

AN ORIGINAL COPY: THE FILM ADAPTATION OF KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *NEVER LET ME GO**

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Abstract

This article compares Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Mark Romanek's film adaptation of the text with the same title. Discussing the novel's deconstructive strategies through which the categories of the human, authenticity and copy are unsettled, it is suggested that Ishiguro's text distinguishes itself from science fiction genre where these categories are affirmed by relocating them in a hierarchical relationship. Ishiguro reveals the power of fiction and stories in constructing identity based on dualities and this applies to both the clone and the human. The film, on the other hand, is a reassuring science fiction where the human is offered as a determined category by setting the identity of the human against its other- nonhuman or clone.

Keywords: Dichotomies, science fiction, deconstruction, human, adaptation.

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ORJİNAL BİR KOPYA: KAZUO ISHIGURO'NUN NEVER LET ME GO ROMANININ FİLM UYARLAMASI

Öz

Bu makale Kazuo Ishiguro'nun 2005 yılında yayınlanan *Never Let Me Go* adlı romanı ve Mark Romanek'in bu romanın film adaptasyonunu karşılaştırmakta ve filmin insan-klon düalizmi bağlamında metinde yaptığı değişiklikleri tartışmaktadır. Romanın insan, klon, orjinal, kopya kategorilerini altüst eden yapısökümcü stratejilerini inceleyerek, Ishiguro'nun metnin bu kategoriler arasındaki hiyerarşiler üzerine kurulu kimliklere dayalı bilim-kurgu türünden farklılık gösterdiği görülmektedir. Ishiguro ikilikler üzerine kurulu kimlik oluşumunda kurgu ve anlatının gücünü anlatır ve bu kimlik oluşumu hem insan hem de klon kimliği için geçerlidir. Filme baktığımızda ise, insanın klon, yapay, insan-olmayan gibi ötekilere karşı kesin ve belirlenmiş bir kategori olarak sunulduğu bir bilim-kurgu anlatısı görmekteyiz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İkilikler, bilim-kurgu, yapıbozum, insan, adaptasyon.

INTRODUCTION

In *Theories of Adaptation* Linda Hutcheon argues that one of the problems involved in the transcoding from the telling form to the visual form is that it requires a reduction of size as the director has to decide what to transfer into dramatization in a more limited medium (2006: 36). This selection, of course, is bound to reflect on the overall meaning of the text; omitting seemingly minor events or dialogues can bring about new perspectives on the plot or erase major arguments in the text. Mark Romanek's film adaptation of Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005-novel *Never Let Me Go* with the same title illustrates how minor additions and omissions can come to produce a new text that is working against the text it ventures to adapt into a new medium (Romanek 2010). Ishiguro's text is a deconstructive text where the categories of human, original, authenticity, and copy are unsettled. The film, on the other hands, is an affirmation of these very categories. Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* seems to be a science-fiction text about cloning and artificial reproduction in a similar vein to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* only on the surface level. Beneath this façade of a story about cloning, Ishiguro is more interested in narratives and fictions that make of the human and today's society than in the issue of cloning and the future of society. Many critics have noted that the text does not yield itself to the sci-fi genre; it is "a quasi science fiction" as one review calls it (Menand 2005). Although the characters in the novel are clones and the world that is revealed at the end is a nightmarish picture of a world of genetic engineering where clones are produced for organ harvesting, the novel exposes the construction of the human as the natural in a dualistic relation to what is not human and natural. To do this, Ishiguro disrupts the boundary between the original and the copy, and unsettles the authenticity of the human by deliberately and successfully confusing it with the clone. Romanek's film, on the other hand, brings the text closer to science-fiction and dystopic texts where the difference between the human and the other- whether they are the clones or robots, is never in question and the identity of the human is safeguarded by setting it against the other. In order to explain how this change is effected in this adaptation process, I will first analyse the arguments of the telling mode and then look at the ways the showing mode eliminates these arguments.

Ishiguro's Deconstructive Strategies

Never Let Me Go poses the question of human as a product of fiction through narrative techniques such as the unreliability of the narrator, empathy, and identification of the first person narrator with the reader. The reader plays an important role because it is the reader who is deconstructed as the original, the human and who is to be confused whether they are identifying with a clone or human. The experimental narrative technique casts suspicion upon the secure identity of the human/reader while art, fantasy, and fiction are revealed to be the controlling forces in the construction of this identity. The critical look at the human

is basically produced by concealing the fact that the narrator is a clone addressing another clone as their reader until after the identification with the narrator is already built, in approximately one-third of the novel. Blurring the distinction between the original and copy in this carefully built identification process, *Never Let Me Go* engages with the anti-humanist deconstructionist philosophy in the context of bio-technologies. The text exposes the construction of the human subject through the interplay of differences in a linguistic system and the interdependence of the clones and the humans who cannot be distinguished from each other in any essential way, as there is no essence of the human or the copy, in the same vein as Derrida argues in relation to the subject of humanism.¹ The subject in Ishiguro's text is one that lacks a truth and authenticity because the hierarchies of nature and artificial, human and nonhuman, clone and original are displaced in the identification of the narrator with the reader.

