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The Copy and the Real: Language-Games of Personhood in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores personhood and its constitution within the backdrop of the rules of the infrastructures in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. By choosing human clones as the oppressed, Ishiguro challenges humanistic legacies of personhood at deep and complex levels, and thus locates the discrimination not in the marked bodies but rules and language-games that go beyond such discernable differences. *Never Let Me Go* aims to unmask the fallacious definitions that establish the bedrocks of the modernized forms of life. Drawing upon Wittgenstein's notions of rules, meaning, and language-games and complementing them with Marya Schechtman's mapping of self-constitution in the person-space, this article claims that the features of personhood are not to be found in the *contents* of the body, but within the *forms* defined by the rules of the infrastructure of personhood. *NLMG* exposes the deception of the forms that create the illusion of content in the most foundational norms and practices of humanistic discourse.

Keywords: *Person, Infrastructure of Personhood, Person-Space, Language-Games, Never Let Me Go*

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1. Introduction

The world of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) is both very unlike and like our world. Although the forms that oppression takes in this story are alien to us, we notice the familiarity of its ways. The abolitionist fiction is the type of literature that claims to manifest the unheard voice of the oppressed and her pursuit of liberation in regaining her identity. Perhaps the oppressed minority in *NLMG* do not attempt to subvert the state at any point of the story or succeed in regaining their seized identity, but *NLMG* targets oppression at deeper levels than the socio-cultural hegemonic discriminations common in the genre, such as color, gender, age, religion, nationality, etc.

Despite the variety in its forms and the depth of its cruelties, oppression has a very simple definition; Marya Schechtman defines oppression as "systematic and institutionalized mistreatment of others to the point where we are tempted to say that they are not seen as persons" (2014, p.172). *Dehumanization* is another term used in relation with this conduct. Both in Schechtman's definition and the term

"dehumanization", we associate oppression with treating a certain individual or a group of individuals as nonhumans and nonpersons. Therefore, hidden in every case of oppression lies the definitions of personhood and humanness despite the fact that these definitions have become so transparent in the western historical and humanistic legacies that reconsidering them seems pedantic. And it is these definitions that *NLMG* challenges with creating a world in which human clones are reared and murdered for their organs.

In the seemingly utopian world of *NLMG* where many fatal illnesses are cured, the clones are oppressed, objectified, commercialized, and eventually eliminated in service to the *normals*. Despite its unpolitical tone, therefore, *NLMG* welcomes being read as a liberationist novel. In "Generic Considerations in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*" Shaddox compares *NLMG* with the abolitionist genre of Victorian literature, asserting that if in such works the dehumanized minorities were marked by their body, in Ishiguro's world what it is to be human has to be searched for at deeper



and more complex levels: in the mind (2013, p.451). Bruce Jennings in “Biopower and the Liberationist Romance” aligns *NLMG* with liberationist literature as well. Reading the novel from a bioethical standpoint, he claims *NLMG* is a coming-of-age novel in which the heroine comes to find her identity near the very end, and when she realizes the atrociousness of systems of biopower (2010, p.18).

The thematic dichotomy between the real and the copy is central to *NLMG* and at the heart of the abolitionist and liberationist focus on the workings of biopower and personal identity. The clone is taken as the metaphorical representative for the oppressed minority subjected to discriminations of biopower. In a similar vein, Aline Ferreira in “New Bodies, New Identities? The Negotiation of Cloning Technologies in Young Adult Fiction” has emphasized the significance of “identity, family ties, and belonging” in the genre of young-adult fiction and traced them in the dichotomy of copy and real and the collaborative notions of replica, imitation, and echo (2019). Ferreira believes the reductionist label of copy stereotypes the clones as abominations in the sequence human conception and objectifies them (p. 251). Ashley Joyce, on the other hand, draws attention to the role of the reader as the participant witness of the social anxieties caused by biopower’s interference into the lives of the individual, and thus expands the responsibility of witnessing the victimhood of the oppressed to our world (2019).

The target of Ishiguro, however, is not merely systems of biopower and biotechnology; by choosing human clones as the oppressed, *NLMG* aims to delve deeper and expose the randomness of the most foundational bedrocks of all hegemonic socio-cultural language-games. The focus of this study is the constitution of personhood beyond our common associations with oppression and within a larger scope of these language-games.

In this article we draw upon the later Wittgenstein’s notions of *language-games*, *forms of life*, *rules*, and *persons* to expose the arbitrariness of definitions of personhood in *NLMG*’s world. The study complements the above discussions with Marya Schechtman’s concepts of *person-space* and the *infrastructure*. The core claim in this study is that persons are not to be found in the *contents* of the body, but within the *forms* defined by the rules of the personhood language-games, and *NLMG* illustrates the

randomness and contextuality of forms that purport the illusion of content.

2. Person Life View

Human beings share many features with the wide category of living organisms. All forms of organic life breath, live, and die. However, humanness demands much more organismic sophistication. A standard human being is healthily embodied and has a higher-order of consciousness subjecting her to certain expected mental capabilities, linguistic interactions, and forensic activities. John Locke associated the organismic life of human beings with them being *Humans*, and their mental capabilities with them being *persons* (Locke, 1975, p.331-332). Accordingly, as persons we are encultured, linguistic, self-conscious, and have a sense of personal identity. A standard human being is therefore called a “person”.

