

Identities of Clones: Cosmopolitical Ethics in Kazuo Ishiguro's 'Never let me go'

Zhiwei Tao*

Beijing NO.4 High School
No.2 Zongmao Toutiao, Xishigang Hutong, Xicheng District, Beijing

Abstract: Based on the experience of human cloning in *Never Let Me Go* and some modern ethical issues, this paper analyzes the cosmopolitan elements and ethical issues, and reveals some modern ethical issues that do exist. By analyzing the settings, plots and techniques, this paper analyzes the reasons why the clones are not accepted in *Never Let Me Go*, and why clones should be regarded as part of human families.

1. Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro is a famous modern and contemporary writer. In his works, Kazuo Ishiguro uses a Japanese narrative style and writes in the first person, so as to express the emotions of the characters more clearly to achieve the purpose of "world literature". *Never Let Me Go* is a representative work of cosmopolitan literature. This essay will explain how universal ethics are expressed in the novel 'Never let me Go' to you from three perspectives, which are settings, plots and techniques.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cosmopolitanism throughout the literary world

Cosmopolitanism can be traced back to ancient world literature. David (2015) [1] puts forward that world literature is literature that circulates outside the original culture of the region, through both translation and the original language. Thus, world literature can be understood as any literary work whose influence extends beyond its own country.

Fan (2020) [2] argues that literary cosmopolitanism is based on relativism and consumerism. In other words, the essence of the world literature is a literary economy based on cultural consumerism, and literature has become a part of the cultural industry. Liu (2021) [3] also mentions that cosmopolitanism is a by-product of capitalism and a chaotic, interest-oriented society makes the fate of uncaptured people closely linked.

2.2 Cosmopolitanism in Kazuo Ishiguro's Works

Kazuo Ishiguro is a displaced man whose native land is neither England nor Japan, which greatly influences the

thematic style of his novels. Don't let me go This novel is full of spatiality. Space is crucial to the emotions and experiences of the character in this novel. As an 'immigrant writer', Kazuo Ishiguro can freely jump between various cultures, which also creates a multicultural style in his novels. (Liu, 2021) [3] According to Fan(2020) [2], Kazuo Ishiguro aspires to be international, to abandon the label of immigrant writer. As a result, his work is less about the discomfort of immigrant life and more about cosmopolitan themes, such as war. Throughout his career, he has focused on big historical events, such as wars, and on the future of mankind.

2.3 Cosmopolitanism in *Never Let Me Go*

In *Never Let Me Go*, the world is divided into two parts, one is the world of clones, the other is the world of ordinary people. Their lives seem to have no intersection, and there is little contact between the two worlds, but their fates are inextricably linked. Liu (2022) [4] points out that organ transplantation brings the two groups together, producing oppression and exploitation. However, Lokendranath(2022) [5] refuses to claim the clones are as human because they feel like they have the moral high ground. The reason why the fate of the clones was not changed in the end was that they did not have enough internality, and the self they showed was only limited to the intelligence level of children. On the other hand, Lokendranath(2022) [5] also claims that, when the minor individuals gather in to a group, things will change a little, because when many such individuals appear as a group, it will cause some reflection in the society.

3. Settings: Enclaves in *Never Let Me Go*

Enclave is an extraordinary human geography phenomenon that refers to the land under the jurisdiction of an administrative region but not adjacent to the

* Corresponding author: rachel_tao@yeah.net

region.[6] In Kazuo Ishiguro's view, this is a kind of geographical location and cultural location. His stories often take place in crowded places (hotels, banquet halls), (constantly visited) homes, or places that tourists want to go (places of interest, squares, guesthouses.). Outsiders bring new ideas and atmospheres, making that in these places' cultural intercourses flow and collision". Kazuo Ishiguro uses this in the novel 'Never let me go,' and he built this fictional world based on our natural world.



Figure 1. Hailsham in the movie *Never Let Me Go*

In “Never Let Me Go,” Kazuo Ishiguro used the imagery of the “enclave” by creating a world almost indistinguishable from real life, which in addition, he built Hailsham—the school for clones in the book, which appeals to us as just a regular school. (as in figure 1) Hailsham is a fitting metaphor for childhood. In such an environment as boarding schools, people with rights can largely control what children know and don't know. They were disconnected from human society, kept in Hailsham, indoctrinated from childhood into dangerous concepts outside the school, with high barbed wire around the school to cut them off from the idea of going out. They could have run when they were in cottage, but they had nowhere to run and they could only obey their long-decided fate.