In addition to the intimacy created by the first person narration, the narrator, Kathy H. strengthens our identification with her through addresses to the reader and appeals to common sense. The opening sentences of the narrator state basic facts and invite the reader to share in the narrator's world: "*My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been a carer now for over eleven years. That **sounds long enough, I know**, but actually they want me to go on for another eight years, until the end of this year*" (emphasis added, 3).² The narrator counts on a mutual understanding and shared world experience of a carer with the reader, which we do not find unnatural even though we do not understand what kind of a carer she is. Kathy H. expects to find a sympathetic listener in us when she assumes that we will also think eleven years too long to continue as a carer. Even though we have no idea what a carer does, the expected time limit to be a carer or what donors she is talking about, her addresses creates in us the sympathy for her. After telling us about the good work she has done as a carer, she says:

*Anyway, I'm not making any big claims for myself. I know carers, working now, who are just as good and don't get half the credit. **If you're one of them**, I can understand how you might get resentful- about my bedsit, my car, above all, the way I get to pick and choose who I look after. And I'm a Hailsham student- which is enough by itself sometimes to get people's backs up* (emphasis added, 3).

The thoughts and experiences Kathy H. talks about here are ordinary, common feelings and experiences that any reader might have had. Even though we do not know what "them" refers to, we can easily sympathize with those who feel resentful for the privileges someone has in a workplace. Some people have privileges and some people get what we think we deserve just because they are

¹ See Jacques Derrida "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences" (2009) and "Différance" (1982).

² References to *Never Let Me Go* henceforth will be given in parantheses (Ishiguro 2005).

from a specific school or because they have somebody who watches their backs. This is a cunning play of sympathy that Ishiguro constructs here by combining experiences that anybody can have and the extraordinary, outrageous experiences in the opening sentences. The narrator's frequent appeals to common sense and common experiences lead the reader to identify with her without questioning the nature of her work and life.

Kathy H. continues to narrate her schooling experiences at a boarding school called Hailsham. This narration of friendship, problems among students, teachers- who are called guardians here- classes and first love affairs is a familiar type of narration of growing up. The familiarity is further reinforced by the narrator with appeals to the reader's similar experiences. Kathy H. invites the reader to compare their own schooling experience with hers:

I don't know how it was where you were, but at Hailsham we had to have some form of medical almost every week- usually up in room 18 at the very top of the house- with stern Nurse Trisha, or the Crow Face, as we called her (13).

This appeal to our experience assures the reader that the narrator is one of us living in a similar world and that what we are reading is a typical story of growing up. Hence, without questioning why the teachers are called guardians or where these students were born, we do not hesitate to think back to our school days to remember the nurse at the infirmary. We might not have had medical checks regularly at school but we still can understand the desire to nickname a nurse as a child. When the narrator makes identity an issue, the reader can still respond to her addresses. Kathy H. writes that she and her friends realize that Madame, who comes to school a few times a year to collect the students' best work -essays, pottery, pictures, etc.- to take to the Gallery, is afraid of them. They puzzle over Madame's reaction to them, - who are eight- year-old children-when they crowd around her on purpose to test her reaction and see how she avoids talking to or touching them. Then Kathy H. again addresses the reader:

Thinking back now, I can see we were just at that age when we knew a few things about ourselves- about who we were, how we were different from our guardians, from the people outside- but hadn't yet understood what any of it meant. I'm sure somewhere in you childhood, you too had an experience like ours that day; similar if not in the actual details, then inside, in the feelings (36).

Indeed, she is right for the feeling of difference from others, the feeling that they are different from the adults is a familiar feeling for any child. As she says, the details can be different, but the feeling of alienation from the rest of the world, feeling in solidarity with "your own kind," in our situation, with other children against the world of adults is not an unusual, unknown feeling. At another instance, when talking about her choosing donors from Hailsham, her school, Kathy H. says as a matter-of-fact that "... when you get a chance to choose, you

choose your own kind. That's natural" (12). What we accept as natural here, becomes the very deconstruction of nature and natural when her identity is revealed later on but at this moment, we agree with Kathy H. over the tendency to choose your own kind natural. The narrator's account of her schooling experiences in the first section of the novel establishes an understanding with the reader that her experiences and feelings are as ordinary and understandable as our own. Without our realizing yet, Ishiguro problematizes identity, authenticity and copy, natural and artificial and he involves our feelings and sense of identity in the problem of identity of the clone.

After the familiar appeals to the reader in the narration and the emphasis on the natural course of things, learning that the narrator is a clone comes rather as a shock to the reader and it is here suggested that the narrative hinges on this shock. We learn the fact that the students are clones from Miss Lucy, a guardian at Hailsham, who wants to put a stop to the clones' imagining an impossible future of going to America or getting a job as humans can do. Miss Lucy's speech, however, is not only directed to the clones but also to us, as we find that just like the clones, we have "*been told and not told*" about the nature of Hailsham, the identity of the students at the school, the profession of caring, and the future of the students as well (79). Since the very first sentences, we have been exposed to a world of donors and carers, like the clones, yet, we have accepted the narrator as one of us, having schooling experiences and tending to choose her own kind when she can. All the vague references to carers and donors make sense and gain significance only when Miss Lucy utters the fact that the students are clones openly. In this narrative device, we are put in a situation in which we identify with a clone while we take the difference between the clone and human, natural and unnatural for granted. John Mullan interprets Kathy H.'s addresses to the reader as her assumption that the reader is also a clone because she is unable to imagine any reality outside her own (2010: 108). This can be true, but there is the fact that Kathy H.'s identity is carefully concealed from the reader while there is a clear, strong effort to establish identification between the clone and the human. Also, Mullan's observation of the clone's mental state can very well apply to the human; we, humans, are as much restricted as a clone is in our view of reality and cannot imagine any other reality than our own. I suggest that Kathy H.'s address to the reader is rather a trick played on the reader for the purpose of unsettling the hierarchy of the human and the clone since our identification shows that clone and human can be confused even when we are sure of identity as human. This destabilization of the hierarchy is what distances this novel from science-fiction or dystopic texts where the natural and the artificial constitutes two opposing forces, with the reader always placed safely on the side of the natural.