However, considering the variety of uses of the term “person”, where are we to fix the standard within the spectrum of persons and nonpersons? Mentally deranged people are given names, comfort, education; they are nurtured and entitled to human rights, whereas in some other cases mentally healthy humans are not provided with the same convenience. In order to find the right approach towards clarifying *personhood* Schechtman introduces the Person Life View (hereafter abbreviated as PLV). PLV demonstrates to be a person is to live “the characteristic life lived by a person” (Schechtman, 2014, p.110). More precisely, persons are determined by *the kind of life they lead*. Schechtman continues: “the duration of a single person is determined by the duration of a single person life” (p.110) meaning the person will endure as long as her person life endures. Schechtman claims the circularity is not as vicious as it seems (As the matter of fact the circularity of the definition reveals the significant nature of personhood which will be discussed below). PLV presumes a *standard life* in order to define a *standard person*; therefore, Schechtman recommends, we can work out our way through the circularity by sketching paradigmatic cases that are commonly considered persons, and then explore the amounts of deviations permissible.

The paradigmatic person, PLV claims, is healthy and encultured, and the standard person life is a trajectory starting with birth and physical and mental dependence; if the person endures, she grows up into a “sentient, reflectively self-conscious, a self-narrator... and a rational and moral agent” (Schechtman, 2014, p.112); then she will

decline physically and mentally and will eventually die. Being linguistically interactive and encultured is a significant determinant in the kind of life that persons live. Schechtman underscores the importance of socio-cultural activities that comprise a paradigmatic person in the following:

[A] characteristic person life also involves an array of complex and sophisticated interactions with other persons which involve, among other elements, adherence to moral, cultural, or personal norms although the details of these norms may differ from context to context). Person lives usually involve friendships and family, tribal, or community ties. (2014, p.112)

Specialists find a correlative relationship between our interactive, hence linguistic, capabilities and our cognitive capabilities, in Schechtman words they are “two sides of a single coin” (2014, p.112). Schechtman explains: “In order to develop psychologically and physically as human persons typically do, it is necessary to mature in an environment that provides the proper scaffolding and social support for such development” (2014, p.169). Accordingly, being encultured functions not only on an interactive level but also on the cognitive level.

Schechtman divides a standard person life to three component parts. However, she maintains that this division is only for the explanatory purposes, and, in fact, these comprising parts are holistic and cannot be separated (2014, p.185). The first component is: the person as the individual, which includes all the cognitive, mental, and “internal structures” (Schechtman, 2014, p.185) that the individual owns. The second is the person at her everyday life activities and its requirements. The third, which is also the core focus of this research, is the person in the social and cultural infrastructure of personhood “the set of practices and institutions that provides the backdrop within which the kinds of activities that make up the form of life of personhood become possible” (Schechtman, 2014, p.113). As persons, we are born into certain *forms of life* and socio-cultural practices that are prior to our becoming a person. Only one of these infrastructures is the infrastructure of personhood, and this infrastructure accords a place in the *person-space* to those it determines as potential persons (Schechtman, 2014, p.114). Without being given a place in the person-space it would not be possible for the self to attain the

capacities required to live a person life at the levels of individual and day-to-day activities as well. It was mentioned above that our higher-order conscious states are dependent upon the linguistic and cultural nature of our lives, and it is in such a context that the mind would develop into the standard level sophistication of persons. If not recognized as a person by the infrastructure of personhood and not given a place in person-space, one will not be able to grow up into a person. Therefore, being a person means acquiring capacities at the levels of individual functions and daily interactions besides being accorded a place in person-space by socio-cultural infrastructures to be able to develop the above capacities in the first place.

Schechtman points out that the details of these practices differ from one culture to another, but the general patterns remain the same (2014, p.114). At our birth we are given a place in person-space by the infrastructure of personhood, hence we are “brought into the form of life of personhood” (Schechtman, 2014, p.114). The question arises: how does the infrastructure decide on who is a potential person and should be allowed a place in the person-space and who is not? The answer is simple: the infrastructure determines personhood based on certain *regulations*, *definitions*, and *standards*. Thus, the paradigmatic person life is lived in standard cultural practices, and “there would be no person without person-space” (Schechtman, 2014, p.118). So far, everything seems to fit into the needs and the western civilized forms of life. However, terms such as “paradigmatic”, “normal”, and “standard” become ambivalent in usage. The norm of being accepted as “one of us”, “suited to live the kind of life we lead and being engaged in the kind of interactions we engage in” (Schechtman, 2014, p.124) has shown to be very selective. The infrastructure of personhood, validated by power systems, is far from being just in allocating a place in person-space:

History, it would seem, is full of examples where one group of humans treats another group of humans as non-persons and prevents them from living a person life. It is, in fact, depressingly easy to find examples past and present of social and cultural infrastructures that institutionalize the idea that those of a different skin color, national origin, ethnicity, ... from the dominant group should not be accorded a place in



person-space or inducted into the life of a person. (Schechtman, 2014, p.125)

The ambivalence of the aforementioned terms in the protocols of the infrastructure becomes exposed in the exclusion of “atypical” and “abnormal” cases, and human clones are examples of such cases.

