

Contrastive Views of Life and Death in *Never Let Me Go*

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Synopsis

Kazuo Ishiguro's sixth novel, *Never Let Me Go* (2005), depicts a world where non-clone humans exploit clone humans for health and longevity. As Ishiguro states, clone humans symbolize human beings in the actual world today. However, non-clone humans also represent ourselves who benefit from life-extending medical care. In this paper, I will focus on views of life and death for both clone and non-clone humans. First, I consider how non-clone humans cling to their life by analyzing how their bodies are conditioned. Referring to arguments in disability studies and thanatology, I will show the materialism of their existence which owes to advanced medical science. The second section examines clone humans' lives which are doomed to premature deaths, focusing on the process in which their human relationships as well as their bodies become severed. However, Kathy's narrative shows that clone humans' memories help them to resist material loss in their lives and take on their life and death. *Never Let Me Go* confronts us with the difficulty to face our life and death in the age of advanced medical science. At the same time, it also indicates how our memories can resist material views of human life and death, and give irreplaceable meanings to our lives.

Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, disability studies, views of life and death, memory

This paper looks at Kazuo Ishiguro's sixth novel, *Never Let Me Go* (2005), which is set in a dystopian world where people have advanced cloning technology. The clone narrator Kathy H. recollects her past life until she loses her closest friends, Tommy and Ruth, who are also clone humans. All three are brought up and educated to become organ donors. Before the donations, they are required to become "carers" who support the donation program. These clone characters seek deferment of their donations, but their operations cannot be postponed. Clone humans can do nothing but resign themselves to their doom. When Kathy loses her two closest friends, she decides to end her job as a carer and become an organ donor.

Ishiguro states in some interviews that the clone humans symbolize human beings in the actual world

(Bates 202; Matthews 124; Wong and Crummett 216, 220). The novel is described from the viewpoint of the clone carer Kathy, and her narration addresses the readers as fellow clone humans from other institutes (Ishiguro 12, 61). By identifying the readers as clones, Kathy's narrative becomes a story of our own life and death.

In the imaginary world where one party of humans exploits the other, this novel shows social divisions caused by the gaps between the two. The form of scientific fiction enables Ishiguro to depict human exploitation, which is related to the ways we deal with physical impairments in our actual lives in an extreme form. In addition, the non-clone humans, who try to survive fatal diseases by the development of medical science, also represent ourselves who benefit from life-extending medical care.

Thus, the book has invited a lot of discussions on the theme of the paradox in humanitarianism and desperate situations of clone humans. For example, Yoshiki Tajiri's study (2018) considers that the art education, which is organized for a humanitarian ideal to acknowledge clone children's humanity, ironically works to make them subordinate to the donation system (236-37). Martin Šemelák's study (2018) looks into clone humans' mental suffering. All they can do is to live on until their final donation, and their hopes and dreams as humans torment them because they are ultimately unattainable (10, 12, 16). The inhuman situation of clone humans highlights the absurdity of human existence which we tend to ignore.

In this paper, I will focus on respective lives of clone and non-clone humans to understand the issues of human existence *Never Let Me Go* raises. I will clarify how people cope with life and death, and how the problems of human life are represented through the donation program described in the novel. In the first section, I will examine how the recipients, non-clone humans, handle their physical decline and death under the organ donation system. In the second section, I will consider how the donors, clone humans, are forced to live toward death over the course of their lives.

1. Non-clone Humans' Obsession with Life

In *Never Let Me Go*, where the world has advanced cloning technology, there are references to people's physical incapacity throughout the narrative. Cloning technology has been developed in order to provide non-clone humans with vital internal organs when their original organs develop troubles. The system that supports their lives, organ donations, enables them to survive despite having organ diseases through the sacrifice of clone humans. Through the discourse on the donation program, clone and non-clone people's views of life and death become clear. In this section, I will look at how non-clone humans, whose way of life is revealed through Kathy's narrative, appear to cling to their life by analyzing how their bodies are conditioned.