Besides keeping Kathy H.'s identity in dark, depicting the world of genetic engineering where clones are bred and raised for organ harvesting as a familiar world of boarding schools, friendship and adolescence also deceives the reader

into identifying with a clone. A grown-up narrator's reminiscing her past at a boarding school with her two close friends, Ruth and Tommy, is a familiar type of narration that is called a *bildungsroman*. This ordinariness is emphasized through the setting of the novel, 1990s London as well, which sets a sharp contrast to science fiction narratives, which, as Keith Macdonald observes, depicts "otherworldly or spectacular environment" (2007: 76). There is nothing spectacular or extraordinary in Kathy H.'s narration except for the curious words *carer* and *donors* dropped here and there. The commonplaceness of the world depicted strengthens the identification of the readers with the clones, or, the deception of the reader into identifying with a clone to share in the uncanny world of a boarding school for raising clones as if it was their own ordinary world. Here, Ishiguro challenges the reader who can safely place themselves against the clones, the others.

The theme of genetic engineering builds a link with many dystopic texts such as *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and *Oryx and Crake*, as some critics noted.³ Like *Brave New World*, which describes a society controlled and produced by genetic engineering, *Never Let Me Go* exposes a world where science has taken it upon itself to cure illnesses by producing clones (Huxley, 2000; Orwell, 2000; Atwood, 2004). Yet, the narration of *Never Let Me Go* distances itself from these science fiction works in a significant way. *Brave New World* is narrated from the vantage point of the human and there is no question of the omniscient narrator's being the ally of the evil forces that meddle with biology and nature. Nor is the narrator a perfect product of genetic engineering. Bernard is not a successful and perfect sample and he is aware of his exceptional status. His difference is speculated to result from a mistake occurred during his development in the test tube. Therefore, throughout the novel, the difference between those human beings and us, the natural human beings, is never put in question. The same applies to Margaret Atwood's crazy scientist novel, *Oryx and Crake*. Throughout the novel, there is never a trespassing between the genetically engineered Crake's people, the hybrid animals and the natural humans. Unlike these typical science fiction narratives, *Never Let Me Go* hinges on the confusion of the categories of the authentic and the copy, the human and the clone.

It is not that Ishiguro's text shows how similar the clones are to us, the humans, as some critics have argued, but how the difference between the authentic and the copy is an artificial one that cannot be determined (Griffin 2009; Battaglia 2001: 501). Anne Whitehead suggests that the absolute categories of human and clone are broken down in the text by representing affection, love and caring among the clones, which she interprets as their humanity (2001: 65-

³ These two dystopias are usually noted in the criticism on the novel. Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* is also about genetic engineering but its ending is not totally desperate. The human race is almost perished, with only a few survivals of the plague. The *designer* humans created by the scientist Crake, the *crake's* people, remain and they embody the possibility of a better future.

68). Jeff Nunokawa and Earl Ingersoll also argue that the clones emphasize the proximity of our condition and that of the clones (2007, 2007). I think there is a huge difference between thinking clones as deserving to be treated as humans and humans' being treated as clones. It escapes the critics' notice that the first one is the Hailsham project. Hailsham boarding school ventured to prove that the clones would not be much different from humans if they were given the same education and care that humans are given. This stance invokes pity. The latter, however, is Ishiguro's project and it is disturbing for the human reader. We see that our originality and nature can very well be mimicked by a clone and both categories are indeterminate.

When we understand that the narrator, Kathy H., is actually not one of "us," we realize that we have been deceived. Once we see that the narrator is a "sham" as the pun on the name of the school, *Hailsham*, reveals, and that Hailsham is a school for shams, and these shams are "shammed" by being conditioned to commit suicide without even realizing or acknowledging that they are doing so, we, the readers, realize that we have been "shammed" just as the shams have, by being led on to believing that the narrator is a human. At this moment, the empathy Kathy H. has established turns out to be the empathy for the state of being "shammed" and being "shams." The similarity we recognize in our positions urges us to turn the critical look on ourselves instead of the clone as our secure belief in our difference, in the difference between the natural human and the artificial clone is jeopardized when we find that we can *naturally* identify with the artificial; we are, just like the clones are shammed in a sham narrative. The school is a sham, too, as Deborah Britzman suggests, giving a pointless education to the clones who will not have the time to put their skills and knowledge into use; yet I think it is rather us, the humans and not the clones, or the humans in the place of clones who are the butt of the joke in *Never let Me Go* (2006: 313).⁴