3. Cloning, Biopower, and the Infrastructure of Personhood

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines cloning as: “The creation of a genetic copy of a sequence of DNA or an entire genome of an organism” (Devolder, 2017). Clones are *copies* of *authentic* humans, “made rather than begotten” (Devolder, 2017). Today the question of the acceptability of human cloning has almost come to a close, and most countries have banned human cloning limiting it to small scale embryo cloning for special purposes such as research and therapy. In these cases, the clone embryo is not placed in a uterus and will not be born, yet these practices show that the door to cloning is open for the future, thus making it a controversial matter targeted by bioethics.

Unlike normal humans that are conceived in the great chain of evolution, clones are designed for special purposes; they are *artificial* “means to others’ ends” (Devolder, 2017). Being called a clone has foundational existential implications; Stanford maintains: “being genetically unique is an emblem of independency and individuality” (Devolder, 2017). Consequently, the senses of authenticity, individuality, and personal identity are denied from the clone. It is with these senses intact that we are allowed to “go forward with a relatively indeterminate future in front of us” (Devolder, 2017). The power to govern one’s life and one’s future is one of the manifestations of autonomy. The clone is a copy made for a purpose and with a predetermined future; therefore, the clone cannot exercise autonomy either. These lacks manifest in the first two levels of personhood, namely, the individual and the everyday mental functions. However, it is the third level that give rise to these implications: the clones are not recognized as persons by the *regulations*, *definitions*, and *standards* of the infrastructure and are not accorded a place in person-space. By being acknowledged as nonpersons - “abnormal”, “artificial”, and as a result “inferior”- the exploitation of the clones is legalized and institutionalized.

Biotechnology is one of the most important hegemonic channels through which the modern infrastructure of personhood justifies its ways. Bruce Jennings asserts because of the “reductionist and objectifying” nature of biotechnology its “intervention into the minds and bodies of human beings ... erodes the foundations of personhood, agency, and individual identity” (2010, p.16). By biotechnology’s *ostensible definitions* of the “healthy” and the “normal”, selves are reduced to medical codes, and the “unhealthy” or the “abnormal” are excluded for either insufficiency or well-being of the limited others.

Biopower emanates through infrastructural institutions that practice power by means of defining the standard embodied humanness and setting its parameters, and in the progressive western world, biotechnology is closely supervised by systems of biopower. In modern forms of life, marked with capitalistic purposes, these institutions control many socio-cultural foundations such as medical sciences, families, hospitals, legal systems, art, literature, etc. and have become as essential to one’s socio-cultural existence as to her embodied identity. Modern humans are born into these infrastructures and sustain them in their practices. In summary, the infrastructure of personhood (branching its power in institutions and also other infrastructures), rationalizes dehumanizing certain groups of humans as nonpersons by not granting them a place in the person-space required for living a standard person life. Similar to all forms of oppression, it is the struggle of acquiring a place in person-space that the clone faces.

4. The Rules and Protocols of the Infrastructure

Considering the exclusion of the “unhealthy” and the “abnormal” as aberrant cases of PLV and the ways in which biopower restricts personhood, the question arises how can definitions as essential and primal as personhood and humanness be arbitrary and context-sensitive? In order to clarify, we will address the connection between definitions propagated by biopower and the rules and protocols of the infrastructure of personhood with a Wittgensteinian approach.

The later Wittgenstein famously claimed that the meaning of a word is its use (1973, p.43) deducing that meaning is in fact context-sensitive and variegated. The uniform appearance of a word in different

contexts only misleads us into thinking that there is a fixed sense to it as well. By extension, in the western humanist tradition we are deceived into thinking that there is a fixed meaning to the word “person”- a necessary and sufficient condition that *makes* a “person” in all possible contexts, and as a result an essential definition (also see Schechtman, 2014, p.147). Wittgenstein objects that there is no such fixed condition but only family resemblance between different uses of the same word, meaning that there is not a single shared feature but overlapping and random similarities. Accordingly, unlike what biopower establishes, all designated “persons” are not connected by a common characteristic that defines them as the *standard* case, but by diverse uses practiced and validated in language-games. As there is no necessary and sufficient feature that is shared between all games, but only diverse contractual protocols between the gamers, language-games set certain contractual rules. Hence, the rules of language-games determine “what linguistic move is allowed as making sense and what isn’t” (Biletzki, 2018; Wittgenstein, 1975, p. 371). These rules are not abstract, fixed, and dependent on the essential meanings, but active, contingent, and context-sensitive.

