

## Other – Exclusion and Discrimination in Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go": A Critical Discourse Analysis

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الآخر - الإقصاء والتمييز في رواية "لا تتركني أذهب أبداً" لكازو إيشيجورو: تحليل نقدي للخطاب

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### Abstract

The present paper is a critical discourse analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005 dystopian novel, "Never Let Me Go", focusing mainly on how the othering is achieved in the text "other" the clones, portraying them as different from "normal". Through the analysis of such discourses, ideology and power, together with inequalities, are revealed. Starting from the comprehensive work of Machin and Mayr (2012), excerpts from the novel will be analysed by mainly looking at naming strategies and lexical choices, without neglecting other valuable instruments for CDA. The analysis is preceded by an introduction meant to provide a background about ideology and power, CDA and also about Ishiguro and his novel, followed by a description of the framework of analysis where tools such as naming strategies, lexical choices, or presuppositions will be introduced. The analysis itself aims to reveal how power is taken from the oppressed, naturalising inequalities in society. The group which is "othered" can represent any of the numerous categories in our society which are at a disadvantage in comparison with the privileged, so the novel and the present analysis are relevant, reflecting society and how it generates and perpetuates inequality, making it seem normal. **Keywords:** ideology, CDA, othering, discrimination, representational strategies

### الخلاصة

يمثل البحث تحليلاً نقدياً للخطاب في رواية كازو إيشيجورو البائسة لعام ٢٠٠٥، "لا تسمح لي بالذهاب أبداً"، إذ يركز بشكل أساسي على كيفية إقصاء المستسخين، وتمثيلهم خطابياً بوصفهم غير طبيعيين. ومن خلال تحليل مثل هذه الخطابات، يتم الكشف عن الأيديولوجية والسلطة، فضلاً عن عدم المساواة في النص. اعتماداً من العمل الشامل لماشين وماير (٢٠١٢)، سيتم تحليل مقتطفات من الرواية من خلال النظر بشكل أساسي في استراتيجيات التسمية والخيارات المعجمية، دون إهمال الأدوات القيمة الأخرى للتحليل النقدي للخطاب. حيث يسبق التحليل مقدمة تهدف إلى توفير خلفية عن مفاهيم الأيديولوجية والسلطة والتحليل النقدي للخطاب، فضلاً عن تقديم معلومات عن إيشيجورو وروايته، يليها وصف لإطار التحليل، حيث سيتم تقديم أدوات مثل استراتيجيات التسمية، أو الاختيارات المعجمية، أو الافتراضات المسبقة. ويهدف التحليل نفسه إلى الكشف عن كيفية انتزاع السلطة من المضطهدين، وتطبيع عدم المساواة في المجتمع. يبين التحليل أن المجموعة التي تتعرض للإقصاء بوصفها "الآخر" يمكن تمثل أيًا من الفئات العديدة في مجتمعنا التي هي في وضع غير مؤاتٍ مقارنة بالمحظوظين، لذا فإن الرواية والتحليل الحالي وثيقا الصلة بالواقع، ويعكسان كيف أن المجتمع يولد عدم المساواة ويديمها مما يجعله يبدو طبيعياً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأيديولوجية، التحليل النقدي للخطاب، الآخر، التمييز، الاستراتيجيات التمثيلية.

### Introduction

First it is important to refer to two concepts which are central to our paper and to a critical discourse analysis – ideology and power. When analysing a text it is essential to answer the question – where does power come from? In discourse, power relations can be present both implicitly and explicitly so one should ask what kinds of inequalities and interests language perpetuates, generates or legitimises. Besides legitimating, discourses can also make particular opinions, attitudes and beliefs to appear “natural and common sense, while in fact they may be ideological” (Machin and Mayr 2012: 24). If, in the Marxist conception, ideology is defined as “an important means by which dominant forces in society can exercise power over subordinate and subjugated groups”, in CDA the meaning is broader, as ideology is being used to refer to “the way that the ideas and values that comprise these ideas reflect particular interests on the part of the powerful” (Machin and Mayr 2012: 25). In this context, CDA’s purpose is to uncover these hidden ideologies and we can do this by an analysis of language and, more broadly, of discourses. Through discourses that reinforce ideas like “immigrants are a threat to national culture” or “women are more emotional than men”, such ideologies are made to appear natural. Machin and Mayr (2012: 25) mention a perspective according to which “ideology obscures the nature of our unequal societies and prevent us from seeing the alternatives”, so limits are placed to what we see and to what we think that we are capable of. Fairclough (1989: 77), also reinforces these perspectives, claiming that “conventions routinely drawn upon in discourse embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere ‘common sense’ and which contribute to sustaining existing power relations”. Generally, the things that are ‘common sense’, implicitly assumed or expected are backgrounded and hidden so we are unaware of them. This is why, in an analysis of discourse it is imperative to ask what choices communicators make, why, to which purpose and with what consequences. And, more particularly, what ideas do these choices naturalise and how does this reinforce inequality or favour a particular group, giving it more power.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

