



**Purity in a Malevolent Harvest
Ustopianism in Kazuo Ishiguro's
Never Let Me Go (2005)**

by

**Dr. Lobna M. Shaddad
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Arts, Assiut University**

Abstract

In a continuous search for perfection, it is possible that one day human body organs will be harvested. This is the premise of the dystopian novel *Never Let Me Go* by the Japanese-born British author and Nobel winner Kazuo Ishiguro. The novel provides a possible fate of the human race in the event that we keep chasing longevity. It depicts an English school in the 1990s in which children are farmed for their organs. Such children are conceived only for scientific purposes and they are not told that they are clones or that the only purpose for their existence is to donate their organs after becoming young adults. Applying Margaret Atwood's term 'ustopia,' a term coined through merging the two terms 'utopia' and 'dystopia' that highlights features these terms have in common, to Ishiguro's novel, this paper aims to shed light on the elements of utopia within Ishiguro's dystopianism. I claim that *Never Let Me Go*, besides serving as a warning, provides hope through questioning the concept of absolute evil and focusing on the idea that there has to be some degree of goodness even in apparently evil situations.

Keywords: *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro, Ustopia, Dystopia, Utopia, Cloning

عندما يكون النقاء بداخل حصاد فاسد: تطبيق مفهوم اليوتوبيا على رواية

"أبدأ لا تدعنى أذهب" للكاتب إيشيجورو

تعد رواية "أبدأ لا تدعنى أذهب" للكاتب أنجليزى الجنسية يابانى المولد والحاصل على جائزة نوبل للأدب كازو إيشيجورو واحدة من أبرز روايات القرن الحالى والتي تسلط الضوء على التقدم الهائل الذى حلَّ بالهندسة الوراثية والجينية وكيف أنه إذا أسىء تطبيق هذا العلم فإن العواقب ستكون وخيمة. حيث إنَّ الرواية تسرد أحداثاً خيالية لمصير يمكن حدوثه للجنس البشرى إذا استمرالإنسان فى لهائه وراء محاربة التقدم فى العمر. وذلك من خلال تصوير مدرسة إنجليزية فى التسعينات يتم بداخلها تربية وتعليم أطفال مستنسخين من أجل الحصول على أعضائهم عندما يبلغون سن معين. ويتم تطبيق مصطلح الكاتبة مارجريت أتوود "يوتوبيا" - وهو مصطلح ابتكرته الكاتبة عن طريق دمج مصطلحي "يوتوبيا" و "دستوبيا" - كي تشير إلى أن كليهما يحتوى على قدر ولو ضئيل من الآخر.

يهدف هذا البحث إلى القاء الضوء على عناصر اليوتوبيا داخل عالم إيشيجورو الذى يزخر بالظلم والفساد لتأكيد أن أحد أهداف الرواية هو منح البشر أملاً عن طريق المسائلة حول مفهوم الشر المطلق.

In his work *De Malorum Subsistentia* [*On the Existence of Evils*], Proclus Lycaeus argued that good and evil are not stable and, thus, that pure evil is not possible as it must be mixed with good such that “evil cannot exist in an absolute sense, but, rather in a limited, relative sense” (Wear 103). This conception that evil must involve some degree of goodness allows room for a viewpoint that would move beyond simply identifying and opposing evil people to also search for their good qualities, with a focus on how understanding the mixed nature of evil may lead to a better understanding of the world. The understanding that there is no absolute evil is adopted in this paper as it examines *Never Let Me Go* (2005), a dystopian science fiction novel by the Japanese-born British author and Nobel Prize winner for literature Sir Kazuo Ishiguro (1954–). The novel criticises modern societies through raising questions in relation to existentialism, that is, a philosophical approach in which the nature of existence “confronts human beings with the possibility of *choice*” (Law 66), as well as shedding light on ethical concerns regarding the genetic engineering of human beings, particularly how the latter has developed to the extent that it may change human lives forever through allowing gene editing to ensure a healthier world, which, for many people, may lead to unpredictable and less desirable side effects. Moreover, the novel exposes the oppression involved among a certain group who are aware that they are destined to die at an early age. In this context, *Never Let Me Go* can be seen, on the one hand, as a dystopia because it is full of darkness and suffering, but, on the other hand, one can argue that the novel develops some humanitarian ideas

more attuned to a type of utopia that, in combination with dystopian elements, reflect a more balanced view of the possibilities of human nature. This viewpoint is adopted here in seeking to explore here how the novel questions the concept of absolute evil.