A critical look at art is also involved in the deconstruction of the human by identifying him/her with submissive clones. The education at Hailsham is basically based on arts and crafts. Students are trained in literature, painting, sculpture, and handicrafts from an early age on until the time a human would go to university. Instead of continuing their education at university, the clones go to a different institution, called the Cottages in the case of the Hailsham students, where they train as carers to look after the donors until they are called for to start their donations. We learn towards the end from Miss Emily, the head of the school, that Hailsham is opened to prove to the world that these clones deserve humane treatment and that the art they produce can prove that they have souls. The irony in this effort is obvious; discussing whether to raise the clones in humane or

⁴ Britzman discusses the pointlessness of the education at Hailsham. She points out that the education has no purpose here and it does not prepare the children for a profession or life as a school should do. In that sense, Hailsham is a sham as a school.

bestly conditions when the whole purpose of producing them is to get spare organs is horrifying itself. Ironically, the success of Hailsham is also the reason why the project loses support and Hailsham has to close down. The clones are proven to be not only humanlike who can produce art but physically and intelligently superior as well. The Morningdale scandal, Miss Emily, the head guardian, accounts at the end of the novel, involves a scientist, called James Morningdale, who produces children with enhanced intellectual and muscular capacities. When his work is discovered, the idea of the enhanced, artificially created humans frightens people and this ends the financial and political support for the Hailsham project. Choosing the comfort in thinking the clones as “shadowy objects in test tubes” in Miss Emily’s words, people prefer not to know where the spare organs come from or the conditions in which the clones are raised (256).

Never Let Me Go casts a sharp look at the notion of art that disavows corporal existence and glorifies the authentic work of art. The idea of art as reflecting the individual’s soul, inner being is situated in such a context that the uniqueness of the individual becomes ironic; the fact that human beings can be copied in test tubes is the very deconstruction of idealism which appears in the service of a system that drags the clones willingly into giving away their vital organs. Shameem Black observes that Ishiguro establishes a parallel between the extraction of the organs and the extraction of art from the clones, and with this parallel, the novel marks how the concept of art as the expression of a unique, original individual is complicit in the medical, scientific, political hegemony (2009: 798). Art that is based on the idea of the authenticity of human, subject, individual is revealed to be the implicated in a violent, murderous social political system.

Many critics find the clones’ submission to their fate, their “*trusting docility*” or “*dullness*” implausible or unrealistic (Wood 2005: 37; Carrol 2010: 66). Indeed, the clones have many opportunities to escape from Hailsham and especially when they go to the Cottages where they train to be carers and donors; yet they do not even attempt to run away from these institutions. Critics have offered various explanations for their passivity in terms of their proximity to the present social order. Bruce Robbins draws attention to our own avoidance of the statistical facts and injustices of welfare state built on capitalist premises in our daily pursuits. He points out that there is no huge difference between the world of clones taking pride in their good work of caring and donating their vital organs and the welfare state and the ideology of upward mobility with its system- trusting members. Kathy H., Robbins argues, is one of us who goes about her daily business without looking at the “*Big Picture*” (2007: 293). Tiffany Tsao suggests that the clones’ acquiescence derives from their imbibed sense of purpose, which also motivates our lives (2012: 224). For Black, the clones are an exploited class, and for Titus Levy, “marginalized social groups struggling on the fringes of

supposedly democratic societies” (2009: 791-792; 2011: 1). Some suggested that the identification with Kathy H.’s fate is build on our knowledge of our own deaths and our own submission to our mortality.⁵ While all these explanations make sense, I think the text also reveals how we act and think within the limits of fictions we submit to. It is true that the clones do not run away but the problem is not, as Mark Currie puts it, of “*unwanted freedom*” (2010: 92). The problem is that they do not see running away as freedom. In one of his interviews, Ishiguro says that the reason for the clones’ willing submission to the system is the social codes and their sense of belonging to a class (2010: 115). What Ishiguro describes as social codes can be thought of as fiction that creates the subjects as such. People define themselves and build their sense of belonging and sense of worth on certain fictions. Kathy H.’s narrative reveals how powerful fictions that construct subjects can be and drive them willingly, even proudly, to give away their vital organs. The clones are created in fiction that being a student of Hailsham is a privilege, being a carer and then donating your organs is how the natural course of life runs. There is no other worthwhile or even possible way of living that the clones can pursue. It is not so much compliance as much as belief in the fiction of their identity that keeps the clones in line just as the narratives of freedom and justice drives armies to wars. Our lives are also motivated by certain fictions that may prove inadequate or hypocritical- such as the fiction of hardwork and talent paying in the form of money and respectability when the circulation of money and wealth is determined by the class system and power relations among countries.

