

The Clones' Struggle for Happiness under the Doomed Fate in *Never Let Me Go*

WANG Xue-juan

University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai, China

Japanese British writer Kazuo Ishiguro is one of the leading writers in contemporary British literature. He has always been committed to creating works with universal significance. Responsibility and destiny are themes that run through his works. His novel *Never Let Me Go* tells a story of a group of clones growing up in the Hailsham, who are given the mission to donate organs at birth. So, there is no doubt that they will inevitably end their lives in the process of donating organs to human beings again and again. The tragic life of clones is determined by the motivation of human to create them.

Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, clones, fate

Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro, winner of the 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature, is a Japanese-British writer born in Nagasaki, Japan. In October 2017, the original award speech given him by Nobel Prize jury was “who, in novels of great emotional force, has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world.”

Literature Review

Studies Aboard

The book *Never Let Me Go* was published in 2005 and received wide acclaim upon its release. Scholars in the West have studied this work from many perspectives. In the *On Being a Slow Reader: Psychological Problems in Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*, Deborah Britzman regards this novel as a kind of fable which is concerned about Parental expectations and child rearing. He also thinks this novel includes a description of the innocence of childhood, the experimentation of youth, the knowledge and maturity of adulthood. Titus Levy classifies the works into the genre of educational fiction. He studied the novel from the perspective of narratology in *Human Rights Storytelling and Traumatic Narrative in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*. Daniel Vorhaus's *Reviews of Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go* tries to analyze the theme of this novel. He interprets the novel as a romance novel and believes that it is mainly about an unforgettable love story between Kathy and Tommy, who are two clones.

A number of scholars have also analyzed the novel from the perspective of genetic engineering technology. In *Not Properly Human: Literary and Cinematic Narrative about Human Harvesting*, Henriette Roos, basing on

the phenomenon of organ transplantation in the novel, believes that the novel reflects the confrontation and conflict between us who are social subjects and them who are outsiders against the background of contemporary cultural pluralism and waves of immigration. John Marks considers the work as a science fiction novel focusing on clone. The literary significance of this work is explored on the basis of bioethics and the issues of stopping the clone and alternative choices raised by the novel in this new era are discussed.

In addition to the common perspectives, other scholars have adopted some special perspectives to analyze the works. Rachel Carroll in *Imitation of Life: Cloning, Heterosexuality and the Human* in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* analyzes the heterosexuality and reproductive technologies in this novel from a gender perspective. In *Autonomy and Why You Can Never Let Me Go*, Lynne Bowyer analyzes the problems of autonomy and identity perception in the novel from a phenomenological perspective.

Studies at Home

Compared to foreign countries, domestic research on *Never Let Me Go* is relatively thin and few in number, but some research results have also been achieved. The first domestic study of *Never Let Me Go* was *The Wail of Helplessness-Review of Ishiguro's new work Never Let Me Go* published by Zhu Ye and Zhao Yanli in *Contemporary Foreign Literature* in 2006. The article is mainly an introductory essay which involves some relative contents of this novel.

At the same time, some scholars also choose to use ethical literary criticism to interpret this novel. Du Mingye in *An Ethical Literary Analysis of Never Let Me Go* tries to probe into the clones' ethical identity, their ethical consciousness and their ethical situation from the perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism. In *Interpreting the ethical identity of humans and clones in "Don't Let Me Go"*, Zou Shaoqin and Hu Yizhen focus on the ethical identity of human beings and clones in the novel. The opposing ethical identity of the two in the real ethical environment is also further discussed.

Thesis Statement

This thesis aims to delve into a series of ineffective struggle of clones in *Never Let Me Go* to evoke reflections on today's fast-moving technology.

Structure of the Thesis

The main body of the article is divided into three chapters. The first chapter introduces the clones living in a confined space. This confinement is not only reflected in their isolation from the outside world but also in the clones' psychological and social isolation. The second chapter focuses on the clones' struggle against their predetermined fate. Unfortunately, none of them can change their tragic fate. The third chapter discusses the clones' ultimate reconciliation with their fate. They finally choose to live in the present while shouldering their own responsibilities.

All Kinds of Confinements of the Clones' Life

The main characters of *Never Let Me Go* are clones. They are the products of modern technology. As soon as they are produced, their destiny is already predetermined. And this kind of life can be seen from two aspects. Their bodies are confined and their minds are controlled, which means they are denied the right to choose what they want. They can do nothing but obey the rules set by the Normals unconditionally.

Isolation from the Outside World

The sites for the clones were located throughout England. Although they were in different locations, appeared at different times in the lives of the clones and may also have differed greatly in specific architectural features, one thing remains the same: these residences are located in relatively remote and secluded areas and always at a certain distance from human society. At the same time, these sites are relatively independent and enclosed spaces.

Except for their location far from human society, the interior of these clones living spaces are a relatively independent and complete system, where the clones eat, dress, and socialize as if they were cut off from the outside world. For example, Hailsham, the boarding school where the main characters live until they are 16 years old, is a place where no one can step outside. The clones attend classes, exercise, and check their health at the school. At the boarding school their social relations were limited mainly to their peers and followed by their guardians. They hardly have contact with the outside world. The only contact with the normal human society is the drivers who deliver goods to Hailsham every now and then and do not have much contact with the clones either.

This form of detention does not only occur in Hailsham, but also in Cottage and recovery centers. However, due to their unconscious acceptance of this mode of life, they continue to confine themselves to the old system even when they are given the right to freedom.