In *philosophical Investigations* II.iv. Wittgenstein brilliantly observes that in our daily activities we do not search the people around us for a necessary and sufficient condition that would make them persons to start an interaction: “My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the opinion that he has a soul”. Schechtman confirms: “when we encounter other humans we automatically see them as persons and interact with them as such” (2014, p.113), for their personhood is already established and acknowledged by the infrastructure of personhood and the other infrastructures that govern socio-cultural practices. It is the validity of that place that we take as a priori; the persons are not to be found in the *contents* of the body, definitions, and essential features, but in the *forms* defined by random and context-sensitive rules of the personhood language-games.

The rules and protocols of the infrastructure of personhood vary in different contexts, and the definitions of *persons* vary alongside, regardless of the designated content. In other words, the term “person” is a cluster of different senses in different contexts, making it open to contextual change. Going back to the

circular definition of personhood, we can conclude that the definition of what it is to be a person is circular because there is no necessary and sufficient feature that constitutes a person, but a cluster of person lives lead in different contexts. We can also delineate the above mentioned issue of oppression as such: definitions of personhood can be discriminating because in certain systems and conditions rules of the infrastructure biasedly define an individual or a group of individuals as *nonperson*, the infrastructure does not allocate them a place in person-space, and thus justifies their exploitation.

This is why years after abolitionist manifestos, still the ostensible notion of humanness is fallacious and has to be reconsidered. The “normals” in the book call humanness “having a soul” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 260) which is ironic, for what the normals do in *NLMG* is cruel and inhumane. Substituting a less normative and more accurate term in line with our previous discussions, restrictions of personhood in the modern world and its implications will be explored in *NLMG* in what follows.

5. Hailsham as the Make-believe Person-Space

Hailsham is undeniably the most significant part of the lives of the clones in *NLMG*. It is recalled as the happiest, most active, and the most meaningful era within the short lives of all the major characters. The thirty-one-year-old Kathy H. starts her life story as she is caring for other clones in their sequential donations, and from her very first lines she expresses how important being from Hailsham is to her identity.

In Ishiguro’s world Hailsham, unlike other centers that foster the clones, is one of the very few houses in which the “students” (what the Hailsham “guardians” call the clones) are raised in comfortable conditions. Hailsham provides the clones with educational programs, art galleries, sales and exchanges, guardians, medical care, and entertainments such as films, sports and games. All in all, the students at Hailsham receive perhaps all the amenities that a “normal” person accorded a place in person-space by the infrastructure would. However, as language-games such as “student” and “guardian” deceitfully hide their hidden double senses, so does Hailsham (on Ishiguro’s euphemism also see Jennings, 2013, p.19).

Towards the end of the book the history behind cloning in *NLMG* and



Hailsham is revealed by Miss Emily, the head guardian of Hailsham. She explains:

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 ask the sensible questions. Suddenly there were all these new possibilities laid before us, all these ways to cure so many previously incurable conditions. This was what the world ... wanted the most. And for a long time, people preferred to believe these organs appeared from nowhere, or at most that they grew in in a kind of vacuum. ... 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. So for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn't matter. And that was how things stood until our little movement came along. (Ishiguro, 2005, pp. 262-263)

After experiencing the catastrophic ordeals of war, which is itself a manifestation of murder and oppression, science starts fabricating the clones for the well-being of the normals. Closely connected to power systems, the medical institutions and biotechnological research centers channel the required hegemonic justifications in their language-games and socio-cultural practices by using symptomatic codes such as "abnormal" and "unhealthy" which establish an essential and discriminating lack. In this way, biotechnology becomes the medium through which the state persists as "a structure of protection designed to preserve the life of functional, productive, and efficient bodies, and to exclude dangerous, defective, or aberrant life" (Jennings, 2013, p.14). However, the Hailsham project attempts to make a change.

The core claim behind the Hailsham project is that if the students are given a place in person-space, encultured and acknowledged as persons, they will become persons, or in Miss Emily's words: "grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 261). Nevertheless, in challenging the infrastructure of personhood, Hailsham still requires political support from the state, Miss Emily confesses as long as there was the support of important people, Hailsham

and its make-believe practices were functional, but without their validation, the project came to a close. And with Hailsham closed, she says, everything will go back to its dark shadowy past, the students will be kept in "those vast government 'homes'" and adds "you'd not sleep for days if you saw what still goes on in some of those places" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 265).

In its attempt to show that the clones were persons, Hailsham creates its own make-believe forms of life, communal ties, socio-cultural infrastructures, and language-games that would prove the normals the clones possessed the *standard* higher-order mental capacities such as: autonomy, agency, and a unique sense of personal identity. Hailsham's method was to enculture the students in order to show they are capable of being encultured. The students are not only educated in literature, art and art appreciation, poetry, and so on, but they are strongly advised to create. The focus of the educational system at Hailsham is on humanities. The obvious reason behind this focus is that in order to prove that the clones are persons, Hailsham has to test mental functions related to the *human experience*, for humanities is the study of how people process and document the human experience. Therefore, to be a person is to be cultured, and to be cultured is to be refined in humanities.