The use of language in the text plays a crucial role in exposing how fictions of identity are created. The specific use of language defines the limits of the clones’ existence. The concept of birth never appears and the substitutions for dying are vague words such as completing, finishing, and switching off. The word “die” appears only once at the end, when Kathy H. and Tommy are discussing openly the project of Hailsham with Miss Emily and Madame for the first time (254). When their lives are defined in these terms that exclude any other purpose in life, it does not occur to them that they can run away and lead their lives differently until they die of natural causes. Some critics describe the linguistic situation as euphemism (Currie 2010: 100; Jennings 2010: 16-20). Euphemism connotes a consciousness on both the speaker and the listener’s side where the speaker intends to make the meaning less vulgar or less offensive. In the use of euphemistic language, both parties are conscious of the fact that a specific language is used for this particular purpose and that the meaning is offensive and vulgar. Using “to relieve oneself” for “to urinate” is not the same as using “to switch off” for “to be murdered” in the case of the clones because “to switch off” is used to avoid uttering and hence accepting, affirming the fact that the clones are murdered in hospitals. Assuming that they are responsible for being aware of what they are doing, euphemism can apply to the human guardians’ use of “to

⁵ See, for instance, Black (2009: 791-792), Clark (2006), and D’hoker (2008).

complete” or “to switch off” for they know that murder is a crime and life is a basic human right but still the guardians do not believe, or rather they prefer not to think that they are murdering the clones to extend other people’s lifespan. For the clones, the particular use of language is the only known usage because the clones do not know that they are murdered and this is cruel, offensive and vulgar. There is a slight but salient difference between these two situations. There is no other language available for the clones and it is this lack of the possibility of articulating the situation in any other way that can keep them prisoners in their cars driving around the country and, as Keith McDonald says, that “*can normalize atrocities deemed necessary in a given ideology*” (2007: 78).

In addition to the language that prevents them from acting the way we expect them to, shame is also part of the fiction that creates the clones as such. Their identity is an embarrassing topic that they avoid to discuss openly. The word “clone” does not appear until the end of the novel. Kathy H., following the guardians’ example, never uses this word let alone asserting herself as one. Indeed, they take pride and are encouraged to take pride in their being special students of Hailsham. Neither the guardians nor the clones can ever spell out what they are. The clones can even be cruel towards each other to cover up this shame. They punish Marge K. ruthlessly when she brings their difference from Miss Lucy, a human, out into open by asking Miss Lucy if she ever smoked, which is, of course, strictly forbidden to the clones who must keep their organs healthy. Kathy H. remembers how they tortured her by forcing her to look at the woods outside the grounds of Hailsham that, deep in their conscious, embody all the horrors that the future holds for them (68). Commenting on Kathy H.’s cruelty towards Tommy, Bruce Robbins suggests that cruelty can be misplaced anger against the system, that the system entails anger and cruelty (2007: 300-301).

The empathy we are invited to, then, is for this masochistic resistance against trespassing the narratives that construct us, to this clinging to the fantasies that give us a sense of belonging. Ishiguro shows how powerful narratives are; to the extent that an ordinary respect to a taboo or shared narratives can seem masochistic to an outsider who is not born into the same cultural, moral frame of reference. As Ishiguro says “*we are much more passive than we’d like to think*” (2010: 124). Evaluating the cultural philosophical boundaries with an outsider’s look could show, for example, our respect for the right of property and practice of punishment for theft in a world in which a minority enslaves the majority and even starves a whole continent, Africa for instance, after colonizing it as masochistic and absurd as the fact that the clones do not attempt to escape when they can. Anne Whitehead discusses the centrality of empathy in the novel and argues that Ishiguro identifies us with humans, not with Kathy H., because her passivity, acquiescence and unreliability problematize our identification with Kathy H. (2011: 73-74). This contention relies on the firm belief that humans, we, never acquiesce and affirm cruelty and victimization. Thinking ourselves in the place of

the decision makers and power holders seems to be disturbing our conscience, making us feel guilty, however, it is not as disturbing as thinking ourselves in the place of those passive clones who remain passive and submissive most of the time. It would not only threaten our self-respect and self-confidence to think ourselves as submissive slaves of ancient times but also our belief in our culture as well for the free individual is the cornerstone of the middle class culture. Our culture and capitalistic economic structure is based on the tenet that human beings willingly, freely, and lawfully take part in the system whereas the fact is that each individual has to submit to and work for this system. Slavery has to be believed to be an ancient problem to save our dignity while we have to toil away to get a decent living. In that sense, many critics tend to ignore this similarity between our lives and the clones. Henriette Roos says that the dichotomies of “them and us” is a common experience around the world (2008: 289-302). The narrative experience shows how ordinary people like you and me can live and even support these dichotomies that today for instance decides which religions deserve respect and which nations have the right to independence. It is such an ordinariness in such a familiar world where clones are raised for organ harvesting or some countries are being invaded by others who think their wealth is due to their superior merits and who live in the fiction that colonization is ancient history. Anjali Pandey asks

Readers are hit with the question of how civilized people can possibly harvest the organs of others and think nothing of it. How can humans be so casual in their obsession with anatomical perfection, we ask? How can they have no regard for where these ‘parts’ for their ‘wholes’ come from?” (2011: 392).

The appropriate use of language and creating a fiction of identity that will value the acts that sustain such a system is the answer that we find in Ishiguro’s text. When the use of the words “clones, copies, murder, slavery, consumerism” is a taboo that you have to obey if you want to be respected, supported, valued, it is very well possible to lie down of your own will to give away your vital organs.