When we consider the conditions of non-clone human bodies, which are told to be "normal" to clone children (Ishiguro 75), we notice that the idea of physical incapacity and certain death for the recipients is closely related to the system of organ donations. Physical disorders for non-clone humans are described by the head guardian of Hailsham, Miss Emily, when she faces her former students, Kathy and Tommy. Miss Emily tells them that it is impossible for non-clone humans to abolish the system of organ donations, for her fellow humans cannot have long lives without the system. Her words that refer to advancements in genetic

engineering show their dependence on the medical care and fear of fatal physical disorders:

After the war, in the early fifties, when the great breakthroughs in science followed one after the other so rapidly, there wasn't time to take stock, to ask the sensible questions. Suddenly there were all these new possibilities laid before us, all these ways to cure so many previously incurable conditions. ... How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask such a world to put away that cure, to go back to the dark days? There was no going back. However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease. (240)

According to this description, non-clone people cannot halt the great progress in medicine that has enabled them to receive organ donations for about fifty years, even if they sometimes feel sorry for clone humans. Genetic engineering had advanced so fast that the non-clone humans did not have time to reflect on "the sensible questions," concerning their longevity at the sacrifice of clone human lives. They cannot give up keeping the cure for what used to be incurable physical disorders, such as "cancer, motor neurone disease, [and] heart disease." Physical incapacity for non-clone humans involves fatal diseases of the internal organs, which make them cling to the system of organ donations. These people are so frightened of their own illness and deaths and those of people close to them; they cannot accept the fact that their lives will ultimately end.

Non-clone humans thus consider their bodily death as the polar opposite to their lives. They cannot endure the loss of their lives from organ diseases. For them, encounters with clone humans remind them of the terror of fatal diseases. Since clone humans are produced to make the donation system work, they are regarded as "spare parts" by non-clones, and their humanity is denied. Their existence is so related with the idea of fatal organ diseases that the recipients evade coming across them. The narrator Kathy recalls this when she and her clone friends face the decisive distinctions between the Hailsham students and non-clone people in the outside world. Through the encounter with a mysterious person called Madame, who comes from outside Hailsham and collects the students' artwork, they unexpectedly recognize themselves to be an "abnormal" existence:

I'll never forget the strange change that came over us the next instant. ... As she came to a halt, I glanced quickly at her face – as did the others, I'm sure. And I can still see it now, the shudder she seemed to be suppressing, the real dread that one of us would accidentally brush against her. And though we just kept on walking, we all felt it; it was like we'd walked from the sun right into chilly shade. Ruth had been right: Madame *was* afraid of us. But she was afraid of us in the same way someone might be afraid of spiders. We hadn't been ready for that. It had never occurred to us to wonder how *we* would feel, being seen like that, being the spiders. (32)

Kathy states that this is "the moment when you realize that you really are different to [people outside]" (33), and they realize there are insurmountable differences between them and non-clone, "ordinary," people. In Madame's face, there is a great fear of the Hailsham students. Even though Kathy and her friends have vaguely learned about their peculiar positioning in human society from their infancy, it is at this moment that all of them clearly notice that a person from outside is really afraid of them. For people outside, they, clone humans, are not regarded as proper human beings, but unearthly beings which are less than

humans. Madame's reaction shows that non-clone humans detest encounters with clone donors, and they differentiate them from the recipients themselves. Because the children's internal organs will be harvested to save their lives from organ diseases, the "ordinary" people all the more associate them with death and critical physical disorders.

In order to look into non-clone humans' attempts to evade their death, I would like to consider their physical and social states. From the perspective of disability studies that deal with people's physical impairments, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson discusses paradoxical circumstances in which non-clone human bodies are surrounded. Introducing the notion of "world building," which means "the shared human project of making and using our world together" (134), she introduces two competing ideas of world-building initiatives which she calls "inclusive world building" and "eugenic world building."