According to the book, ordinary people are very afraid of cloning human beings, but they still plunder the organs of cloned human beings, which leads to the sense of separation in space between ordinary people and cloned people.[7] In the book mentioned a cottage, and left Hailsham clone switch here to do a few years in the quiet and lonely farmhouse, in addition to an old man, the rest are all clones, it clearly reflects the human treatment of clone indifference and disgust. Using the style of farming, I this kind of space setting not only highlights the style of human and clone in geography but also the key. He divided ordinary people and clones into two different hierarchies. Ordinary people are on the high level and clones are on the low level. This difference in space can distinguish the habits of different classes.[9]



Figure 2. Hailsham in the movie *Never Let Me Go*

4. Plots: Acceptance of Clones in *Never Let Me Go*

Never Let Me Go tells the story of clones Cathy, Tommy and Ruth as organ donors. Although this is a science fiction story, if you read this book for science fiction, you will be disappointed, because the setting, while science fiction, is actually more emotional.

In the book, a clone is educated at birth and can only live as an organ donor when he or she grows up at Hailsham (as figure 2) .

When I first read this book, I thought Hailsham was a protective umbrella for students from the cruel society, but the more I read, the more I felt wrong. Now it seems that Black Sham was built for a special group of people who needed a secure source of their organs, and HailSham fulfilled that need. [8] Pupils are strictly controlled, and some of the school's rules are chilling: teenagers are allowed to have sex and fight, but not to smoke and drink, which treats them as vessels for nurturing healthy organs. I think Hailsham might be a big organ factory, an organ factory run by powerful people. Power is the top threat to man in modern society. The technology behind power makes people become lost, eventually losing their own characteristics and nature. In the future, human beings will face the endless torture of power and technology behind reason. [10]

Clones have no future, They cannot get married and have children, cannot do anything detrimental to the interests of ordinary people; they are monitored, their life expectancy is squeezed to an average of 40 years; they suffer from psychological harm of witnessing the slow death of their companions, they are pathetic.



Figure 3. Cathy and Tommy in the movie *Never Let Me Go*

But even so, cloned people still have ridiculous dreams, hoping to one day live the life they want like ordinary people, and they are still trying to integrate into the human group.[10] (as in figure 3) A clone is educated at birth and can only live as an organ donor when he or she grows up. They have no future. In their short lives, their expectations and meticulous emotions tell the audience that they are ordinary people just like you and me, and their emotions are our emotions. The difference is that they don't have a choice. Their lives are planned.

Different ways of birth, the same consciousness, physiological function and vastly different fate are intriguing themes throughout the whole novel.[7] As Kazuo Ishiguro said when he was awarded the 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature: "In the world of fiction, I find the connection between the real world and the unreal abyss."

On the surface, the novel shows the tragic fate of human cloning suppressed by human society, and aims at the value of human thinking whether to carry out cloning technology, but behind it is Kazuo Ishiguro's consciousness expressed for us. Through the cloning of human beings to show normal life and inner emotions. Questions and concerns about humanity itself.

5. Techniques: Use of Empathy in *Never Let Me Go*

Then there is the universality of the novel. Kazuo Ishiguro uses the novel's unique technique of empathy. Bring the feelings of humans and humans into the feelings of clone and clone so that the whole world can feel the novel's theme. In this novel, Kazuo Ishiguro highlights the unique human emotions and survival -- goals, directions, desires, and fears -- that define the source of human value. His practical significance is that all life can be understood as either valid and emotive or ineffectual and emotionless. In his novel *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro built a small community for minorities that transcend culture and ethnicity. In this community, people are more welcoming than ever. His novels are full of humanity and arouse readers' resonance with emotion and ethics.