Ishiguro's novel has received a great deal of research. For example, Leona Toker and Daniel Chertoff argue, in their paper "Reader Response and the Recycling of Topoi in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*," that this novel is a milestone of dystopian fiction. They explain that the novel acts as a spell over the readers as it sheds light on ethical concerns about the dignity of human life. Another study is "Look in the Gutter': Infrastructural Interiority in *Never Let Me Go*" by Kelly Rich which emphasizes that Ishiguro's main aim is to criticise modern societies. Rich analyses try to understand the clones' personhood in the light of the organ donation program which encourages the idea that the clones must sacrifice their lives for the sake of curing incurable diseases. Rich's argument is close to Kai Yan's, who, in her article "Posthuman Biopredicament: A Study of Biodystopia in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*," describes the novel as being a biodystopia that re-examines the value and power of life. Moreover, in his article "Exploring and Anti-Utopian Subtext in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*," Arnab Chatterjee revisits the rustic theme to argue that the novel portrays an ideal landscape that becomes an authentic dystopia in the long run with fearful results. The focus of this study is different from the previous works because it sheds light on overlapping aspects between the two concepts of utopia and dystopia.

This analysis of *Never Let Me Go* relies on a term coined by the Canadian author Margret Atwood, namely, ‘ustopia’, that she created “by combing utopia and dystopia – the imagined perfect society and its opposite – because ... each contains a latent version of the other” (Atwood 1). Atwood explains that utopia and dystopia initially appear as completely different, but when examined more closely “you see something more like a yin and yang pattern; within each utopia a concealed dystopia; within each dystopia, a hidden utopia” (Atwood 23). Atwood’s term not only suggests that ultimate evil is unreal in itself when applied conceptually to designate a dystopia, but also facilitates a more positive view concerning the future of humanity. Atwood aimed to introduce a term that challenged any binary opposition between utopia and dystopia and that could reveal the layers of complexity employed in dystopian fiction writing.

1. Utopia/Dystopia

The idea of a utopia was initially developed by Plato in his *Republic*, but the term, together with utopian fiction, began in 1516 when Thomas More introduced to the world his book *Utopia*. Since the publication of *Utopia*, whenever the term ‘utopia’ comes to mind, it is usually thought of as an imaginary world where everything and everyone is ideal. In this paradise-like society, every citizen works hard and, as a result, enjoys the full benefits of effective morality, religion, politics and law. For More, the main goal behind creating a utopia was to “baptize the island described in his book” (Vieira 3), but More’s world and its “citizens have to be controlled – educated to do right, restrained from doing wrong”

(Ferns 42). Over time, writers of utopias became aware that this ‘restriction from doing wrong’ makes the presentation of conflict and drama difficult, which are critical elements in storytelling. Utopian writers were drawn to dealing with human imperfection. Accordingly, utopian literature increasingly turned away from dealing with perfection and started creating societies that had gone wrong; imaginary frightening societies where people are suffering, unhappy, dehumanized and corrupted. Thus, it is arguable that the concept of dystopia had emerged before the term, as coined in 1868 by John Stuart Mill, to “describe a situation or a government that would be the ‘worst imaginable’” (Roth 230).

