.

The idea of somehow capturing the ‘self’ in artistic output is upheld by the clone students throughout their lives, encouraged by their teachers’ focus on art and literature at Hailsham. They are brought up to believe that ‘art bares the soul of the artist’ (Ishiguro 2010, 249). The infertility of the clones means that they cannot achieve a sense of continuation through biological reproduction, which makes it even more pertinent that they achieve this through representation. Kathy’s narrative and Tommy’s drawings have a sense of permanence; they are a static representation which does not undergo the change and death of their short-lived bodies. Otto
Rank’s theory of the ‘double’ suggests that the double, in its representational form, is created as a way of immortalising the self: ‘The idea of death, therefore, is denied by a duplication of the self incorporated in the shadow or in the reflected image’ (Rank 1971, 83). The clones’ desire to double the self through representation not only speaks to a wish to immortalise the self, but also shows their eagerness to attribute their ‘true’ self to their cognition and the products of their cognition, distancing their ‘self’ from a body over which they have no control.

While representation doubles the self in order to create a monument of the human, in *Never Let Me Go* we can see that the clone body is also a double in itself. The longevity of representations of the physical self causes a recognition of the transient nature of human life. However, it is not only artistic and literary representations that instil a fear of temporality. The guardians’ fear of the clone students is, again, suggestive of a fear of death. The clones are created so that the people in this society can stave off the sense of mortality attached to their physical bodies. Their status as ‘creations’ means that the clones themselves are *representations* of humanity, as well as being bodily doubles. Sigmund Freud, expanding on Rank’s argument, explains that ‘the “double” was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an “energetic denial of the power of death”’ (Freud 1919, 235). But the fact that the clones are created to be *just* a body used for its parts causes the humans – when confronted with the clone body – to become aware of that which initially inspired the creation of the clones: their own perishable bodies. As a result, the clone, although created as a tool for the humans to *cheat* death, ends up being a *reminder* of it. This
sense of fear surrounding the existence of the clone is confirmed by the Kathy’s description of Madame’s reaction towards the clones:

So you’re waiting, even if you don’t quite know it, waiting for the moment when you realise that you really are different to them, that there are people out there, like Madame, who don’t hate you or wish you any harm, but who nevertheless shudder at the very thought of you – of how you were brought into this world and why – and who dread the idea of your hand brushing against theirs. The first time you glimpse yourself through the eyes of a person like that, it’s a cold moment. It’s like walking past a mirror you’ve walked past every day of your life, and suddenly it shows you something else, something troubling and strange. (Ishiguro 2010, 36)

The clone as a double of the human body – as a representation of humanity – only serves to remind the non-cloned humans of their mortality. Encountering the clone, and the organ donations it represents, is like encountering deterioration and death, and is a constant reminder of the bodily existence the human wishes to overcome.

Objectified Bodies

In Kathy and Tommy’s confrontation with their teachers, Madame repeatedly uses the phrase ‘poor creatures’ (Ishiguro 2010, 267). And this is what the clone is to their wider society – a ‘creature’, both in the sense of being linked to the physicality of the animal: ‘A living or animate being; an animal, often as distinct from a person’ (Oxford English Dictionary n. 3.a), as well as being a ‘creation’: ‘An original production of human intelligence, power, skill, or art’ (OED n. 1.b). The clones are bred, genetically manipulated, and are viewed as objects, created by humans and thus under human control. Jürgen Habermas discusses the idea of the genetically engineered human as being viewed as ‘object’, in terms of their utility for a second party, rather than as a subject in their own right. He suggests that this objectification
is the product of asserting an authorial control over another being, thereby reducing the other being’s agency:

For as soon as adults treat the desirable genetic traits of their descendants as a product they can shape according to a design of their own liking, they are exercising a kind of control over their genetically manipulated offspring that intervenes in the somatic bases of another person’s spontaneous relation-to-self and ethical freedom […] obliterating the boundary between persons and things. (Habermas 2003, 13)

Being treated as an object, rather than a ‘full’ human, can lead to a disassociation with the subjugated body. Stephen Burwood discusses how the dualistic tendency to attribute the ‘self’ to the mind can have the consequence of the bodily experience being denied:

The sense of estrangement characteristic of dissociation thus usually arises […] for one of two reasons, both of which are disagreeable: (1) the debilitation of the body; or (2) the objectification of the person. It is in such circumstances that dissociation may lead one back to the idea that, in some deep sense, I am not my body. It is certainly the case that I may no longer feel that I fully ‘am’ my body, but that I merely ‘have’ a body. (Burwood 2008, 266)

The only way that Kathy can try and find meaning within her life is through writing and discursive reflection; any kind of bodily meaning seems impossible for a character whose body is not her own, and which is seen as a means to an end by others, rather than an end in itself. The idea that the clone’s consciousness is distanced from a body that belongs to others is nowhere more apparent than when Kathy and Tommy discuss his upcoming final donation. This is the first time either of them betrays their rigidly-controlled emotions to express fear over what is being done to them. Kathy elaborates on Tommy’s worries by explaining that, after the fourth donation, even if you’ve technically completed, you’re still conscious in some sort of way; how then you find there are more
donations, plenty of them, on the other side of that line; how there are no more recovery centres, no carers, no friends; how there’s nothing to do except watch your remaining donations until they switch you off. (Ishiguro 2010, 274)

The clones seem to fear the idea of just being a body on an operating table, having their organs taken at will and being ‘switched off’ by others.

Kathy uses narrative and writing to transcend a body that is not her own, both for her own mental wellbeing, and, indirectly, as a demonstration of her humanity to her readers, though we are unsure how her narrative would be disseminated, or even if she intends it to ever be read. Though Kathy’s narrative habits and Tommy’s artwork allow them to recognise their own selfhood, the detached physical form of these representations can also act as a hindrance in communicating the self to others, and thus a disassociation with the body in many ways ignores the oppression of that body.

The ‘Animal’ Body

In Never Let Me Go, there are many instances in which this detachment from the body is evident. Ishiguro leaves out bodily descriptors of the clones, rarely mentions them eating, and the clone characters seem as if they have a fairly clinical attitude towards sex. When the body is mentioned, it is done so in embarrassment, particularly in relation to the character of Tommy. Tommy’s emotional and physical outbursts cause him to be ridiculed and avoided by his fellow students. Ruth describes him as a ‘mad animal’ (Ishiguro 2010, 12), and this sentiment seems to carry through with most expressions of physicality in the novel. The separation
between animal and human informs how the clone students behave, favouring the civility and rationalism of a reserved countenance over the emotional expressivity they connect with the animal. This seems to stem from a fear that an ‘animal’ is all they are, and, arguably, their devotion to art and literature is an attempt to demonstrate their desire to be seen as rational, enlightened individuals. Indeed Tommy is further teased for his lack of creative interest, as he avoids the cognitive expression of art in favour of the physicality of sport – an area which is devalued at Hailsham.

Cary Wolfe, in discussing the situating of the human in relation to the animal, suggests that “the human” is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether’ (Wolfe 2010, xv). The animal is seen to identify with the body, whereas the human identifies with the mind. This sense of animality is further explored through Kathy’s being ashamed of her sexuality. She attributes her sexual urges to her genetics, believing that the only reason she would have such a strong desire for sex is if she was cloned from someone like the girls who appear in the pornographic magazines found at the Cottages (Ishiguro 2010, 179). Distancing a sense of self from the body results in sex being viewed as unnecessary; this is reinforced by the fact that the clones are infertile, which indicates that the only function of their sexual activity is bodily pleasure. Baudrillard explores the idea surrounding cloning more generally, suggesting that once reproduction shifts into the realm of technology – moving to the
laboratory and away from the body – that the meaning of sex changes: ‘Among the clones (and among human beings soon enough), sex, as a result of this automatic means of reproduction, becomes extraneous, a useless function’ (Baudrillard 2001, 10).