Recently people have become more and more aware of the impact and importance that language has so the interest has increased to analyse it and see how it works as an instrument which both shapes and is shaped by society. In order to conduct such an analysis a set of tools is necessary, and critical discourse analysis offers us precisely this set of tools. By using these instruments of analysis provided by CDA we can take a closer look at how speakers and writers use language in order to create meaning, or even to manipulate, by hiding or underlining particular elements of their discourse. When conducting such an analysis it is imperative not only to observe what is present in a discourse, but rather what is absent and, even more importantly what is assumed or treated as natural, as a given or a fact. Thus, the aim of CDA is to uncover meanings carried by a discourse which are expressed less directly and straightforward, but which are very powerful, “to reveal buried ideology” (Machin and Mayr 2012: 1). As van Leeuwen (2008: VII) suggests, when applying CDA one should not disregard the key elements of social practices, namely “actors & their roles and identities, actions and their performance styles, settings, and timing”. To these van Leeuwen (2008) adds the importance of paying attention to the purposes and legitimations of the actions in a discourse, that is – what does the discourse aim to achieve and where do power and authority lie when it comes to taking action? Critical linguistics focuses on how language and grammar are used to “categorise people, events, places and actions” to foreground, background or even exclude events of persons, to make certain views of the world appear natural and, ultimately to “maintain and regulate our societies” (Machin and Mayr 2012: 2). Moreover, critical linguistics attempts to reveal what is absent in a text and also what is assumed or taken-for granted. The term ‘discourse’ itself describes “the broader ideas shared by people in a society about how the world works”, so in the CDA framework ‘discourse’ is not simply a speech, but rather consists of ideas, identities and values (Machin and Mayr 2012: 11). Discourses are in a way models of the world and “certain discourses represent the interests of specific groups” (Machin and Mayr 2012: 21). This is clear to us if we look at discourses such as those of national unity, of racial or cultural superiority, or at those which portray immigrants as a threat – ‘enemies of society’. To sum up, CDA is concerned with exposing hidden ideologies by analysing discourses, proving that language is not used merely to describe, it is shaped and is shaped by society and it comprises of what we consider to be the ‘real world’, having significant power over our reality and vice versa. And in a literary text where an author purposefully chooses particular words and discourses, CDA becomes even more relevant and useful when trying to reveal an author’s intentions and motivations behind its linguistic choices.