A question arising here is: if a utopia describes a perfect world, does a dystopia describe the exact opposite, that is, a completely imperfect world? Many thinkers have supported this viewpoint, claiming that dystopia is utopia’s “opposite: a nightmare, the ultimate flawed world” (Wilson 1) that can be identified as a conceived world in which humans are forced to deal with various sources of oppression. Daniele Fioretti agrees, claiming that the aim of dystopian writing is to portray a futuristic disaster “to prevent the catastrophe before it happens by modifying our conduct in the present” (36). In contrast, some critics have asserted that a definition of dystopia as the exact opposite of utopia is too narrow, since dystopia appears to be a broader term that can be seen as utopia’s “essence” (Claeys15) or its “shadow” that “emerged in the wake of utopia and has followed it ever since” (Kumar 19), and that dystopia fiction operates to promote clearer thinking concerning personal and

societal faults, to stimulate reform. Therefore, Michael D. Gordin declares:

Despite the name, dystopia is not simply the opposite of utopia. A true opposite of utopia would be a society that is either completely unplanned or is planned to be deliberately terrifying and awful. Dystopia, typically invoked, is neither of these things; rather, it is a utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society.(1)

In arguing that dystopia is not the opposite of utopia, these critics invoke an understanding close to that of Atwood's term "ustopia". For example, Gordin writes, "Every utopia always comes with its implied dystopia – whether the dystopia of the status quo, which the utopia is engineered to address, or a dystopia found in the way this specific utopia corrupts itself in practice. Yet a dystopia does not have to be exactly a utopia inverted" (2). This understanding implies that the term ustopia highlights how the absolute evil promoted through elements of dystopia can be potentially undermined by the initial or ongoing utopian impulse, meaning that the two concepts of dystopia and utopia are always connected.

2. *Never Let Me Go* Portraying a Ustopia

The term "ustopia" is likely to be useful when applied to the novel *Never Let Me Go* to show that, besides suffering and injustice, the novel also contains utopian elements. The novel depicts the lives of three human clones, namely, Kathy, the narrator and a carer (one who looks after clones while they make organ donations), and Ruth

and Tommy, who are raised in an elite English boarding school, Hailsham, in the 1990s where children are farmed for their organs. The clones have to undergo a certain number of organ donations until they reach ‘completion,’ which entails death. Ishiguro’s dystopianism is clear throughout the novel. For example, it is highlighted in Ruth’s words, after some clones sought to understand why they were created, “We all know it. We’re modelled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren’t psychos. That’s what we come from. We all know it, so why don’t we say it?” (166). Ruth also adds, “If you want to look for possibles, if you want to do it properly, then look in the gutter. You look in the rubbish bins, look down the toilet, that’s where you’ll find where we all came from” (166). This depiction of a dystopia has allowed critics to argue that Ishiguro “occupies his work with the limits of our humanity and the problem of making sense of a seemingly senseless world” (Groes 7).

Even though dystopian elements are prevalent, the novel also provides support for the view that utopia and dystopia can coexist, since the purpose of creating the clones is to provide solutions to otherwise incurable diseases, to make the world a better place; perhaps even a utopia. This is perceptible in the words of Miss Emily, the headmistress of Hailsham:

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. This was what the world noticed the most, wanted the most. And for a long time, people preferred to believe that these organs appeared from nowhere, or at most that they grow in a kind of vacuum. (262)

In due course, this dream of utopia may turn into a dystopia “if the cost of utopia is too high,” as Kenneth Hanshew argues (18). Here, the cost to sustain the utopia is the farming of clone children, who are plundered of their natural life and true identity because of society’s refusal to see them as human beings. This aspect of cost is conveyed in Kathy’s words to Miss Emily, when questioning why the clones are to be educated if their destiny is already determined: “Why did we do all that work in the first place? Why train us, encourage us, make us produce all of that? If we’re just going to give donations anyway, then die, why all these lessons? Why all those books and discussions?” (259). Lyman Tower Sargent claims that twentieth-century ideas concerning utopias that “have the potential of producing an enhanced life” have not been sustained but “have been hijacked and turned into dystopias” (4). This is the case with *Never Let Me Go*, in which Miss Emily is trying to create a perfect and safe place for the clone children at Hailsham. As Miss Emily says to Kathy, she has the aim, alongside Madame, a woman who comes to choose which of the children’s paintings to put in her Gallery, to prove that the clones “*had souls at all*” (260). She and Madame collect the artworks of the clones so they can declare to the world, “There, look! ... look at this art! How dare you claim these children are anything less than fully human?” (262). Miss Emily

wants to prove to the world that these clone children are as creative as other children and that they must be treated normally until the time of their donation comes.