In the make-believe world of Hailsham the students are most of all expected to be creative, otherwise they are seen as "layabouts" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 10). From the standpoint of the guardians this is a cultural practice of art appreciation that could prove that each individual has the capacity to create art and recognize those of the others. Being physically identical to normals, the clone should be searched beneath the surface for what the guardians call the "soul", and "Art bares the soul of the artist" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 254). In addition to this significance at the individual level, humanities and art have also a civic implication, for its appreciation not only conveys subjective experiences but it also enhances communal ties of "like-minded" people coming from a shared cultural background (Dilthey, 2002, p.103). And the civic role of artistic creation is what becomes significant for the students. Participation in such practices is considered to be vital in individuating oneself and acknowledging the unique identity of other members besides declaring one's commitment to cultural coalitions and

communal ties. Tommy is admonished for his works and his idleness because his attitude towards creativity expose his lack of care for this norm.

In Summary, Hailsham works by creating a make-believe infrastructure of personhood in order to observe if the students, when accorded a place in person-space by the infrastructure, could grow up to be persons and live up to the space given to them both at the individual level of mental capacities and the communal level of collective interactions. Within the socio-cultural practices of Hailsham students gradually pick up the rules, norms, and codes of the language-games as creativity becomes the most important means of reciprocal recognition.

6. Inconsistencies in the Make-believe Person-Space of Hailsham

The fictitious walls of Hialsham are not able to withhold the truth of the outside; the adversities of Hailsham manifest in different appearances. Madame and her Gallery mark the first glimpses of the truth that breach the make-believe world of Hailsham and its forged person-space. Bearing traces of the outside world, the event of the Gallery is for the students a "hazy realm" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 32). Every once in a while, Madame came and collected the best works of the students for what they assumed to be a gallery, but she also brought with herself to Hailsham an alien look. Madame's look and her shudder when getting too close to the students are signs of the truth from which the "guardians" have "sheltered" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 267) the students. The students believe their "guardians" at Hailsham *guarded* them like parent figures. However, we gradually come to discover another one of Ishiguro's equivocations: the guardians, in fact, guard and protect the *truth* of what the students are to the world beyond Hailsham.

The walls of Hailsham are protected by frightening stories about the unfortunate girls or boys that one day decided to climb up a fence and go into the "woods" and ended up dead (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 50). The Woods that stand at the top of the hills behind Hailsham embody an omnipresent darkness in the life of the students. Kathy recalls: "I certainly wasn't the only one of my age to feel their presence day and night. When it got bad, it was like they cast a shadow over the whole of Hailsham" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 50). Ishiguro connects the Woods and the unknowable fear it induced to the "ghastly truth" that awaits the

clones in the real world: "The guardians always insisted these stories were nonsense. But then the older students would tell us that was exactly what the guardians had told them when they were younger, and that we'd be told the ghastly truth soon enough, just as they were" (2005, p. 50). From an early age the students become unconsciously aware of this fear and stay away within the delusive comfort of Hailsham.

The main source of inconsistencies at the make-believe world of Hailsham is its dominant protocol of "being told and not told" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 81). It is Miss Lucy that breaks the rules and explicitly tells the students that they will die donating their organs in the near future. Although the students had already known what Miss Lucy told them, her candor comes as a great shock, for it is against the protocol, norms practiced, and the rules of the games. The forms of life and the rules at Hailsham both shelter the students by preventing them from being directly exposed to the harmful truth, and prepare them for their purpose by setting new norms and practices. The truth about their future donations had been tacitly conveyed in socio-cultural practices such as jokes, stories, and educational programs, all in all disguised for years as the clones grow up. When reflecting about the ways of Hailsham Tommy observes:

[T]he guardians had, throughout all our years at Hailsham, timed very carefully and deliberately everything they told us, so that we were always just too young to understand properly the latest piece of information. But of course we'd take it in at some level, so that before long all this stuff was there in our heads without us ever having examined it properly. (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 207)

As a result, despite all the efforts to make Hailsham believable, its cardboard walls cannot fabricate a real person-space for its students; it is not easy to renounce the prescriptive definitions of the infrastructure. In the eyes of the normal people both in and outside of Hailsham the clones can never qualify for persons. The failure of the project becomes fully exposed in Kathy and Tommy's last visit to Madame and Miss Emily's house for a "deferral" when after years Miss Emily confesses: "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, 2005, p. 82).



7. The Secondhand Place in the Person-Space and Disconnection

The dichotomy of real and copy associated with the ostensible definitions of biopower refigure in subsequent dichotomies of firsthand and secondhand, valuable and dumped, and connection or belonging and disconnection and not belonging. The world Ishiguro has created for the clones is filled with “dumped” and secondhand things. Ishiguro implicitly associates the secondhand and the dumped with the clones and their disconnection with the world. As nonpersons that do not possess a place in person-space the clones both at Hailsham and outside are only given secondhand and used things that once have been a possession of the normal world. All the things sold at the Sales, including Kathy’s tape, are secondhand. At the Cottages the rooms are derelict and filled with marks and imprints of what they used to be in the past. Desks, bed covers, farm tools and equipment are the remnants of an original life. When out in the real world, Kathy still chooses secondhand shops and interestingly finds her lost cassette there. The sight of the boat is another example; the clones go and visit the dumped boat as if it now belongs to them. There is no place in the real world for the clones to settle in. As a carer, Kathy seems to be always driving in deserted roads and among empty fields, staying at overnights, and care centers. Unusable old buildings are converted for rearing the clones. Tommy’s center, Kingsfield, had been a holiday camp; an old picture of the place shows happy families having fun: “splashing about having a great time” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 219). However, like all secondhand stuff handed to the clones bearing the traces of the original past, Kathy notices the remaining mark of the old pool: “the outline’s still there...the metal frame for the high diving board” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 219). The secondhand things always carry the traces of their original days, when they were firsthand. The association becomes clarified when we notice that the clones too are mere imprints of their models and originals, and they too are dumped or forgotten in the dusty corners of the world.