This disassociation with the body is exhibited by the Hailsham clones for the majority of the novel. However, the characters Ruth and Tommy do increasingly identify with their bodies when they eventually become organ donors. The donors have formed their own identity group – one which is based on their shared bodily suffering. Being a ‘good donor’ is something that they view with a distorted sense of pride – even treating their donations as a badge of honour – with Kathy telling us that ‘there’s this odd tendency among donors to treat a fourth donation as something worthy of congratulations’ (Ishiguro 2010, 273). Tommy, though he continues to work on his art privately, hides his work from Kathy after their trip to see their teachers, perhaps feeling foolish that he once thought his art could elevate him above his existence as a mere body. The theme of animality is extended to the teachers’ reactions to the clones, with Kathy often suggesting that they are looked at as if they were spiders: ‘I don’t know if she recognised us at that point but without doubt, she saw and decided in a second what we were, because you could see her stiffen – as if a pair of large spiders was set to crawl towards her’ (Ishiguro 2010, 243). This notion of a split between the human as mind and the animal as body leads to a questioning of what can be defined as a ‘person’, and whether a ‘person’ must resemble more than just a biological model of the human. If we are to attribute personhood merely
to the mental or represented self, as that which is ‘exceptional’ and definitive of the ‘human’, then Kathy and her fellow clones would be deemed ‘persons’ by others than themselves. However, the bodily and experiential differences that set them apart from non-cloned humans ensure that they are viewed as somewhat inferior. The question then becomes: how do the clones assert a personhood that is recognisable to others, and how can they affect a change in the narratives of the society which has created them to be mere bodies?
Chapter 4. The Incompatibility of Narrative and Experience

If a narrative does not relate back to the body, if we indeed keep a distance between the mind and body, then the privileging of narrative continues, and the subjugation of the body is not recognised or deemed to be important. But once we aim to reunite the narrative and the body, to recognise their interconnected nature and the value of them being seen as a ‘self’ combined, we can see how repeated narratives allow for little difference in narrating a different lived experience. Moreover, the narratives available reflect the experience of someone assumed to have the privileged existence in which they are an individual with complete bodily agency and the ability to determine themselves. In this chapter, I will focus on how the clones’ experience is incompatible with the narratives they encounter, and how they have limited power to affect social and historical narratives because of their position. I will also explore how different narratives, if accessible, can influence the fabric of society and the narratives that are continued into the future, and then go on to ask whether this narrative recognition is sufficient in changing the lived reality of those whose physical oppression is maintained by such authoritative models of subjectivity.

Uncanny narrative

The reader, both of Ishiguro’s text, and of Kathy’s narrative within the world of the text, has no access to her body, and must instead rely on her story to gain an understanding of Kathy as a human subject. Kathy and her fellow Hailsham students feel they are privileged because they have had the opportunity to go to school and
receive an education, and this education is vital in allowing the clones to recognize
the importance of a narrative representation of self for themselves, but it is also vital
in representing the self to others. Heta Pyrhönen explains that ‘without some shared
conception of what, for example, a narrative is, writers would be unable to
communicate with readers’ (Pyrhönen 2007, 109). The fact that she has had an
education provides her with the opportunity to offer a narrative representation of her
subjectivity, but Kathy is also written as a very limited narrator. Her lack of
knowledge about the world she inhabits suggests that Kathy cannot recognize certain
differences between her narrative and the narratives of others. But the more
knowledgeable position of the reader of her narrative, both within and outside of the
world of the text, ensures that both the similarities and differences are evident.

These subtle differences which accumulate over the laboured telling of the narrative
lead Kathy’s story to become somewhat ‘uncanny’. The setting of the 1990s, coupled
with the old-fashioned tone of Kathy’s boarding school memories is the first sign
that there is something slightly ‘off’ about this novel. Kathy’s representation of
herself as narrator eventually has a similar effect on the reader as the body of the
clone has on the humans within the novel – it is different, but similar enough to be
unsettling. As Kathy describes when comparing the Cottages to Hailsham: it is ‘like
when you draw a picture of a friend and it’s almost right but not quite, and the face
on the sheet gives you the creeps’ (Ishiguro 2010, 116). This uncanny feeling
encourages the reader to become aware of the apparatus of narrative itself, and assess
the applicability of such a narrative model to the existence of the clone. Freud’s work
on the notion of the uncanny espouses the idea that repetition can cause an uncanny feeling, particularly when something is repeated with a slight difference: ‘whatever reminds us of this inner “compulsion to repeat” is perceived as uncanny’ (Freud 1919, 238). It is this repetition also that links the idea of the ‘uncanny’ with the notion of the ‘double’, discussed in the previous chapter. This doubling causes the observer to look at both the original and its copy. In terms of Kathy’s narrative, the reader observes it in relation to the narratives she is modelling it from, recognising both the repetition of narrative ideology and conventions, as well as the incompatibility of these models with Kathy’s own bodily experience.