But Miss Emily's dream of a utopia is hijacked and turned into a dystopia when Hailsham and other schools for clones are closed forever, after it is discovered that a scientist named James Morningdale has developed a method for creating a generation of clones with higher intelligence than other humans. This incident, as Miss Emily concludes, "reminded people, reminded them of a fear they'd always had. It's one thing to create students, such as yourselves, for the donation programme. But a generation of created children who'd take their place in society? Children demonstrably superior to the rest of us" (264). This observation supports Sargent's comment that a utopia is ended "by people who either were willing to force others into a mould of their devising but they rarely applied to themselves or simply ignored the utopian implications of the vision in order to further their personal agenda, which was usually money and power" (3-4). Therefore, Ishiguro's dystopia emerges through a failure to make sense of some of the consequences of trying to make the world a better place since, as Miss Emily puts it, "How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask a world to put away that cure, to go back to the dark days? There was no going back" (Ishiguro 263).

3. Utopian Elements in *Never Let me Go*

3.1. Hailsham as a 'good place'

Although "Hailsham represents a subtle exaggeration of boarding school practices, and a kind of comic lateralization of recognizable aspects of the total institution" (Currie 102), it can be seen as a 'good place.' Hailsham, as Miss Emily explains, "was considered a shining beacon, an example of how we might move to a more humane and better way of doing things" (258). Even Kathy recognises the same fact: "We were all very special, being Hailsham students, and so it was all the more disappointing when we behaved badly" (43). Harmony among the clone children is clearly fostered through the way they are taught to value each other. For instance, Kathy declares, "I can see now, too, how the Exchanges had a more subtle effect on us all. If you think about it, being dependent on each other to produce the stuff that might become your private treasure – that's bound to do things to your relationships" (16). Therefore, Hailsham is considered as an ideal place, as evidenced through Kathy saying of one of the donors before his third donation, "He could hardly breathe, but he looked towards me and said: "Hailsham, I bet that was a beautiful place" (5). She adds:

He knew he was close to completing and so that's what he was doing: getting me to describe things to him, so they'd really sink in, so that maybe during those sleepless nights, with the drugs and the pain and the exhaustion, the line would blur between what were my memories and what were his.

That was when I first understood, really understood, just how lucky we'd been – Tommy, Ruth and me, all the rest of us. (5–6)

Hailsham, on the one hand, is where some of the clones are not only given education, but also protection from the outside world that sees them as being not fully human. On the other hand, the clones at Hailsham are not given a true picture of their future. Moreover, Hailsham as an institution approves of the donation process, which is inhumane to the clones. In defence of the donation process, Miss Emily states, “However uncomfortable people were about [the clones’] 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” (263). Thus, the intentions behind Hailsham have “a desire for goodness that could never realistically find a place” (Geoghegan 75). This situation leads to Hailsham closing after the Morningdale development, illustrating that Hailsham is like More’s *Utopia*, which was undone “by erasing every statement of the good with a statement of impossibility” (Featherstone 4).

3.2. Health as Utopian and Dystopian

One key element in More’s utopia was health, described as being “the greatest of all bodily pleasures” (86) because “the pleasure of eating and drinking, and all other delights of the body, are only so far desirable as they give or maintain Health” (87). Being healthy is considered a top priority among the guardians of

Hailsham. Kathy declares, “at Hailsham we had to have some form of medical almost every week” (13). Also, as Miss Lucy, one of the guardians, explains, “You’re ... *special*. So keeping yourselves well, keeping yourselves very healthy inside, that’s much more important for each of you that it is for me” (68–69). To keep the children healthy, the guardians are, as Kathy puts it, “strict about smoking. I’m sure they’d have preferred it if we never found out smoking even existed; but since this wasn’t possible, they made sure to give us some sort of lecture each time any reference to cigarettes came along” (67). Here again, it can be seen how a utopia can change into a dystopia since the “rule that removes the freedom to damage one’s own body, is given an exaggerated importance at Hailsham because, for a community of clones being grown for their body parts, smoking amounts, in a literal way, to the corruption of somebody else’s organs” (Currie 102). Through this example, the novel offers a critique of an inhumanity that could arise for medical reasons in relation to a need to harvest genetically modified people, where they could be valued and their choices restricted for health reasons but not for their good but for the good of others, and thus undermining the point of care and of human value in itself.