Norfolk is the most prominent symbol of not belonging. Miss Emily describes Norfolk as “something of a lost corner” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 65). Kathy remembers her saying:

You see, because it’s stuck out here on the east, on this hump jutting into the sea, it’s not on the way to anywhere. People

going north and south”—she moved the pointer up and down—“they bypass it altogether. For that reason, it’s a peaceful corner of England, rather nice. But it’s also something of a lost corner. (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 65)

The story of Norfolk as a lost corner, gradually transforms into another, more hopeful, story: Norfolk is also a place where all lost things can be found. Norfolk represents being abandoned and cast into the shadows, a place where dumped, lost, and forgotten things end up, but at the same time Norfolk is the imaginary place where lost things do not fade into nothingness and can be found. The correlation between the clones and Norfolk becomes more apparent at the end of the story where Miss Emily points out “for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 274). Similar to Norfolk being bypassed and not seen by the normal world, clones at Hailsham are seen as worthless copies and are washed away from the memory of the world. Hailsham for the clones is like Norfolk, although lost and forgotten, it carries on peacefully.

Hailsham is a place where the clones belonged. Schechtman maintained the person can endure as long as her person life endures (2014, p.110), and Hailsham as the make-believe person-space is not only a place where the clones develop personal identity and a sense of self at the individual level, but also practice the game of being a self in everyday activities and adhere to communal ties of mutual recognition. The first two levels of personhood become realized because prior to becoming self-conscious, Hailsham accorded them a place in its person-space. However, because of its dubiousness, both at Hailsham and increasingly as the clones leave and enter the real world and get closer to completing their donations, all the three levels of their person life unbind, leaving them with a fear of lack of identity and disconnection (see Shaddox, 2013, p.234). As soon as they finish their fourth donation, which, if they survive the first three, would be their last, even the secondhand life assigned to them is taken away. Tommy confesses his fears of what awaits after the fourth donation for Kathy:

How maybe, 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, 2005, p. 279)

If secondhand facilities were required up to the fourth donation for optimizing the results, with the fourth donation being necessarily the last, there would be no reason to spend more time or money on the worthless yet still conscious clone.

After their demystification by the truth that Miss Emily discloses, and while going back to their predestined lives, Kathy realizes the sheer discrimination of space allocated to the clones and the normals while driving back: “[T]hat night, 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 cafés were for everyone else” (Ishiguro, 2005, pp. 272-273).

The existential afflictions of being labeled a *copied nonperson* and denied authenticity, individuality, and autonomy in *NLMG* are not pronounced in a plea for help, but conveyed implicitly in the clones' latent emotional expressions. The balloons with which Kathy identifies herself and her friends are identically hollow objects with painted smiles, aimlessly bobbling up in the air at the mercy of the strings and the hand that holds them carelessly (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 213). The “vulnerability” of Tommy's animals also reflect the sad condition of the clones; Kathy remembers she saw them:

The first impression was like one you'd get if you took the back off a radio set: tiny canals, weaving tendons, miniature screws and wheels were all drawn with obsessive precision, and only when you held the page away could you see it was some kind of armadillo, say, or a bird... For all their busy, metallic features, there was something sweet, even vulnerable about each of them. (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 187)

This “vulnerability” made the observer worry “how they'd protect themselves or be able to reach and fetch things” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 188). Vulnerability is parallel to the desperate struggle of the clones “to hold on” in order to avoid collapsing into non-existence and objectification. The make-believe world of Hailsham and the temporary identity it bestowed are not retained in the real world; as nonpersons the clones are stripped from their authenticity and left vulnerable. When watching the balloons Kathy keeps anxiously imagining “someone coming with a pair of shears and snipping the balloon strings just where they entwined above the man's fist. Once that

happened, there'd be no real sense in which those balloons belonged with each other anymore” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 213). Without their person-space and personal identity, communal ties and the reciprocal recognitions the clones are insignificant copies without any sense or place in the world. The clown with a painted face and wearing a costume represents the make-believe simulated nature of Hailsham with its fragile binding strings holding on to its students as persons, but being a joke and a deception all along.