Inclusive world building seeks to "integrate people with disabilities into the public world by creating an accessible, barrier-free material environment." It is a world building initiative to include people with disabilities and certain kinds of congenital or acquired physical disorders, enabling them to participate in the society. The world deals with physical diversity of all people, who will ineluctably get some kinds of disorder in course of their lives (134).

In contrast to inclusive world building, eugenic world building strives to "eliminate disability and, along with it, people with disabilities from human communities and future worlds" (134). Unlike inclusive world building, this world building initiative does not intend to handle a variety of people's physical states but tries to exclude physical disorders and people with them from the world (134). It does not interpret disability as physical disorders coexistent with people's lives but regards it as disadvantage to the society. In order to maintain people's living standard and quality of the society, the world offers people several choices to remove certain kinds of physical impairments from the society.

Garland-Thomson considers that although our actual world today disapproves of explicit eugenic enterprises such as Holocaust, its "communities are now actively shaped by a velvet eugenics enacted through biomedical technologies" such as "selective reproduction, genetic manipulation, so-called enhancement, selective abortion, and medical normalization, all of which aim to eliminate disability" (135). Medical science, which should deal with physical disorders in human life, results in attempts to eradicate physically impaired lives and every kind of physical disorder throughout people's lifetime.

In the eugenic world building initiative, Garland-Thomson considers that the world building "depends on the imagined cultural figure" which she has termed "the normate." The normate "embod[ies] the form, function, behaviors, and appearances that conform to all of the culturally valued traits in the social systems of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability" (135). "The normate is medically and socially hypernormal," she states, "displaying the markers of that status and collecting resources and status from this embodied form of social capital" (135). The term "normate" enables people to "represent themselves as definitive human beings" by "usefully designat[ing] the [normative] social figure" into which they try to fit themselves (135). The "normative" status stands as the privileged standard people yearn to achieve.

Using the idea of the eugenic world-building initiative, Garland-Thomson looks into the novel and the film adaptation of *Never Let Me Go*, which indicates non-clone humans' contradictory positions. As she points out, the non-clone humans, who should be in normate status, possess disabled embodiment because

of physical disorders they inevitably develop in their lifetime (138). Whereas clone donors are kept young, healthy, and fit until they lose their vital internal organs in organ donations, non-clone recipients need the donors' body parts in order to deal with their organ diseases, "disabilities" that lower the quality of their lives (138). We see that the recipients do not try to coexist with the disorders but "eliminate" them from their lives to continue their "normateness" by forcing the donors to relinquish their intact (i.e. normate) body parts to them.

Thus Garland-Thomson's suggestion elucidates the reversed physical states in the novel. Non-clone humans, whose bodies have reproductive ability (Ishiguro 76), can leave offspring and create the next generation, but they cannot avoid death brought by declines in their bodies. On the other hand, clone humans have young and healthy bodies, which are eventually destroyed before their declines by the donations. Except for temporary disorders, they do not experience declines in their bodies in their lives until they start donating. This results in threatening non-clone human bodies and their "normate" status they should possess. Clone human bodies disclose non-clone human bodies' fragility and mortality, or their "disabled" embodiment, to the non-clone people.

As we have seen in the novel, non-clone humans' body concept is highly influenced by medical science, and they feel threatened by physical declines in their lives. In "*Sei to Shi no Jikan* [The Time of Life and Death]," Yoshinori Hirai considers people's views of life and death by examining how people accept their death in the age of science. After the advancement of science, people have come to regard their lifetime as linear trajectory that is on the rise until they reach the prime of adulthood, but falls as they get older, and comes to nothing when they die (Hirai 137-38, 140). Unlike in some religions which propose the continuity of life and death or an eternal life, their lives come to an end with the death of their bodies. Therefore, they try to avert their eyes from their death, and from the time their lives become naught (138, 140-41).