3.3. Friendship

In a world in which clone children live with no parents, friendship plays a vital role in creating stability in the lives of the children of Hailsham. Clone children need each other to survive and this makes friendship another utopian element in *Never Let Me Go*. Friendship is formed “in those moments when we open our hearts in exchanges of laughter, stories and perspectives” (Feinberg 3). The

most obvious example of friendship in the novel is the one between Ruth and Kathy. The way they are depicted as being respectful of each other's feelings is striking. For example, Ruth pretends that she knows how to play chess, but when Kathy brings a chess set and asks Ruth to teach her, Ruth always pretends that she has something else to do. In time, Kathy figures out that Ruth does not know how to play. Despite this fact, Kathy never confronts her dear friend. In another example, when Ruth hints that she has received a pencil case as a gift from Miss Geraldine, Kathy exerts considerable effort to prove Ruth wrong. Afterwards, however, Kathy feels remorseful and reflects:

All this effort, all this planning, just to upset my dearest friend. So what if she'd fibbed a little about her pencil case? Didn't we all dream from time to time about one guardian or other bending the rules and doing something special for us? A spontaneous hug, a secret letter, a gift? All Ruth had done was to take one of these harmless daydreams a step further; she hadn't even mentioned Miss Geraldine by name. (60)

Even when Ruth exaggerates about Hailsham to strangers in Kathy's company, the latter refuses to comment. Kathy says to herself, "But if Ruth was sometimes embarrassed, catching my eye in the middle of some story or other, she seemed confident I wouldn't give her away. And of course, I didn't" (145).

As for Ruth, she values her connection with Kathy. When, for example, Kathy loses her favourite cassette tape, Ruth brings her another tape to help her feel better. This makes Kathy happy, and

she reflects, “And suddenly I felt the disappointment ebbing away and being replaced by a real happiness. We didn’t do things like hug each other in Hailsham. But I squeezed one of her hands in both mine when I thanked her” (76). Kathy keeps the tape for what it represents, “especially now Ruth has gone, it’s become one of my most precious possessions” (76). Even after long years of separation, the relationship between Ruth and Kathy remains the same. Kathy narrates, “The instant I saw her again, at the recovery centre in Dover, all our differences – while they didn’t exactly vanish – seemed not nearly as important as all other things: like the fact that we’d grown up together at Hailsham, the fact that we knew and remembered things no one else did” (4–5). Thus, it is clear that both Ruth and Kathy understand that friends are supportive of each other and understand each other, and react accordingly without necessarily needing words.

3.4. Teacher-student Relationships

The way the guardians treat the children in Hailsham is further evidence that Hailsham has elements of utopia. One example of a good guardian is Miss Geraldine, who plays an important role in the clone children’s lives. Kathy comments, “She did her best to look at the picture with kindness and understanding ... she went too far the other way, actually finding things to praise, pointing them out to the class” (20). Miss Lucy is another good guardian, who is empathetic enough to apologise to little Tommy after saying to him that he does not have any artistic talents. Tommy says, “She was sorry for what she’d told me before. And that it wasn’t too late, I should start straight away, making up the lost time” (109). He also

adds, “What she said was that if I didn’t want to be creative, if I really didn’t feel like it, that was perfectly all right” (23).

Miss Lucy also believes that the relationship between a teacher and their students must be built on trust, which is why she decides to try to make the children understand what they really are and their position in the world. She did this because, as Miss Emily declares to Kathy, “She thought you students had to be made more aware. More aware of what lay ahead of you, who you were, what you were for. She believed you should be given as full a picture as possible” (267). Miss Lucy’s words to the students are very honest:

If you’re going to have decent lives, then you’ve got to know, know properly. None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars. And none of you will be working in supermarkets as I heard some of you planning the other day. Your lives are set out for you. You’ll become adults, then before you’re old, before you’re even middle aged, you’ll start to donate your vital organs. That’s what each of you was created to do. You’re not like the actors you watch on your videos, you’re not even like me. You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided. (81)

Both Miss Lucy and Miss Geraldine understand that certain “teacher-student relationships are more effective for student achievement and attitudes than others” (Brekelmans 74). In fact, they know that the quality of a teacher-student relationship is crucial

because it is this relationship that can help in building the social and academic identities of the students.