8. The Protective Walls of Simulacra and the Rules of the Seeing-Game

Fear and vulnerability grows as the protective walls of illusion are obliterated. The illusive worlds of simulacra are distanciations from the “ghastly truths” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 50) of the *real*. The make-believe world of Hailsham is itself a strived imitation of the real world, a “simulacrum”, and as such it is filled with copies and representations. Its students see the world in pictures, films and maps; they even have role-play classes in which they play normal people. Later on at the Cottages the clones become engrossed in television, advertisements and happy pictures of working normal people having fun at an office. As they go to find Ruth's possible, she seems close enough to Ruth when seen from behind the glass doors of her office which is very similar to the picture Kathy and Ruth had found before in an advertisement, but as she steps out from the office, distanciation is cancelled: “now ... the woman was too close, much closer than we'd ever really wanted. And the more we heard her and looked at her, the less she seemed like Ruth” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 163).

Clones are used to living in pictures, fictions, and simulations. The real world does not belong to them for they have not been given a place within the real world. As copies they also live a fictitious world of copies. The pleasant and familiar is the world of simulacra, with fixed two-dimensional people in posters smiling, but the real world is the unfamiliar and unfriendly one that not only does not recognize the clones as persons, but kills them for its own sake.

The power of simulacra magnifies as we search deeper and consider their role in justifying the cruel life trajectory predetermined for the clones. The clones in *NLMG* live a *designed* life in which they are taught to adhere to completely different kinds of norms that even include accepting



their fate and looking up to the ones that fulfill their donations the best. They aspire to complete after the fourth donation which would count as an honor, and it is considered a shame to die in your first or second donation. Even the best carers are the ones that lead the donors towards their last donations in calmness and full acceptance, and not in an “agitated” state. The best that the clones dream of is a deferral: “[to] ask for your donations to be put back by three, even four years. ... So long as you qualified” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 153). Therefore, the clones are born to live within the backdrops that induce them to consent to their own oppression, mistreatment, and murder as a norm and with a sense of obligation.

Shaddox suggests Hailsham induces conformity based on a sense of ethical responsibility (2013, pp. 451-452). He believes this submissiveness is partially fostered by the literature of emphatic responsibility especially manifest in Victorian novels that comprises the major part of the educational syllabus practiced. Victorian literature with its profound moral adherence to duty and the obligation of the individual towards the well-being of the society and its insistence on common-good, finds the source of virtue in following the pre-established ethical norms, hence the rules of the infrastructures.

As the example of Victorian morality reflects, the norms that are at play at Hailsham are legacies of the same practices in the real world. Accordingly, it is not only the world of the clones that is accused of being built upon simulated norms and games; the foundation of modern world's socio-cultural practices, definitions, and uniform appearances are illusory rules and language-games. In the modern world built upon the interests of power state the individual experiences personhood and all the forms of life built around it from a deceptively transparent stand. She receives the rules of the game as essential and abstract facts, sustain them without noticing their randomness, and experience forms of life from prescribed points of view. We now turn to the implications of these predetermined points of view.

The clones realize their disconnection not only through the things that they are told, or the ways in which they are treated like being given only the secondhand and dumped amenities, but first and most importantly in the way they are seen by the

normals. Kathy describes this turn of perspective as:

So you're waiting ...waiting for the moment when you realise that you really are different to them; that there are people out there, like Madame...who nevertheless shudder at the very thought of you.... 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, 2005, p. 36)

Ishiguro plays with the rules of the *seeing* language-games by not giving any facial descriptions of the clones, as if they are faceless. Reflection is not absent in *NLMG* but it is necessarily *opaque* (see Lamarque, 2014). In line with living in a world of simulacra, language-games, and appearance, the transparency of ontological presence is undermined by mediums that render all existence necessarily opaque. Rules of seeing is foundationally preset by the infrastructures. Like the ad that attracts the attention of the clones on the street: “There was one cardboard notice pinned over the counter that had been done in coloured felt-tips, and at the top of it was the word ‘look’ with a staring eye drawn inside each ‘o’” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 149), infrastructures order to *look* and at the same time define the rules of the *seeing-game*. The familiar ways of dehumanization in the farfetched world of *NLMG* reflect the modern and capitalist world's forms of oppression where certain groups of individuals are rendered faceless not because they are essentially different, but because protocols and rules represent them as such. All seeing is, therefore, necessarily opaque and predetermined in language-games.

[9. Memory, Identity and Rehumanization](#)

In “Generic Considerations in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*” Shaddox asserts as a narrator Kathy is attempting to reverse the dehumanizing process by establishing her first-person point of view (2014, pp.452-453). The irony of the Hailsham project is that the idea behind its insistence on artistic and literary creations was to extract the subjective expression of the students in order to prove that they possessed subjective first-person expression, yet the clones' perspectuality is not even recognized by their guardians. Kathy realizes at the end that years ago at Hailsham Madame was not shedding tears because “she can see right inside” her like

Tommy believed (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 73), but because she had her own sad story in mind when she saw Kathy dancing to the song and holding the pillow affectively to her chest. She saw Kathy enacting her own vision, she admits: "It wasn't really you, what you were doing" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 272). Kathy is only a performer, a mannequin, and an external presence with no internal perspcetuality to Madame. However, drawing upon Halpern and Weinstein, Shaddox claims by using the first-person narrative of Kathy H. Ishiguro deploys "the strategy of 'rehumanization' via the empathic reconciliation" (as cited in Shaddox, 2013, p. 452; Halpern and Weinstein, 2004, p. 565). He believes Kathy by narrating herself deduces empathy which unlike sympathy "involves imagining and seeking to understand the perspective of another person" (Shaddox, 2014, p. 462), and in this way, is able to constitute the perspective of the clone and restore the denied personhood.