This is the power of Ishiguro’s imagination that holds a troubling mirror to us where we see how desperate, masochistic, and violent we are in our desire to be somebody. Hence we will punish those who deviate from the dominant fiction as deviations can ruthlessly show how fragile, how vulnerable our fictions are. This power of fiction and how individuals come to be somebody through fiction is, I believe, what the novel is about, what Ishiguro is demonstrating in the marvellously constructed crafty narration. Unlike critics such as Gabriele Griffin who read the novel as a science fiction warning us about the ethical dilemmas that biotechnologies entail, I suggest the text is rather concerned with reflecting how scandalously we can act when we are stuck in the truth of our identity. Dystopic narratives such as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* present two distinct methods of shaping humans; one depicts the government of humanity by

pleasure and the latter by pain. *Never Let Me Go*, on the other hand, exposes the government of people by fictions and narratives. *Never Let Me Go* is not as concerned with biotechnologies as such as much as the function and power of narratives and art. John Mullan also notes that there is no scientific explanation or detail about genetic engineering, which he also sees as the novel's distance from dystopia or science-fiction (2010: 104). Black says that it is only "a veneer of science fiction" where Ishiguro criticizes injustices on a global scale (2009: 785). Putting the humans in the place of the clones, the text exposes how narratives can shape a subject and drive it to acts that seem outrageous and unrealistic to those that are not part of the same fiction.

Although the complicity of art in reconciling the clones to their fates, which is suicide, seems to throw a dark look on art, Ishiguro is performing an alternative form of art that is self-conscious, wary of its power in creating fantasies, and of its tendency to support hegemonic politics. The fact that Kathy H. is writing her biography when she is not supposed to do offer her narrative as the possibility of a form of art that can affect change. The implication is that even though the subject is created in fiction, fictions can change and art can serve alternative purposes. By writing her past, Kathy H. is creating a self for herself in memory and reminiscence. This can also be interpreted as a form of rebellion in that Kathy H. is not only constructing another story, she is also leaving her mark when she is supposed to switch off when she is called for. Treating the clones as a minority group, Titus Levy also reads her narrative as a response to her condition (2011: 7). Narrative unreliability, a technique that Ishiguro masters to perfection in his novels, can be interpreted in this context as a form of critical look at fiction. Kathy H.'s unreliability makes us to look beyond her interpretation to understand what is actually going on, to question her fictions. The narrator confesses that she can't get the past correct many times and she is also sincere in her attempts. In his account of the various ways Ishiguro uses unreliable narration, Elke D'hoker, defines unreliability as

An ironic distance between the narrator and the implied author/ reader, which is mediated by a distance between the interpretations and evaluations of the narrator and the facts of the fictional world (2008: 152).

This definition can describe Kathy H.'s narration. It is not that we believe Kathy H. is deceiving the reader and or a character in the novel. The problem with her narration is that we find a contradiction between what we gather about her life from her narration and her evaluation of these facts. Likewise, Mullan describes her narration "inadequate," reflecting her desire and incapability to decipher and makes sense of her short life (2010: 111). I think it is the impression of inadequateness that makes us aware of the fact that there is more than one way of making sense of the world and telling stories.

An Original Copy

Having analysed the argument in the telling mode, now I will turn to the film adaptation to focus on some small additions to the novel, which turns this criticism of the human and art into a science fiction and love story where the secure barrier between the human and the clone is re-established even before the viewer starts watching the movie. The film erases the novel's arguments of art and narration from the very beginning and brings the text closer to science fiction texts, which as I argued above, what Ishiguro carefully avoids. The criticism of art and fiction being erased from the text, what remains is a science fiction that strengthens our sense of identity as the human against the others/the clones who are distinct from us, which enables us to pity their deplorable fate from the vantage point of the human. The "disconcerting narrative" of the text, becomes a reassuring one where we experience pathos (Scurr 2005).

The possibility of creating the crucial effect of familiarity and commonplaceness in the novel is eliminated from the very beginning. The information on the DVD box reveals that the film is about genetic engineering. In addition, the first scene of the film gives background information about genetic engineering and the medical advances that increased life expectancy to more than 100 years in the 1990s. This information precedes the image of Kathy H., watching Tommy in the surgery room who is looking sheepishly on the bed, about to die. The film, thus, is presented as a narrative about genetic engineering where two young people will suffer and not as an ordinary adolescence story in these opening scenes.

Another change occurs in the identification of the reader/viewer. Linda Hutcheon discusses the difficulty that emerges when first person narratives are adapted into cinematographic form, but as she argues, these difficulties can be overcome by various techniques such as the voice-over and camera angle, both of which are employed in this adaptation (2006: 40-55). The first scene of the film, where we see Kathy H.'s silhouette from behind when the voice-over begins is a promising start for transcoding the vagueness of her identity and her dubious, unreliable narrative. The camera then turns to show her from the front where we see the reflection of Tommy, who is about to be taken to the surgery, on the mirror behind which stands Kathy H. This scene where we see the reflection of the donor on the image of the carer blurs the distinction between the two and suggests the idea that we see Tommy through Kathy H.'s eyes. This scene could have given the two underlying ideas in the written text: that Kathy H. is not a determined entity and that we are adopting her perspective. Or, it could have followed the thread in the novel that Kathy H. is narrating Tommy's memories of Hailsham which she learned when looking after him. Her unreliability also opens the possibility that she is herself not a Hailsham student but writing as if one. Unfortunately, these opportunities that that scene allows are lost soon. The parts omitted from Kathy H.'s narration reveal the consistent care taken to prevent the

identification of the viewer with her. Kathy H.'s opening voice-over, for example, omits the vitally important address to the reader on the first page of the novel: "That sounds long enough, I know [...]" (3). As discussed above, these kinds of addresses to the reader establish the mutual understanding between the reader and the narrator, and give the idea of the ordinariness of the experience.