Captivity of their Ability to Think Independently

During the clones' early years, Hailsham's guardians repeatedly told the clones that they are all special and they enjoy privileges and opportunities that other clones did not have. Ironically, this privilege is reflected in the auction. The objects on the table are the broken things discarded by human children. The clones, however, treat them as treasures and select them carefully one by one. The guardians carefully selected lessons and toys for the obvious and crude purpose of promoting the superiority and advancement of humans at all times and highlighting the inferiority of clones. So, it will finally influence and shape the clones' worldview and values by non-violent means.

Moreover, human guardians always talk about organ donation while talking about other things, but they never explain why and how to donate. This subtle cultural penetration gradually makes the clones recognize the cultural values and ideological connotations conveyed by human beings, so that the hegemony of the ruling class become a kind of common sense and consensus. As a result, the clones tend to misunderstand the donation as a simple matter.

All above suggests that the ideology of the ruling class succeed in taming the ruled class and force them to accept the moral, political, and cultural values of ruling class. So, students who leave here never discover much truth.

The Endeavors of the Clones to Pursuit Happiness

As time passes, clones become more mature and come to realize that they cannot escape the life that is destined to be a disaster. So, they begin to fight against everything in their own way. They start to find their possibilities and imitate the human behaviors on TV, but it tends out to be useless. Then they begin the pursuit of salvation by indulging in sex. However, all the struggles turn out to be futile.

Finding Self-Identity

After the age of sixteen, the clones who graduate from the Hailsham school move to another place—the Cottage. The two years in the Cottage is the time period when they pay attention to themselves and start working on their career plans. Here they have more opportunities to imitate the behaviour of human by watching TV shows. They also get information about the outside world by interacting with their seniors. After staying for a while, they can even be permitted to travel to the human society.

Going out in search of the possibles is the way that clones fight back against their fate, which heralds as their beginning to focus on and face up to themselves. Every clone has a high passion for finding their possibles and they believe that the possible's life is their future life. What they want is to seek a sense of belonging.

All the clones' efforts to find a clear identity for themselves ultimately tend to be futile. Although they achieve the transformation from desire to rationality in the process of growing up, they are unable to overcome their own taboo against organ donation under human slavery education and shake the supreme human authority which leads to the shattering of possibles.

Indulgence in Intimacy Relationship

Sexual freedom is a way to liberate oneself and part of what constitutes a person's identity. Given that they are not fertile, they enjoy it wholeheartedly and regard it as a way to stress their identity. To some extent, this is also a manifestation of their resilience to the challenges from outside world and fate. They hope to find happiness by getting satisfaction from extreme sexual relations, however, there is no doubt that this struggle is meaningless and will only make them more and more pessimistic about the future.

Applying for deferral is also used by them to get salvation. In Cottage, there are rumors that students from Hailsham are special. Once they can provide clear evidence of true love for each other, they can not only defer the completion but also have a significant period of free time at their disposal. At the same time, Kathy and Tommy want to use this opportunity to make one last effort to change their destiny, however, Finally, they know the truth from Miss Emily that "there's definitely nothing. No deferrals, nothing like that" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 266).

Although the clones have been fighting against their tragic fate, however, the reality is ultimately cruel, everything is just in vain when they face the fate which has been arranged by human.

Reconciliation with the Doomed Destiny

After finding that there was no point in fighting, the clones try to accept the unjust fate. They begin to enjoy their life and create the value of their existence in their limited lives. To them, maybe the most important thing is to cherish the present while also look forward to the future.

Living in the Moment

Clone's life can be said to be destined for tragedy. They are born into this world only to complete the mission which is to donate their organs. Even after three or four donations, their lives are already at an end, they still have to be unknowingly squeezed out the last of the value by human and only then their lives are truly over. After all the struggles turn out to be futile, their attitude towards the life and world have changed completely.

In addition, after experiencing all kinds of joy and sorrow together, the friendship and love between the clones also become more touching. Kathy and Tommy have loved each other for a long time, but Kathy never

intervened in the relationship between Ruth and Tommy. In order to make up for Kathy and Tommy, Ruth finally gives them the address of the guardian in her deathbed. At the end of the novel, Tommy and Kathy accept their fate peacefully and separate with each other with sincere love in the bottom of their heart.

In a word, it is this love, especially the love between the clones, that has sustained them throughout their short and tragic lives. Finally, they were able to resist the indifference and isolation of human society and to face the darkness of life.

Taking their own Responsibility

It is clones' fate they cannot control and escape to donate their organs. With no other choice, the clones are heading for the end of their lives. On the one hand, they were helpless, but on the other hand, confronting the harsh reality, they face the impending death with a sense of responsibility and resilience.

Kathy has been a carer for twelve years. As a caregiver, she has been traveling all year round and working to care for donors day and night. With no one to talk to, all of these things can wear a carer down. So, no one will be a carer for long. But Kathy has been stuck to this work because she feels she is the right person for the job. She dedicates to give those she cares for the help they need and hopes she can make the final stage of their lives a little more comfortable.

Although the tragic fate cannot be changed, clones choose to enjoy the beauty of their life. It seems to be a story about clones, however, their experience can also be applied to human. Everyone should be inspired to take responsibility for his or her own choices to realize personal values.

Conclusion

As a work of literature, *Never Let Me Go* presents the reader with a fictional social scenario. Clones are not natural humans in the modern biological sense, but they are the products of modern technology. The short life course and the inescapable fate of the clones are deplorable. All of this stems from their identity as donors, which means they are born to donate and will die to donate. The issue of clone has led to a deeper reflection on how to understand this technology and how to view it.

In turn, the novel also inspires us to think about human beings. In the age when man has replaced God in the creation of life, we should figure out how to view the confusion of modern human identity and define ourselves as human beings.

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