It was mentioned that, as persons, the *healthy and encultured* human beings are necessarily self-narrators (Schechtman, 2014, p.112; see also Schechtman, 1996). Personal identity is constituted by a variety of ways by which we *identify* ourselves from the rest of the world. One of the most important dimensions of our identity is our diachronic sense of self - a self that is unified and has persistence through time. Autobiographical memory plays the key role in extending the self in time by installing the first-person point of view in our memory narratives of the past and possible scenarios of the future, and thus conjoining these individual life-narratives in a general life trajectory (see Schechtman, 1996; Hamilton 2013; Bernsten and Ruben, 2012; and Rowlands 2017). As a result, an important part of our identity, the diachronic sense of a self, develops as we learn the language-game of self-narration in both past and future narratives that constitute the general life story of the self. The life story of the clones does not include a long future span; therefore, the past becomes more significant in constituting a sense of personal identity.

Kathy believed that Hailsham was the string that bonded them together and prevented them from fading into nothingness of the world. And for this reason she tries to cling to her memories of Hailsham as hard as she can. What Kathy is doing is preserving the memory of having an identity in a make-believe person space. Kathy's assuming the role of the narrator is

significant for the other clones as well. Even as a carer she spends a lot of time remembering the details of the space to which they belonged and keeps telling them to her donors. She rearranges the past in meaningful patterns and even creates an imaginary past for donors that are not from Hailsham to adopt and thus to avoid the emptiness of their existence. The clones being reduced to a sum total of body organs, gradually diminish until they are completely obliterated without leaving a trace. Their births and deaths are not recorded, and they are dumped somewhere after they are "Switched off" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 279). Kathy "holds on" (Ishiguro, 2005, pp. 162, 258) to the last meaningful pieces of not only her own existence, but a cultural memory and a collective identity. In the active voice of the narrator of memories she is able to preserve herself and her species in her stories. She says: "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" (p. 286).

Conveyed in the title, *loss* and disconnection is central to *NLMG*. The clones consistently struggle with not belonging to a place and, as a result, constantly losing their friends and loved ones, their organs, their originals, their identities and authenticity, their home, a place in the world to belong to, and their memories. Living with this great fear they buildup the fantasy of Norfolk. Norfolk was the imaginary space where the unwanted and forgotten would end up. Before the closing of Hailsham, the students subliminally associated it with Norfolk. Later with the person-space of Hailsham lost, the clones are left facing their fading into nothingness. Although they do not belong and are not rooted anywhere, "holding on" is what saves them from the maddening bitterness of their condition. They first hold on to each other, like Kathy and Tommy did, on the sad night they were returning from Madame and Miss Emily, to stop "being swept away into the night" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 274). Yet, when they even lose one another, the only place to rebuild connection is in memories. Memory is the real Norfolk where all lost things can be found. The winds of vast empty planes wash away the rubbish; green fields and lakes become marshlands; clones fade into nothingness, present too is lost into past, but when looking into the empty fields of Norfolk amid all the flapping of empty "torn plastic" and "old carrier bags", Kathy realizes: "...a tiny figure would appear on



the horizon across the field, and gradually get larger until I'd see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 288).

Life stories are calling the past to the present, summoning the unheard voice of the unseen, the oppressed, and the erased; life stories pass on individual and collective identities. Life stories surpass the discriminating barriers of person-space and build up a narrative place in which the personhood of the narrator and her kind is recognized. By the merit of telling her life story Kathy rehumanizes the dehumanized and fulfills the liberationist novel.

10. Sum Up

It is commonly assumed that foundational notions such as humanness and personhood have definitions based on necessary and sufficient conditions. With a Wittgensteinian approach to meaning this article claimed that persons are not to be found in the *contents* of the body, or the soul, but within the *forms* defined by the rules of the personhood language-games preset and sustained by the infrastructure of personhood. In certain conditions rules of the infrastructure's language-games describe an individual or a group of individuals as nonperson, does not allocate them a place in person-space, and thus they are systematically exploited.

In Ishiguro's *NLMG* the clones are determined nonpersons; they are denied a place in the person-space and reared in the illusive make-believe world of Hailsham; they are lead to accept and adhere to their exploitation as a cultural norm and are finally reduced to a sum total of body organs objectified and commercialized for the wellbeing of the normals. Behind the lines of Ishiguro's imaginary world lies the norms of his real world. A scientific, modernized, and purportedly humane world wherein the seeing language-games dubiously create the illusion of transparency rendering certain groups unseen, unheard, erased, and forgotten. Life stories, however, have the means to conjure up dead voices and restore seized identities.

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