3.5. Perceptiveness and Hard work

Further evidence of the success of Hailsham as a utopia is shown through its producing highly perceptive students. Thus, at an early age, six Hailsham students come up with a plan to impress Madame. But as soon as they begin to approach Madame, they come to think that Madame is afraid of them, that she sees them as being like “spiders” (35). The children are right in this feeling, as the truth is revealed later when Miss Emily confesses to Kathy, “We’re *all* afraid of you. I myself had to fight back my dread of you all almost every day I was at Hailsham” (269). Kathy also proves herself to be very perceptive when she summarises the whole situation:

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

Besides being perceptive, the Hailsham students are hard workers. For instance, Kathy grows up to be a devoted carer; a nurse for the clones who donate their organs. Thus, her “donors always tended to do much better than expected. Their recovery times have been impressive, and hardly any of them have been classified as “agitated,” even before fourth donation” (3). Kathy explains, “I’ve developed a kind of instinct around donors. I know when to hang around and comfort them, when to leave them to themselves; when to listen to everything they have to say, and when just to shrug and tell them to snap out of it” (3). She adds, “There’s no way I could have gone on for as long as I have if I’d stopped feeling for my donors every step of the way” (4).

4.5. Hopes and Dreams

Another aspect of utopia found in the novel concerns having hopes and dreams, which are specifically human characteristics. From the beginning of the novel, Ishiguro depicts the young clones as having dreams of something better. One of these dreams involved a part where, as Kathy narrates, “each of us was secretly wishing a guardian would come from the house and take him away” (10). This type of dream or aspiration indicates that the children miss living a normal life and having parents. This lack is highlighted further when Kathy is listening to the fictional pop star Judy Bridgewater singing, “Never let me go...Oh baby, baby ... Never let me go” (70). She imagines a woman giving birth to baby after waiting for a baby for a long time and, therefore, holding her baby firmly, singing to it ‘never let me go’, “partly because she’s so happy, but also because

she's so afraid something will happen, that the baby will get ill or be taken away from her" (70). Miss Emily is aware of this dream of Kathy's and says, "I saw a little girl, her eyes tightly closed, holding to her breast the old kind world, one that she knew in her heart could not remain, and she was holding it pleading, never to let her go" (272). Currie comments, "Ishiguro's novel invents and names itself after a pop song, which belongs to a recognizable category of pop songs, or to a field of imagery, in which the paradox of unwanted freedom is simply the upshot of a conventional comparison of love and conflict" (92). Cynthia Wong also supports this argument; "In his novels, the main characters search similarly for compensation or consolation from a loss in their lives" (1). Furthermore, Sebastian Groes and Barry Lewis argue, "Ishiguro's success with audiences around the world is driven by his unconditional commitment to understanding the world and its people, but also by his ability to provide consolation and a sense of community often seemingly lost in the contemporary, globalized world" (10).

Also, having hopes and dreams is reflected in a game in which Kathy creates "the illusion the place wasn't crowding with students, but that instead Hailsham was the quiet, tranquil house where I lived with just five or six others" (90). Ruth also proves herself to be someone who can dream and hope in that she used to console anyone who lost any precious thing through encouraging them to imagine that one day they could go and visit Norfolk and find it. Kathy comments, "You have to remember that to us, at that stage in our lives, any place beyond Hailsham was like a fantasy land; we had only the haziest notions of the world outside and about

what was and wasn't possible there" (66). She also adds, "I'm sure Ruth was right about that. Norfolk comes to be a real source of comfort for us, probably much more than we admitted at the time, and that was why we were still talking about it – albeit as a sort of joke – when we were much older" (66).