Hirai designates such a modern scientific view of life and death as "materialistic" (157-58). In such a view, while people have a stable existence when they have sufficient physical capacity to contribute to society and support themselves (which corresponds to Garland-Thomson's concept of the normate), it starts fading when they enter their twilight years, and becomes nothing once they meet their deaths. Lives will vanish in the end, and nothing material will be left behind in the world from which they pass away. Since people still do not have means to deal with such a notion, Hirai indicates, they just try not to think about it (138, 141). Losing physical strength in their later lives, they still have to follow their linear life trajectory until their deaths. Guidelines that have formed their materialistic view of human bodies cannot show them alternative measures to accept the physical decline in their later years, so all they can do is to wait for the time they meet their end, and to be afraid of it. Their existence, therefore, becomes more unstable as they get closer to death.

When we refer to Hirai's study, we see that the non-clone humans' existence turns out to be quite unstable in the world they live in. Just as people in the actual world today have troubles finding a new guidance on how to live their declining years, non-clone humans who live in the world of advanced medical science do not have means to face their physical decline by themselves. What they do is just to cling to the materialistic views of human bodies, and transpose their fear and hatred onto clone humans. They repress

the fact that they are mortal in to their subconscious, along with the fact that they are exploiting clone humans under the pretext that they do not have “souls” (237). The very presence of and encounter with clone humans, who always have to live being conscious of death for their sake, show up this inconvenient truth to non-clone humans, exposing their contradiction and self-deception. Consequently, clones become uncanny creatures that reveal non-clones what they try not to be conscious of. This mechanism becomes evident when Kathy visits Miss Emily and asks Madame’s reaction toward Hailsham students. The conversation displays non-clone humans’ irresistible aversion to the clone children, which breaks the bond between Miss Emily and her old students:

‘Madame never liked us. She’s always been afraid of us. In the way people are afraid of spiders and things.’...

‘Marie-Claude has given *everything* for you. She has worked and worked and worked. Make no mistake about it, my child, Marie-Claude is on your side and will always be on your side. Is she afraid of you? We’re *all* afraid of you. I myself had to fight back my dread of you all almost every day I was at Hailsham. There were times I’d look down at you all from my study window and I’d feel such revulsion ...’ (Ishiguro 245-46)

Miss Emily’s reply to Kathy, which confesses her own “dread” of and “revulsion” against them, proves what Kathy used to perceive was an undeniable fact. Miss Emily and Madame, who certainly have devoted themselves to raising their students, are in complex states of mind. Because they cannot regard the students as mere “aggregates” of the internal organs, they are tormented by a sense of guilt about letting their students die for their own longevity. Hence, even when she looked down at her students from a height where she was not endangered by them, she would have an abhorrence of them. The trust between the students and the guardians was never there. Although the guardians admit their students certainly have “souls” (237), they still depend on the donation system. The children’s presence reminds non-clone Miss Emily of her contradiction and self-deception that brings about her strong sense of guilt. In order to escape from such ugliness, the recipients shift their detestation onto clone donors, and try to externalize their fear of death. The evasion, however, does not solve their problem.

As Miss Emily says to her old students, the donation program has enabled non-clone humans to survive “cancer, motor neurone disease, [and] heart disease” that can be treated by transplanting vital internal organs from clone donors. Yet, by taking advantage of the program, it gets more difficult for the non-clone people to meet the eventual end of their lives. Whereas they are saved from sufferings of the critical physical incapacity and a premature death due to it, their bodies are just kept alive in the linear trajectory of life toward death. There is no guideline to show them how they should deal with their unchangeable mortality in their later lives. The donation system does not bring ultimate solution to Miss Emily and non-clone people in general, who cannot accept deaths of their close people or the time when their existence becomes nothing.

Thus, non-clone humans’ being, which lives in the idea of the eugenic world-building initiative, turns out quite materialistic. Their lives are threatened once they experience their physical decline, and end with their bodily deaths. The concept of “normate” they internalize does not take into account that they will eventually lose physical strength and the social status that enables them to stand at overwhelming

advantage over clone humans. Benefited by advanced medical science, the non-clone people cannot find out an alternative way to receive their human fate, and enter a dead end. They can only recognize themselves as material being that disappears by the end of their lives. They are followed by fear of death throughout their living. Paradoxically, since they can pursue their life and better physical condition, they are always exposed to fear of death and physical decline, the ultimate threat that deprives them of their privileged subsistence.