The film, however, does not create the effect of ordinariness and familiarity because, instead of Kathy H., the identification is built with Miss Lucy, the guardian, who is now turned into a subversive guardian in the fashion of John Keating of *Dead Poets Society*. Unlike the old familiar guardian of the novel, this is a new guardian who, just like us, knows nothing about the life of Hailsham, and is looking at this world with revolting eyes just as we are supposed to do. The addition of an episode where Miss Lucy as the new guardian observes students play football illustrates how the film identifies the viewer with her. While the children are playing football, the ball bounces over the fence but Tommy does not trespass the boundaries of Hailsham grounds and returns without the ball. Voicing the viewer, Miss Lucy asks why Tommy doesn't go and get the ball and gets the answer that the fence is the boundary and getting out is dangerous. We stare at the girls with Miss Lucy with pity and anger. Miss Lucy and we are angry because of the lies told to these children who are kept inside the fence with horrible stories of children who dare to go outside. To underline Miss Lucy's heroism, the film emphasizes Miss Lucy's dismissal from the school for lecturing the students explicitly on the purpose that they were created for. This further foregrounds her proximity to the rebellious and heroic teacher, John Keating, fighting against the evil authority.

Identifying the viewer with Miss Lucy also cancels out any possibility of the interpretation that emerges from the audience's being shammed by being tricked into identifying with a clone. Thus, the suggestion is that the clones, not us, can be deluded, deceived by narratives but we are not shams, we are the authentic originals, the natural humans who should treat these poor copies humanely. The implication of the power of fiction and phantasies that made the crowds *hail* and create Hitler,⁶ for instance, is erased off the new text, and what is offered instead is the relief that we, as human beings, are aware that these stories are not true and these children are only deluded by such phantasies, whereas we never are. Ishiguro's mirror that reflects the uncanny image of us now gives us the image of the heroic, original outsider, the authentic human in contrast to the world of shams and copies.

The comparison between the corresponding two parts from the two texts reveals how the film adaptation works to erase the deconstruction of the human

⁶ Shameem Black draws attention to the similarities between Hailsham and the concentration camps during the Second World War. Like the camps, he says, the school forms a world where identity, citizenship, and the right to life is cancelled (2009: 789).

and represents the clones as innocent victims. In the novel, Kathy H. ventures on narrating her childhood with Ruth and Tommy thus: “*That was when I first understood, really understood, just **how lucky we’d been** –Tommy, Ruth, me, all the rest of us*” (5-6). The introduction in the film, on the other hand, goes: “*Carers and donors have achieved so much. That said we aren’t machines. In the end it wears you down. I suppose that’s way I spent most of my time not looking forwards but looking back, to the Cottages and Hailsham, and to **what happened to us there**, me, Ruth and Tommy*” (Romanek, 2010). The striking difference in the wording is part of the effort made to represent the clones as victims. In the telling mode, there is unreliability, distance between Kathy H.’s point of view and ours and surprise element. When we learn her true identity, we will think everything but lucky about their situation and begin to question how one can think of herself lucky in such a situation, which will bring us to the idea of narratives, of course. In the film, on the other hand, she presents herself as a passive victim to whom something is done in Hailsham.

That the film ventures to erase the theme of the narratives and language, as the system, which creates the subject, is most visible in the addition of the electronic tracking system for the clones. The clones have to tap on the monitors to check in and out of the school and cottages. This answers to the readers’ expectations that the clones have to rebel and run away if they are not physically restricted, of course. Yet, it undoes Ishiguro’s text by relieving us, the humans, that they are victims in the hands of a malicious totalitarian power, which is the generic theme in science fiction. In Michael Bay’s *The Island*, for example, the clones are innocent victims who make an escape from the underground compound at the end when they discover the truth that they are clones raised for organ harvesting.⁷ In *Blade Runner*, the replicants cannot be described as innocent maybe but they are still the rebellious monsters that humans expect them to be. They are difficult to distinguish from humans but this does not mean that they are not different. They are different from the humans; there is no question of this and the film is based on the war between “them and us,” the artificial and the natural.

Instead of identification with the clone, the film creates pathos. Some parts of Kathy H.’s narration such as her having sex randomly at the cottages, the farms that they move at the age of sixteen and her unreliability are eliminated in order to represent the clones as victims and raise pity for the clones. At the Cottages, Kathy H. mentions her sexual drive and having sex with various students randomly without getting emotionally involved and even wonders if her original was a prostitute. Removing these parts, Kathy H. is presented as an innocent

⁷ In *The Island*, the clones are kept in an underground compound and they all hope to win the lottery one day and be one of the lucky ones to go to the island, the only habitable land remained on the ecologically devastated earth, the authorities say. Lincoln Six-Echo leads an escape when he learns that the island is a fiction created for the clones to walk to their ends happily (Bay 2006).

naïve girl, “*easily hurt but too gentle and thoughtful to retaliate*” as reviewers of the film describe her (Ebert 2010).