Finding their "possibles", the original persons they were cloned from, is another dream that provides hope for the clones. They want to find models through which to "glimpse [their] future" (140). Kathy explains, "When you saw the person you were copied from, you'd get *some* insight into who you were deep down, and maybe too, you'd see something of what your life held in store" (140). Kathy adds:

Since each of us was copied at some point from a normal person, there must be, for each of us, somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life. This meant, at least in theory, you'd be able to find the person you were modelled from. That's why, when you were out there yourself – in the towns, shopping, centers, transport cafés – you kept an eye out for "possible" – the people who might have been the models for you and your friends.(139)

But the greatest hope the clones hold dear to is what they call "deferral", which entails the possibly of delaying donations for some time, they believe, if a couple proves that they are in love. Tommy and Kathy are planning to go to Madame to ask for a deferral. Tommy's hopes are clear in his words to Kathy, "If we get this ... Just suppose we do. Suppose she let us have three years, say,

just to ourselves. What do we do exactly? See what I mean, Kath? Where do we go?" (244) To impress Madame, Tommy takes with him some of his paintings to prove that he is talented and says to Madame, "I was mixed up in those days, I didn't really do any art. I didn't do anything. I know now I should have done, but I was mixed up. So you haven't got anything of mine in your gallery, I know that's my fault, and I know it's probably way too late, but I've brought some things with me now" (254).

With the greatest of their hopes dashed, the dreams of Kathy and Tommy come to an end. The closing of Hailsham exhausts the energy of people like Miss Emily to continue their battle and she says, "But the dream of yours, this dream of being able to *defer*. Such a thing would always have been beyond us to grant, even at the height of our influence" (261). Matthews comments, "*Never Let Me Go* seems to be about the ethical dilemmas presented to us by cloning, but, it is first of all an analysis of the complexities of human relationships, and cloning itself may be read as a metaphor for any number of modes of exclusion" (3).

5. Conclusion

After a careful reading of the world depicted in *Never Let Me Go*, it is apparent that Ishiguro is a writer capable of conveying an emotionally charged story that raises questions about the future of humanity where humans need to be harmed to ensure humanity continues. Within a relatively straightforward plot, the novel successfully generates sympathy towards the clone characters, whose plight connects with a range of ethical concerns nowadays

about genetic engineering and genetic modifications that, in Ishiguro's world, involve the clones' welfare and lives being subordinated to serve as medical supplies for human vital organs. That these clones must die as young adults generates a major dystopian element within the novel.

Despite being a dystopia, the novel incorporates elements of utopia, such as depicting Hailsham as a caring place, the clones as being healthy (physically and emotionally) during their short lives, deep friendship among the clones, strong student-teacher relationships, the independence of young clones during the three or four years that they live after leaving Hailsham and before completion, and the dramas occurring within the clones' lives that demonstrate their humanity. Such utopian elements illustrate that Margret Atwood's term, *ustopia*, can be applied to this novel, as it helps provide a greater understanding of how sometimes utopian ideas can develop into dystopias. Moreover, the term *ustopia* allows for a claim that Ishiguro's novel is intended to depict a possible fate that needs to be prevented from occurring. Therefore, Ishiguro's dystopianism, which bears some elements of utopia, works to remind readers that the world we know could get worse. At the same time, *Never Let Me Go*, with its glimpses of utopia, also offers hope through reminding people of what needs to be focussed on, within a context of ambiguity and uncertainty that marks the real world as opposed to simple dichotomies of good and evil.