2. Accepting Clone Human Doom

In the world of *Never Let Me Go*, non-clone humans are unable to come to terms with their bodily fate. Through the system of organ donations, they can survive fatal organ diseases to live long. They cannot escape, however, from the fact that the organ donations do not make them immortal. No matter how firmly they project their fear of death on clone humans and detest them, it does not solve their ultimate destiny. They can just cling to their own material existence in their lifetime, which makes it more difficult for them to accept their bodies' impermanence.

In contrast to such non-clone humans, clone humans are doomed to face physical and mental adversity until they die. Their lives are taken away for the non-clone recipients' benefit, and they have to be conscious of the end of their lives throughout their lifetime. Reflecting this material reality, Kathy's narrative shows the sufferings of clone humans from a carer's perspective as she recollects her life with her friends. In this section, I will inquire into clone humans' lives which are doomed to premature deaths, focusing on the process through which their bodies and human relationships are severed to death. To elucidate the way clone humans accept their life and death, I will consider changes in the personal relations between the clone characters and the narrative by Kathy, who faces the end of her life.

Contrary to non-clone humans' assumption that clone humans should exist "only to supply medical science," or that they do not have "souls" (Ishiguro 238-39), the clone characters develop friendships among themselves until they participate in organ donations. Kathy, Tommy and Ruth show their complex but lively "human" relationships through their interactions. Kathy's recollection reveals, however, that their ties gradually dissolve as they get closer to death.

Ruth, who "had a really bad first donation" (192), is the first to be separated from her two closest friends, and she is forced to confront her physical debility. When she and Tommy are taken to North Wales by Kathy, she refers to their older friend Chrissie, who died during her second donation. How Kathy and Tommy respond to Ruth reveals physical and mental divisions between the three. Tommy, who is also an organ donor, shows his grief over Chrissie's "completion" of her life, but he is "[g]lad that didn't happen to [him]," feeling relieved that he escaped "complet[ing]" during his second donation (205). He does not identify with Chrissie, to whose position Ruth's weak body is now getting closer. To his response, Ruth utters her thought that cases like Chrissie "[happen] much more than [carers] ever tell [donors]," and directs the question at Kathy, calling her by the title of her position "carer" (205). Divided into a donor and a carer, Ruth cannot treat Kathy as her old friend anymore because of her severe physical decline.

Kathy cannot answer the question looking at her friends full in the face. She cannot remove Ruth's doubt over carers who are on the operating side of organ donations. While she is eventually to become a

donor, too, she is forced to take non-clone recipients' side nonetheless. Their conversation shows that the communication among clone people is discordant. The system of organ donations compulsorily changes their relationships into donors and carers, and engenders ruptures among them. The clone carers are made to support the system and work for the non-clone recipients' benefits rather than for their fellow donors. Thus, the system separates the carers from their donors to exploit all clone humans. It is difficult for Kathy to cope with the physical and mental rifts between herself and her donor friends.

Kathy feels isolated when Ruth condemns her that, as a carer, she is on the side of non-clone humans. In order to defend herself, Kathy brings up Chrissie's old lover Rodney's calm response to her completion. This conversely makes the ruptures among them even more apparent; catching on Kathy's utterance, Ruth stresses that she does not understand dying donors' feelings. The physical divisions between Ruth and Kathy result in accelerating the split of their personal relations:

'Actually,' I said, 'he wasn't too bad about it. He was sad, obviously. But he was okay. They hadn't seen each other for a couple of years anyway. He said he thought Chrissie wouldn't have minded too much. And I suppose he should know.'

'Why would he know?' Ruth said. 'How could he possibly know what Chrissie would have felt? What she would have wanted? It wasn't him on that table, trying to cling onto life. How would he know?' ...

'I've seen a lot of people in Rodney's position,' I said. 'They do come to terms with it.'