The Barriers in Reconciling the Clone Narrative and Experience

The problem with basing a narrative conception of self on the narratives of others is that one often forgets, or is unable, to relate this conception of self to their own lived existence. Kermode explains that literature is a particularly useful medium to show the separation between representation and physical reality, when he suggests that ‘nowhere else, perhaps, are we so conscious of the dissidence between inherited forms and our own reality’ (Kermode 2000, 130). By crafting a novel which relies on the Bildungsroman form, with a character narrating from a first-person point of view, Ishiguro demonstrates the repetition of inherited forms evident not only in literature, but also in narrating the self. However, the clones seem quite happy to ignore their lack of physical self-determination in favour of the self-determination they wield over the cognitive process of narrating their lives. Kermode discusses this self-deception when he explains that inherited forms both create and reflect the ideas we
maintain about what is a ‘good’ life: ‘the prison of modern form, the place where we accept the knowledge that our inherited ways of echoing the structure of the world have no concord with it, but only, and then under conditions of great difficulty, with the desires of our own minds’ (Kermode 2000, 174). This inherited structuring of the world is again largely shaped by what is and is not passed on through education.

The censorship of the clones’ education denies them full knowledge of their society and their place within it, although it could be argued that such imperfect knowledge is a condition common to all humans. Maya Schechtman, when discussing her theory of narrative self-construction, indicates that a lack of common knowledge and experience distorts one’s self conception: ‘The failure to be tuned into basic facts about the world one inhabits – and hence the failure to inhabit a world in common with one’s fellows – interferes with the capacities and activities that define the lives of persons’ (Schechtman 1996, 122). In the case of the clones in Never Let Me Go, their difference of experience should cause them to feel a sense of misidentification with the narrative models they encounter textually, but their lack of knowledge about their position in society ensures they are unaware of certain essential differences between themselves and others, and guarantees that their own self narrative is reflective of the models they have available to them, rather than of their own experience. And without access to knowledge about their wider society, the clones, by remaining outside of this wider human society, have no way to influence the development of social and historical narratives that would reflect their experience.

What is denied to these clones is the opportunity to constitute a ‘link’, either
biologically or culturally, in the chain of humanity. Due both to their segregation from non-cloned humans and their inability to procreate, the clones have a limited ability to affect change in the social fabric, or to see a continuation of themselves, biologically or socially, into the future.

This lack of biological or social lineage removes the clone from a traditional conception of what it is to be human, and ensures that the clone remains, in a sense, ‘outside’ of society and history. Biological lineage is the main way that the clone is initially distinguished from the non-cloned human. Not only are Ishiguro’s clones unable to have children of their own, but the method of their birth separates them from a traditional lineage of human reproduction. Creation implies subjectivity, a point of origin and a connection to the creator, in this case the human. In creating a division between the human and the clone, the human suggests its superiority based on a lineage which projects backwards into a past which precedes human culture and self-awareness. Genetic intervention ensures that the clone is seen as an ‘unnatural’ creation, as opposed to the ‘natural’ birth of the human. Habermas explains that this sense of a ‘natural’ continuity is what binds the human to a natural world independent of human culture: ‘We can achieve continuity in the vicissitudes of a life history only because we may refer, for establishing the difference between what we are and what happens to us, to a bodily existence which is itself the continuation of a natural fate going back beyond the socialization process’ (Habermas 2003, 60). The clones cannot look to this continuity of a ‘natural’ bodily fate, both by virtue of their birth, as well as because of their infertility. Indeed, it seems as if each clone is a
distinct and separate entity without lineage. The clone cannot be separated from the rational, self-aware human, since it is a product of culture, not nature, which makes it all the more disturbing for its human creators. It is not only biologically similar to the ‘natural’ human, but it bears the mark of the ‘cultural’ human through its very creation. Ronald Dworkin argues that this divide between nature and culture occurs when we intervene in a ‘natural’ process; when we make an active choice to alter the course of events: ‘We dread the prospect of people designing other people because that possibility in itself shifts […] the chance/choice boundary that structures our values as a whole’ (Dworkin 2002, 444). The genetically-engineered clone is the reflection of the human; it reflects our values and priorities, and it reflects what we think of as the human body.