In this book, Ishiguro uses a calm and objective narrative perspective to discard the science fiction elements of the novel and to try to turn it into an allegory of the cruel condition of the political governance of human life. In the novel, this cruelty is expressed in the form of human cloning, the novel describes the three main characters are all the product of genetic engineering, namely, cloning, and they must donate their organs to die. Instead of delving into the science fiction aspects of cloning, the book focuses primarily on politics. He described in detail Cathy's emotional changes and psychological activities, highlighting the political problem that human cloning is not accepted.

The reason why readers sympathize with the protagonists is not only because they have been part of this gigantic lie since birth; but also because the children of these clones behave almost like humans at school. Even; in Cathy's narration, they are "people" who are purified and retain their childlike innocence. Therefore, readers will pay attention to their situation; and even hope that

they can get out of danger. This is not only readers' concern for the clone; but also their concern for the situation of people themselves. On the surface, the novel shows the tragic fate of human cloning suppressed by human society; and aims at the value of human thinking on whether to carry out cloning technology, but behind it is Kazuo Ishiguro's consciousness expressed for us. This is a world-wide social problem that can be empathized by all mankind.

Ishiguro used this problem to arouse readers' interest in in-depth reading, and also used the event that people empathize with to convey their thoughts to all mankind so that his readers can understand him. Through the cloning of human beings to show everyday life and inner emotions. About our own problems and worries, the book cleverly evokes the fear that our lives are meaningless. Clones are controlled and fated, and so are humans.



Figure 4. Clones donating their organs in the movie *Never Let Me Go*

Ishiguro vividly describes the exhaustion, abandonment, and loneliness of the clone through the perspective of the clone Cathy. She watched her companions and lovers leave one by one and collapse in pain. I think this is crucial evidence to prove that cloning is human. Even so, Cathy will eventually have to donate her organs. And she did not think of running away; because she knew that she could not escape from the collapse of order. (as in figure 4)

6. Conclusion

Never Let Me Go was able to sell in a short period of time in the form of original and translated versions to many countries. Kazuo Ishiguro's works have been translated into more than 40 languages and have a wide readership around the world. And all of this thanks to Ishiguro himself; he likes to communicate with readers, listen to their views and respond in subsequent creations. For him, there is nothing wrong with reader feedback affecting the author's writing. Listening does not mean absolute identification and catering, but a way of communication aimed at creating real world literature for more people. He finally completed the road to become 'world literature' and won the literary supreme glory Nobel Prize.



Figure 5. Kazuo Ishiguro winning the Nobel prize in literature 2017

Throughout Kazuo Ishiguro's nearly 40 years of career, he started from immigrant literature, constantly broke through, experienced internationalization and cosmopolitanization, and finally realized the ideal of cosmopolitan writing. (as in figure 5)

References

1. Aso, E. (2010). Kazuo Ishiguro's Cosmopolitanism: Landscapes of the Atomic Bomb in *A Pale View of the Hills* and *Never Let Me Go*. *Journal of College of Literature*, 52, 57-76.
2. Fan X.Q. (2020). Kazuo Ishiguro's Cosmopolitanism Novels. *China Book Review*, 07, 112-116.
3. Liu, T. (2021). Ambivalence of Cosmopolitanism: A Study of Kazuo Ishiguro's Writing. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 12(4), 611-615.
4. Liu, T. (2022). Cosmopolitanization of the Body: Kazuo's Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 25(2), 70-73
5. Lokendranath, K.S. (2022). A Critical Study of Cosmopolitanism and Multiculturalism in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novels. *International Journal Of English and Studies*, 4(11), 28-38.
6. Whu, H.T. (2017). Virtue of Space and Poetic Justice- On Space Ethics in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. *Journal of Hubei University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 36(03), 36-142.
7. Walkowitz, R. L. (2006). *Cosmopolitan style: Modernism beyond the nation*. Columbia University Press.
8. Zhi, Y.B. (2021). Biopolitics and Life Value in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. *New Perspectives on World Literature*, 03, 112-119.
9. Wang, Y.S. (2020). Esotericism, Betweenness and Cosmopolitanism: Analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's Writings. *Literary and Artistic Contention*, 02, 184-189.
10. Walkowitz, R.L. (2007). Unimaginable Largeness: Kazuo Ishiguro, Translation, and the New World Literature. *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 40, 216-239.