'How would you know?' said Ruth. 'How could you possibly know? You're still a carer.'

(205-07)

Through their conversation about the bereavement of their old friends, we can hear anguished voices of the clone characters. Being a donor at death's door, Ruth vents her anger on her carer Kathy, who has become isolated from her donor friends. To show Ruth her legitimacy, or rather to convince herself, Kathy can just say that Rodney had calmly accepted his lover's completion. They were separated by the donation system a couple of years earlier, so Rodney was able to accept Chrissie's death, albeit with sadness. Kathy states, furthermore, that he even supposed Chrissie had not been tormented when she came to the end of her life. By quoting his wishful supposition, Kathy attempts to conceal clone donors' fate by which they are deprived of their lives against their will to live on.

However, her remarks do not settle the dispute with Ruth; Kathy does not answer Ruth's question directly but only talks about Rodney's response. He could not have known Chrissie's feelings at the end of her life. Ruth keeps asking Kathy about the donor herself, and she accuses her of evasiveness. Having experienced a terrible first donation, Ruth assumes Chrissie must have tried to survive the donation, and she can see herself in her friend's death. Just like Chrissie, it is possible that Ruth may "complete" during next donation, considering the severe decline in her body. By bringing out Chrissie's tragedy, Ruth pours out her rage and despair. Her cry tortures her carer Kathy, who is torn between clone and non-clone positions. She is a clone human, but also a carer on the perpetrators' side of the donation program. As we can see, the physical difference between the donors and the carers hinders the clone characters from understanding each other. Moreover, this episode conveys their predicament: whether they are donors or carers, they are forced to be conscious of their deaths. Kathy, who avoids referring to the donors' fate, also has to look at

their clone humans' dead end. There is no other route but to painful death for all of them.

The clone people especially get cornered through carers' work. Kathy tells that while her being a carer suits her fine for the most part, the work is "a real struggle" for those who cannot stand their donors' early completion (189). The carers have to do their job in solitude, and there is no time for them to share their worries and laughs with their old friends (189). The carers are thus isolated, and physically and mentally consumed. Observing these carers' circumstances, Kathy refers to their state of mind where they come to seek for the end of their work to become the donors. Whereas Kathy states that she has learned to cope with the carers' work, she is aware that some of the carers become quite desperate about their duty. They use up their energy in the harsh condition where they are forced to face their donors' early deaths, and they come to wait for their own.

Their sense of helplessness and guilt is expressed as "shrink[ing]" (189), which is the moment the role "carer" preys on them. They try to serve their donors, but they have insufficient ability to support them. Rather, they have to leave their donors to their fate for their own survival, even if they cannot identify themselves with non-clone health-care staff. The moment the carers enter hospitals, they are tortured by the guilt for committing themselves to their occupation. Ultimately, they are thrown into despair each time when their donors complete their lives. Anne Whitehead points out that the education the clone characters have received is "complicit with" the system by which they are oppressed (57). The carers' work, which is an extension of the education, leads to their further "exploitation and suffering" (57), and their sense of self-destruction. The system non-clone humans build around clone humans, as I discussed in the previous section, is based on the idea of eugenic world-building initiative, and the clone people are exploited until they waste away as mere workforce and suppliers of internal organs that make their materialistic social system possible.

Kathy states that she keeps in her mind the fate of all clone donors and that she still feels the hardship when she faces her donors' early deaths. She is also seized by a sense of powerlessness in the donation system, but she has to repress those feelings for her survival. Like other carers, enduring the carer's work is the only way for her to live on. Through their duties as donors and carers, clone people are thus forced to look at their fellow humans' and their own deaths in the face. They are helpless against their donors' death throes when they are carers, and they come to choose the end of the work to be donors: their own death. They are coerced to live toward the end of their lives alone. They passively accept their exploited lives as the system of organ donations has designed. They can only "let go" (Whitehead 79) of their friends and themselves in the eugenic world they live.