Kathy H.’s dubious and unreliable narration where she sometimes appears suspicious and even cruel in Ishiguro’s text turns into a sorrowful look at past. Kathy H. reminds Ruth of her dream of working in an office and accuses her of not doing anything to make that dream come true when Ruth, after two donations, is on the threshold of death (226). Another instant that shows Kathy H.’s cruel side is when she decides to have sex with Tommy when she is his carer at the recovery centre. Unlike the loving, affectionate partners in the film, Kathy H. says that she just went and aroused him by touching because she thought it would be good to have had sex before they went to see Madame about getting a deferral, which is their false belief that they can defer their donations for some time if they prove that they are truly in love. After she tells Tommy that they can now go and see Madame, Kathy H. hints at the idea that she is dragging Tommy into this relationship and the idea of deferral when she says of Tommy’s reaction that “*Someone watching might have thought he was being unenthusiastic*” (240). In the film, though, this hint does not exist and they appear to be a loving couple.

Thus, the relationship among Ruth, Kathy and Tommy gains a different light and becomes a love triangle as it says on the DVD box. The film presents Ruth and Kathy as rivals for Tommy’s affection. The antagonism between Kathy H. and Ruth is most openly shown in the scene where Ruth visits Kathy H. after having sex with Tommy in the next room. Making sure that Kathy H. hears they are having sex, Ruth comes and tells Kathy H. that Tommy will never love her. In comparison, in the novel, their conversation takes place in an old bus shelter. Kathy H. asks Ruth not to hurt Tommy and Ruth politely tells her that Tommy sees Kathy H. as a friend only.

One way of looking into the changes in the film could be that this is an interpretation of the unreliability of the narrator of the novel. What Alex Garland might have done by turning Kathy and Ruth into antagonistic friends who are competing for Tommy’s affection is that he is reading this love story into Kathy H.’s unreliable suspicious narration of her past. However, ignoring Kathy H.’s cruelty towards Ruth and Tommy or her unreliability produces a completely new text of a consistent narration. Although Elke D’hoker finds Kathy H.’s narration “*naïve*” and “*innocent*” her narration is far from naivety. He suggests that her unreliability is a strategy for coping with the traumatic experience and shame, but it is also a way of concealing her cruelty against Ruth and Tommy (2008: 148, 164). Mark Romanek and Alex Garland’s interpretation, on the other hand, turns Kathy H. into a loving young woman who awaits Tommy’s affection patiently.

In addition to the changes that represent Kathy H. as an innocent, helpless victim, the film also ignores the parts that imply that the clones are potentially a threat to human beings. In the novel, while the clones submit to their fate, there is

also the implication of rebellion. Ruth, Chrissie, and Rodney's curiosity and search for their possibles, that is, their models, while they are at the Cottages, or Tommy's famous tantrums when he was a child, for instance, hint at a desire to change their lives and anger deep down. When Kathy H. and Tommy visit Madame at the end, the first thing they say is that they have not come to give trouble (243). This, of course, implies the fact that they can very well give trouble, claims their right to live or accuse people of murder and they are very well aware of this possibility. In the film, however, they do not trouble us, the humans, when they are represented as passive victims in our dominant human hands that can be cruel or benevolent as we choose.

Linda Hutcheon criticizes the interpretation and appraisal of films as secondary to the originals. The fidelity commentary, she says, takes the novel as the original that sets the standard for the adaptation and the adaptations are praised in terms of the extent they reflect what the original text conveys. The argument here implies the failure of the cinematic text in transposing the main issues in the print text and thus becomes prone to Hutcheon's criticism. Even though the film can be a success in itself, since it has a claim to the novel as its origin, a critique of the film has to take into consideration its relation to the adapted text. It is expected that interrogating this relationship reveals the different perspectives that can be adopted towards the original text but these different perspectives also connote different political stances and choices. In that sense, rather than describing the work as a failure or success, it is more useful and enlightening how an adaptation reads and interprets a text.

CONCLUSION

This article has discussed the strategies used in the cinematic text to diverge from Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and pointed out the political signification of this process. The aim of the article is not to show that the cinematic form is a failure. What is underlined is the differences created between these two texts through omissions and additions that seem minor on the surface but work consistently to produce a contrary argument to the one in the written text. The film adaptation takes care to establish the secure distinction of "them (the clones) and us (humans)," "the original and the copy" and represents the clones as *the other*, as innocent, passive victims whereas the novel deconstructs dichotomies. The question is why the adaptation does so, or in other words, why the adaptation secures the viewer from encountering the mirror that shows, not the clones *per se*, but the "*troubling and strange*" reflection of human in the clones, as Ishiguro implies (236). Instead of giving, or even imposing a glimpse at ourselves- the products of phantasy, fiction and the prisoners of our own norms in the simplicity and ordinariness of horrible crimes of our daily lives as the novel does, the film takes us back to the sheltered world of "us and them," "the humans and the clones" with a poignant love affair –as the information on the DVD box goes- as if it was trying to destroy the mirror Ishiguro holds to us. Of course, there is nothing wrong to change a story when adapting it into another medium but this does not mean that the adapted form does not inform us of the ideology and concerns involved in the process.

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