The perpetuation of a cultural model of the human, rather than just a perpetuation of the biological human, is important in defining what we call ‘humanity’. In a world where we place such importance on a narrative representation of self, and are distancing ourselves from biological reproduction, it seems as if we are more interested in immortalising a conception of the human, than the human body itself. Our overpopulation and scientific prowess lead to our not fearing physical extinction, but rather cultural extinction. As I suggested when discussing Kermode earlier, our ability to see ourselves as historical beings is due to the fact that we can see ourselves as the products of narratives that have preceded us, but also as having some small effect on narratives that are carried into the future. Kermode signals that ‘there is still a need to speak humanly of a life’s importance in relation to [time] – a
need in the moment of existence to belong, to be related to a beginning and to an end’ (Kermode 2000, 4).

For the clones in *Never Let Me Go*, however, their beginning differs from the non-cloned humans, and they have few means to see a continuation of themselves towards the ‘ends’ of humanity. Larkin, in discussing George Eliot’s views on how the experience of the average person affects history, states that,

> Eliot recognised that these ‘unhistoric acts’ and their faithful performers are themselves merely links in a casual chain anchored in the past. But, for anyone who wished to feel part of life and to experience a fellow feeling with the rest of humanity, it was consoling rather than disappointing to sense one’s role as that of a link rather than a prime cause. It enhanced the individual’s sense of solidarity with humanity and the living world. (Larkin 1977, 97)

The seemingly insignificant mundanities of life may not seem to have much historical importance. However, being a part of one’s society and performing within it has the effect of creating an impact on the lives of others which is carried through to successive generations, no matter how small the act. But with the self-imposed and externally imposed boundaries separating the clones from wider human society, the clones have little chance of influencing the development of human history, even in a small way. They are evidently not a ‘part’ of human society, and this is reflected in their actions: they rarely interact with anyone who is not a clone; they often stick to towns and roads that are small, out of the way, and underpopulated; and they are further segregated by being placed in hospitals designated for clone donors, or in accommodation which is situated in remote areas or apart from other humans. Kathy sums up their segregation by stating: ‘it seemed to me these dark byways of the
country existed just for the likes of us, while the big glittering motorways with their huge signs and super cafes were for everyone else’ (Ishiguro 2010, 267). The clones replace the physical fences of Hailsham with their own social limitations, and because of this they are unable to impact their society. However, Kathy’s written narrative, if indeed it is written and disseminated within the world of the novel, does have the power, like all narratives, to represent the clone experience to others, and to integrate itself into a cumulative sea of life narratives.

Other Narratives

While we are aware of the differences between Kathy’s narrative and the narratives of others, Kathy herself remains unaware of the differences between herself and her reader, as is made evident by her mode of address in which she repeatedly addresses the reader as if they have shared her experiences. Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith indicate, however, that it is precisely this ‘difference’ which can interrupt the endless repetition of normative narratives, and that the act of resistance writing ‘can enable access to and potential recognition of the incommensurable differences between the teller’s experience and that of the reader, making possible circuits of connection across differences, and circuits of difference across connection’ (Schaffer and Sidonie 2004, 27). Literature is an important communicative tool to show the interiority of the other and to provide an outlet for the recognition of other types of narrative. Kathy’s first-person narration within Never Let Me Go situates the novel as a narrative of resistance, joining postcolonial, feminist and queer literature in their aim to give voice to the oppressed.
The disheartening aspect of Ishiguro’s narrator, however, is that she does not recognise her own oppression, such that the role of her narration is primarily for herself. However, if we are to take Kathy’s narrative as a testimony of sorts, as written for a second party, we can see that it has the potential to impact her wider society. Kermode suggests that small differences in experience make themselves evident within the literature of particular time periods and cultures, and that these small differences then go on to influence society in turn, claiming that: ‘When the fictions change […] the world changes in step with them’ (Kermode 2000, 42). Kathy’s narrative, if it were to be made available to others, would provide her with an opportunity to affect broader social and historical narratives. Jerome Bruner discusses the idea of ‘narrative accrual’, which is the process by which a proliferation of different narratives accumulate to make up larger narratives of humanity:

One of the principal ways in which we work ‘mentally’ in common, I would want to argue, is by the process of joint narrative accrual. Even our individual autobiographies, as I have argued elsewhere, depend on being placed with a continuity provided by a constructed and shared social history in which we locate our Selves and our individual continuities. (Bruner 1991, 20)