After Kathy decides to quit her carer's job, she revisits Norfolk and finds "a fence ... with two lines of barbed wire" on the ground. "All along the fence," she says, "especially along the lower line of wire, all sorts of rubbish had caught and tangled" (Ishiguro 263). According to Olga Dzhumaylo, the "barbed wire" with "rubbish" reflects Kathy's present circumstances (97); the wire with rubbish is her memories with her lost friends from childhood. Her friendship with them has been torn into pieces like the rubbish caught by the wire. She knows she herself is to follow the same fate as they did. The scenery reflects Kathy's harsh reality, and signifies to her that her life as a clone human is a series of loss. What she had before will crumble into debris, and as the rubbish eventually falls into decay, her memories with her friends will be

lost when she completes her own life.

Against this material reality, Kathy attempts to regard the rubbish as an accumulation. It is accumulation of her memory, which is the only proof of her life with her old friends. Looking at the rubbish, she connects it with the very place she is in, Norfolk, which was believed as “England’s ‘lost corner’” among Hailsham students (Ishiguro 60). She imagines she faces what she used to have and now she has lost (263). While Kathy does not develop her imagination further, she associates the rubbish with the center of her recollection: “the spot where everything I’d ever lost since my childhood had washed up” (263). By this association, she tries to regain what she has lost since her childhood, the proof of her own life story. The assembled rubbish summons Tommy to her (263), creating a connection between her and her lover beyond life and death. Their bodies and relationships are disassembled in the world they live. Yet, even if it is for a moment, she believes their nonmaterial ties cannot be split by anything. In her narration, she imagines continuity of life and death so as to oppose non-clone humans’ materialistic view. This is the only means for her to confirm the meaning of her and her friend’s lives, and to relieve the coming agony of donations. Although the imaginative power can support her only in her mind, for a clone human Kathy, this is the sole consolation and resistance against her fate.

As she has “let go” of her closest friends, now she leaves the materialistic world that has exploited them. Kathy’s narrative shows a significant resistance to non-clone humans’ eugenic world-building initiative, however feeble its influence may be on the actual world. In *Revisiting Loss*, Wojciech Drąg considers her narrative on the loss of her friends in relation to their old school Hailsham. Drąg observes that the boarding school has raised and educated clone children as future organ donors, but it has also fostered the internal bonds between them. Even after Kathy hears the school has been closed, she perceives that former students are “still somehow linked by the place [they]’d come from” (Ishiguro 193, qtd. in Drąg 173). In order to confirm human ties with the old students, Kathy chooses donors from Hailsham as her patients, and decides to be the carer of Ruth and Tommy. Unlike their bodies, their memories at Hailsham, which are one of the few proofs of their lives, cannot be disintegrated nor deprived of by non-clone humans. The memories of Hailsham are the students’ “shared experience” that have fostered their fellow feelings, and they are the mainstay when the students face physical and mental sufferings in their later lives (Drąg 173-74). In the world where clone humans are divested of their every material memento, the shared memories from their childhood are indispensable for their sense of being.

In order to elucidate the importance of their nonmaterial property, Drąg considers that Kathy’s narrative works as “the role of a safe reservoir of the most precious recollections that sustain Kathy in resigned anticipation of imminent donations” (178). At the end of the novel, Kathy loses her two best friends through organ donations, and she loses the material legacies of Hailsham that have tied them together against their fate. However, her recollection resists the material loss of her friends and ties with them:

The memories I value most, I don’t see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won’t lose my memories of them. ... Once I’m able to have a quieter life, in whichever centre they send me to, I’ll have Hailsham with me, safely in my head, and that’ll be something no one can take away. (Ishiguro 261-62)

Citing the above, Drąg shows the memories are “a retreat” where Kathy is protected from dispossession

of everything that she has gained in her life (178). It ensures that she certainly spent her childhood at Hailsham, and offers her “the only genuine refuge invulnerable to the bleakness ahead” (179). In order to relieve the agony, she reminds herself that the memories of her friends and Hailsham can keep living inside her, even when her body loses physical strength and approaches completion of its life. Regardless of her whereabouts and her physical states, she can be always with the unfading memories that are safely stored in her mind. They are the only thing that gives her the significance of a clone human life. “Having placed Hailsham securely in her memory,” Drag observes, “Kathy has distanced and, in a sense, released herself from the burden of loss” (182).