Works Cited

- Atwood, Margaret. *Dire Cartographies: The Roads to Utopia – The Handmaid’s Tale and the MaddAddam Trilogy from In Other Worlds*. New York: Vintage, 2011. Print.
- Brekelmans, Mieke, Theo Wubbels and Perryden Brok. “Teacher Experience and the Teacher-student Relationship in the Classroom Environment”. *Studies in Educational Learning Environment: An International Perspective*. Ed. Swee Chiew Goh and Myint Swe Khino. London: World Scientific, 2002. Print.
- Claeys, Gregory. “Three Variants on the Concept of Dystopia”. *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*. Ed. Fátima Vieira. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, pp.14–18. Print.
- Chatterjee, Arnab. “Exploring and Anti-Utopian Subtext in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*,” *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2019, pp. 109-124.
- Currie, Mark. “Controlling Time: Never Let Me Go”. *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes. London: Continuum, 2009, pp. 92–103. Print.
- Featherstone, Mark. *Planet Utopia: Utopia, Dystopia, and Globalisation*. London: Routledge, 2017. Print.
- Feinberg, Margaret. *Friendship: Cultivating Relationships that Enrich Our Lives*. Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2009. Print.

Ferns, Christopher. *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999. Print.

Fioretti, Daniele. *Utopia and Dystopia in Postwar Italian Literature: Pasolini, Calvino, Sanguineti, Volponi*. Gewerbestrasse: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. Print.

Geoghegan, Vincent. "Political Theory, Utopia, Post-secularism as Method". *Utopian Method Vision: The Value of Social Dreaming*. Ed. Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccoloni. New York: Peter Lang. 2007, pp. 47–68. Print.

Groes, Sebastian and Barry Lewis. "Introduction: 'It's Good Manners, Really' – Kazuo Ishiguro and the ethics of Empathy." *Kazuo Ishiguro: New Critical Visions of the Novels*. Ed. Sebastian Groes and Barry Lewis. London: Red Globe, 2011, pp. 1–12. Print.

Gordin, Michael D., Helen Tilley and Gyan Prakash. "Introduction: Utopia and Dystopia beyond Space and Time". *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility*. Ed. Michael D. Gordin, Helen Tilley and Gyan Prakash. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010, pp. 1–20. Print.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go*. New York: Vintage Books, 2005. Print.

Kumar, Krishan. "Utopian's Shadow". *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*. Ed. Fátima Vieira. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, pp.19–22. Print.

- Law, David R. *Briefly Sartre's Existentialism and Humanism*. London: SCM Press, 2007. Print.
- Matthews, Sean. "Introduction: Your Words Open Windows for Me: The Art of Kazuo Ishiguro". *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes. London: Continuum, 2009, pp. 1–12. Print.
- More, Thomas. *Utopia*. Reilly, 1737. *Google Books*, <https://books.google.com/eg/books?id=1sNLAAAACAJ&pg=PA87&dq=utopia+health&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUK EwjSmY3a76XkAhXGDWMBHU2MB4sQ6AEIMDAB#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Accessed 28 January 2019.
- Rich, Kelly. "“Look in the Gutter”: Infrastructural Interiority in *Never Let Me Go*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 61, no. 4, 2015, pp. 631-651.
- Roth, Michael S. "Trauma: A Dystopia of the Spirit". *Thinking Utopia: Steps into Other Worlds*. Ed. Jörn Rüsen, Michael Fehr and Thomas W. Rieger. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005, pp. 230–246. Print.
- Sargent, Lyman Tower. "The Necessity of Utopian Thinking: A Cross-national Perspective". *Thinking Utopia: Steps into Other Worlds*. Ed. Jörn Rüsen, Michael Fehr and Thomas W. Rieger. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005, pp. 1–16. Print.
- Toker, Leona and Daniel Chertoff. "Reader Response and the Recycling of Topoi in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*," *Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2008, pp. 163-180.

Yan, Kai. "Posthuman Biopredicament: A Study of Biodystopia in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol.9, no. 5, 2019, pp. 594-602.

Vieira, Fátima. "The Concept of Utopia". *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Ed. Gregory Claeys. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 3-27. Print.

Wear, Sarah Klitenic. *The Teaching of Syrianus and Plato's Timaeus and Parmenides*. Boston: Brill, 2011. Print.

Wilson, Sharon R. "Introduction: Utopian, Dystopian, Ustopian, Science Fiction, and Speculative Fiction". *Women's Utopian and Dystopian Fiction*. Ed. Sharon R. Wilson. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, pp. 1-5. Print.

Wong, Cynthia F. *Kazuo Ishiguro*. Devon: Northcote House Publishers, 2005. Print.