Affecting this collective human history involves not only narratives of difference being written, but also these narratives being accessible to readers. If the clone narrative is not read, and not available to others, the difference that the clone’s bodily experience brings to inherited narrative form cannot affect the continuation of those narratives, and the difference goes unrecognised. The censorship of the clones’ education, coupled with Ishiguro’s use of a clone character to narrate her experience
within a society in which clone narratives are not available, highlights the need for narratives that reflect multiple perspectives. Although Ishiguro may not have intended this, as he has expressed a fondness for nineteenth-century literature as the foundation of a sound literary education, a point raised by this novel is that because this literature is still studied extensively, perhaps to the exclusion of more diverse texts, the narrative models and social attitudes expressed in nineteenth-century texts are recycled and repeated both in modern works, as well as within the fabric of society itself. A limited education limits the stories we can tell, and the stories that are intelligible to us. Schaffer and Smith state that:

Genres of life writing become forums through which people lodge their concerns and claim rights in the name of the ‘human.’ In doing so, they both affirm something called ‘human rights,’ always a moving target rather than a fixed concept, and redefine the grounds upon which those rights are asserted. (Schaffer and Smith 2004, 229)

Of course, Schaffer and Smith are largely discussing non-fiction autobiographical works, and it would be to mistake a character for an author if we were to grant Kathy’s narrative status as an autobiography. But the process of writing against a dominant narrative can only begin once subjugation has occurred and been recognised, and as yet, humans cloned for the use of others do not exist. However, Ishiguro’s use of a clone narrator is a powerful statement about how we may ‘other’ those in the future who do not fit into a current definition of what it is to be ‘human’. The genres of science/speculative fiction offer opportunities for writers to imagine a world in which oppression takes on a different form – one more obvious to the reader who may have grown accustomed to the forms such oppression takes. Through his narrator, Ishiguro demonstrates the force of narrative in our recognition of the
humanity of others. But while a narrative representation may encourage a reader to recognise the ‘humanity’ of the narrator, it may not be sufficient in affecting a change in the narrator’s subjugation.

Narrative and the Body

While one may not question the personhood of someone seen physically, encountering an artefact created to represent the personhood of another entails a different response. Kathy’s narration of herself, for herself, implies a presence that a textual artefact cannot supply; thus, whether Kathy has written her narrative for a reader within the society of this novel, or whether Ishiguro has written a character whom he wishes us to recognise as a person, there is a problem of presence and absence – a problem Ishiguro is no doubt aware of, with a strong theme of this novel being the active ignorance and segregation of the clone body within the society of the novel. The problems that arise from the binaries of speech and writing, and presence and absence, are problems largely focused on by post-structuralist theorists, and highlight the importance of contextualising and embodying representations of the self:

My spoken words seem immediately present to my consciousness, and my voice becomes their intimate, spontaneous medium. In writing, by contrast, my meanings threaten to escape from my control: I commit my thoughts to the impersonal medium of print, and since a printed text has a durable, material existence it can always be circulated, reproduced, cited, used in ways which I did not foresee or intend. Writing seems to rob me of my being: it is a second-hand mode of communication, a pallid, mechanical transcript of speech, and so always at one remove from my consciousness. (Eagleton 1994, 130)
Eagleton, although admitting that, as many post-structuralists have argued, we can never be ‘fully present’ even in our speech, suggests that speech entails a bodily medium of voice that necessitates bodily presence and a proximity of speaker and listener, a proximity that would involve a confrontation of the oppressed body. The more we rely on these ‘impersonal mediums’ of representation, the more we look to the text for our models and definitions of humanity, rather than to the human body. But this equation of the ‘human’ with narrative representation seems only to be beneficial to those who largely do not need to recognise their body. Burwood explains that dualism of mind and body, with a privileging of the mind, may seem to some as simply a ‘common sense’ response to the unanswered questions of human conscious experience, but can in fact be viewed as a politically-charged construction which maintains class distinctions in favour of the privileged:

By not having to reflect on their embodiment, by not having it constantly drawn to their attention and disparaged, and (perhaps most importantly) by not being defined in terms of it, the dualist separation of self and body may appear to be a perfectly plausible theory to these philosophers, who then generalise from their particular lived experience to formulate an ostensibly universal truth of human nature […]. When this is combined with the way the theory of self-body separation lines up with other sets of binary oppositions, a distinctly political dimension is revealed to what philosophers normally take to be apolitical theorizing about human nature. With mild exaggeration one may conclude that dualism is a bourgeois philosophy of the privileged. (Burwood 2008, 276-277)