While Kathy’s narrative is a feeble resistance to the donation system, her idea, which “value[s]” nonmaterial property “most,” leads to Garland-Thomson’s inclusive world-building initiative that tries to accept human bodies as they are. Including every kind of torment and exploitation, she declares that she accepts the whole of her life. This is her resolution to find her own significance in her life, which refuses to have her life story measured with non-clone materialistic view. By declaring she will not lose her memories, she “distance[s]” and “release[s]” herself from the materialistic view of life and death that have oppressed her and her fellow humans.

As Kathy decides to take on her fate, she respects Ruth and Tommy, who came to different ends. Ruth and Kathy recognize their importance to each other as Kathy attends Ruth’s deathbed (Ishiguro 215). Kathy cherishes her belief that at that moment they understood each other just by gazing at each other (215). On the other hand, Kathy leaves Tommy before his last donation, for she respects his wish to change his carer so as not to make her suffer (256, 258). They spend their last time together, talk with each other, and share their gratitude to Ruth (260) and their childhood memories (261). Kathy accepts her two friends’ human existence even when they grow weak from losing their internal organs. She thus tries to take the initiative in her life by appreciating her memories with her irreplaceable friends. Even if the attempt cannot change her doom, she can bear her mortality by embracing the proof of life. Her recollection presents a countermeasure against the eugenic non-clone world that cannot accept the end of people’s lives. Her narrative submits to their clone humans’ fate but offers her a foundation that enables her to take on death; there, she can live in peace, and her friends’ bodies are never divided or deprived of by outsiders.

In conclusion, clone humans’ lives become disassembled under the donation system. They are separated into the categories of donors and carers, which causes rifts in their human relationships. These ruptures hinder them from understanding each other beyond their individual bodily state. Clone humans especially get exhausted by carers’ work. Being forced to take part in their donors’ deaths, the carers are eventually driven to quit their job to be donors. The more they are involved in the social system, the more they come to resign themselves to clone humans’ fate. They just have to face and accept death. In the exploited life, they are not even allowed to leave the proofs of their lives in any material way.

Yet, whereas these clone humans’ lives are thus a series of material loss, their memories and nonmaterial ties cannot be fragmented or deprived of by the donation program. Kathy’s narrative shows her spiritual bonds with her old friends from Hailsham, and their images relieve her from agony to be dispossessed of her property. Her memory is the only foundation that gives her a significance of a clone human’s life. Against the non-clone materialistic world that does not have means to face the end of people’s

lives, her narrative attempts to present unfading proofs of clone humans' lives. It is the sole measure to accept their tragic doom: Throughout their lifetime, clone humans have to live for death, and they are forced to become donors. Their memories, however, enable them to take on their life and death.

In this paper, I have considered how clone and non-clone people meet their life and death in the world of *Never Let Me Go*. On account of organ donations, non-clone humans cannot accept their mortality. They just cling to their material entity, and have no alternative to take on their human fate. Contrastively, clone humans are forced to face and submit to their doom throughout their lifetime. Although they lose every material property, Kathy's narrative tries to bear their lives out by holding on to the memories of her old friends.

In the age of advanced medical science, *Never Let Me Go* confronts us with the difficulty of facing our life and death. As non-clone humans in the novel, it gets more difficult for us to accept our human fate; we tend to avoid thinking about our deaths, and we seek for health and longevity today. Non-clone human life makes us notice that we are in danger of losing ways to confront our own mortality. On the other hand, the novel also indicates how we can cope with physical and mental sufferings in our later lives. As Kathy's narrative shows, our memories can resist material views of human life and death, and give irreplaceable meanings to our lives. It relieves our agony to accept every material loss in our lives.

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