An identification of the self with the mind being upheld through education and literature which makes no attempt to reflect an embodied experience only serves to maintain this politicised division between those with the privilege of being able to view themselves as disembodied, and those who are viewed by them as embodied, and do not have the luxury of ignoring their bodily experience. To attribute a sense
of value and agency only to the products of the mind is to ignore the objectified body, and to deepen a divide between those who experience no limitations on their body, and those who are devalued as being ‘just’ a body. Those who experience a limited bodily agency and are at the same time encouraged to believe that their objectification is somehow natural and should be of little consequence to them, are encouraged to maintain this belief because the body is of little value in the recognition of the ‘human’.
Conclusion

As the clones in *Never Let Me Go* demonstrate, relying on the representations of others to represent the self can encourage compliance with normative social values which ignore the real bodily oppression these clones face. Kathy does not recognise herself as a victim, and in this way Ishiguro writes her to mirror the inertia present in the average human experience, in which we accept our position as ‘pawns in a game’ (Ishiguro 2010, 261), because, like the clones, we too are products of the narratives ingrained in the social consciousness, and we repeat the life models we have available. By placing value on their adherence to the narrative models they repeat, and the social values held therein, and without having access to a fuller explanation of their role in society, the clones do not recognise their own oppression. They believe that their donations are meaningful; that they cohere with the idea of purpose that has been espoused by their education and the literature that they look to in order to gain an understanding of what it is to live a meaningful human life. Narrative representation is detrimental to Kathy because it causes her to disconnect from a bodily experience which is incommensurable with the narrative models she encounters. We tend to distance our ‘self’ from our body and we justify this by attributing human exceptionalism, both in our supposed difference to other life forms, as well as our placing ourselves as hierarchically superior to them, to the mind, and viewing the body as pure, animalistic functionalism – as something that could potentially be removed from the equation with our mind and sense of self remaining largely intact. And the danger then lies, in relation to the clone body, in
creating a class system which, as an exaggeration of our existing social hierarchies, 
draws lines between cognition and physicality, with some humans being viewed as 
just bodies to be used, and others as essentially minds who have no need to think of 
their own bodies. For if we attribute personhood to our cognitive faculties alone, it 
then becomes easy to determine one’s worth by their level of education, and their 
ability to represent themselves through language. If the clone is denied an education, 
they are systematically withheld from gaining the attribution of personhood. But 
*Never Let Me Go* demonstrates that reducing the human to its representational 
abilities may grant them personhood, but is not sufficient to render a change in their 
access to bodily agency. Physical presence and proximity are invaluable to the 
recognition of the subjugation of others; and without referring a representational self 
back to the body it is assumed to represent, one cannot recognise one’s *own* 
subjugation.

Narratives are not in a one-to-one relation with the experience they seek to tell. Thus, 
although narrating our lives can mark us as human – as it seems to be a particularly 
human endeavour – it also has a tendency to relate historically to experiences that are 
not our own. Without relating this narrative back to a lived experience, the 
differences of that experience, and the subjugation experienced, are not recognised as 
problems. Though perhaps the difficulty lies in the attempt to relay an experience for 
which you have no narrative precedent. Here then lies the dilemma: is it possible for 
Kathy to create a narrative based on her own lived, bodily experience which would 
also be recognised as a particularly *human* narrative, or is she doomed to repeat the
narrative models she is presented with in her society, mirroring their values and teleology, without regard for her bodily reality? This is why minority narratives such as Kathy’s (although obviously fictional when framed by Ishiguro’s novel) have an important place: they *rewrite* the stories, and the cumulative effect of such small narrative differences provides new narrative models which are more reflective of the range of lived experiences encountered in the world. Small and accumulative difference would seem to be the best method of integrating the lived experience of the clone into the narratives they tell, such that their representation is still recognised as ‘human’, but that differences are also recognised and incorporated into larger societal narratives. However, to affect a change of circumstances, it seems that confronting the physical clone body, and ascribing it value, is more beneficial than merely recognising the humanity of a representation. What Ishiguro’s novel highlights is the need to address the issue of what we value and define as ‘human’ before scientific advancements create new beings to subjugate, who may not be capable of representing themselves according to our definitions of personhood.
References