### **The Selected Novel Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never let Me Go***

Born on the 8th of November 1954 in Nagasaki, Kazuo Ishiguro is maybe the most appreciated contemporary Japanese novelist, being shortlisted for and having won multiple awards. Ishiguro describes his work as international, not wanting to be categorized as a Japanese writer. Ishiguro's work celebrates openness and tolerance and it addresses "readers of all places and times without falling into cultural relativity" (Matthews and Groes 2009: 2) Language itself plays a very important role in Ishiguro's work, being "both a source with which to construct reality while its very constructedness leads us away from any notion of 'authenticity' of that reality" (Matthews and Groes 2009: 7). All in all, an analysis of language can prove to be extremely relevant in Kazuo Ishiguro's work, particularly if we are to look at the role that it plays when it comes to power, ideology and otherness. After all, the author himself declares that his aim is not only to entertain, but rather to have a "serious purpose", a "serious conversation" with his readers about the "serious things in life" (Matthews 2014: 116). And such conversations with the readers are worth a careful analysis. Published in 2005, *Never Let Me Go* is one of the most famous novels of Ishiguro, being shortlisted for the Booker Prize, the 2006 Arthur C. Clarke Award and the 2005 National Book Critics Circle Award. The novel also has a film adaptation which was released in 2010. As we will later see, otherness is clearly present in this novel where clones are separated from normal people, but *Never Let me Go* is not merely about the ethical dilemmas of cloning, but rather about the complexities of human relationships, the clones themselves being a metaphor that can represent any excluded category, no matter the criteria (e.g. gender, nationality, social class, etc.). Thus, any category that is excluded and discriminated can relate to Ishiguro's novel, which is a discourse of human oppression. This is because the practice of othering has been and continues to be present in society, starting from the colonizers versus the colonized up to today's discourses which separate the "normal" from anything which is considered deviant in any way. In an interview, Ishiguro declares, when talking about *Never Let Me Go*, that he wanted to create a very strong image that reflects how most of us are – "in many ways we are inclined to be passive, we accept our fate [...] accept that we are mortal [...] accept the human condition, accept ageing, and falling to bits, and dying" (Matthews 2009: 124). Ishiguro refers also to how the oppressed sometimes are passive and accept their fate. The analysis itself will clearly show how the novel includes multiple discourses of othering, with social inequality and the fragility of life being at the core of one of Ishiguro's most famous works. But first the tools that will prove to be useful in this analysis will be briefly introduced.

### Framework of analysis

This section of the paper represents the toolbox for the analysis that will follow, aiming to introduce the reader to some essential instruments when conducting a critical discourse analysis. As we will see, the analysis will mainly focus on lexical choices, naming strategies, and presuppositions in connection to the concept of othering. This is why, in the framework we will mainly focus on presenting these tools. In order to reveal meaning, the aim will be to identify what is placed in the foreground and in the background, what is absent, what is assumed, what is placed in opposition, and what is made to appear natural.

#### • Lexical choices

- One of the first and most basic steps in conducting a critical discourse analysis is to look at the writer's or speaker's lexical choices – what words are in a text and what meanings does their presence reveal? The lexical choices in a text represent what is called a lexical field – "the map an author is creating for us", indicating areas of interest and salience (Machin and Mayr 2012: 31) How can such choices be this powerful? Let us take as an example the case in which an attack takes place: it is different if we call the attacker 'rebellious teenager', 'troubled orphan' or 'out-of-control immigrant'. These different choices carry different meanings with respect to the level of guilt, responsibility and gravity of the attack. One important instrument when it comes to lexical choices is **overlexicalisation**, defined by Teo (2000:20) as a process taking place "when a surfeit of repetitions, quasi-synonymous terms is woven into the fabric of news discourse, giving rise to a sense of overcompleteness". In other words, overlexicalisation appears where a word and its synonyms appear multiple times, so we are dealing with overuse, or when details are added which are not necessary – excessive description. In opposition to overlexicalisation stands **suppression** or **lexical absence**. As the name suggests, suppression occurs when things that we might expect to be present in a discourse are missing. Suppression can also occur when a text is rewritten in order to be simplified and to reduce ambiguity. Whichever the case is, we should always ask ourselves why something is missing from a text, whether it is a participant, an activity or other information. Maybe the most powerful and frequently used tool when it comes to lexical choices is, however, **structural opposition** which involves using opposing words, concepts, or classes of concepts in the same discourse. This placement of participants or categories of participants in oppositions leads to their evaluation by

comparison, with one of the groups being generally evaluated more favourably in contrast with the other. We are very familiar with opposites from our early childhood when we learn pairs such as good and bad, young and old, beautiful and ugly, rich and poor and so on, so, even if only one concept from such a pair is present, we are easily triggered to think of its opposite and make evaluations based on contrasts between the two.

- **People's representations – naming strategies**

After discussing lexical choices, let us focus on the participants or social actors in a text and the choices that are made in order to represent them, so on what is commonly known in CDA as 'representational strategies'. By looking at how individuals or groups are introduced and described in a text we can again see what the writer or speaker tries to highlight, to hide or to eliminate altogether. In order to introduce the reader to these 'representational strategies' we will resort to Van Leeuwen's (2008) comprehensive inventory of ways that people can be classified and what effects these classifications might have, particularly when it comes to ideology.

A first question to ask is – to what extent is the participant personalised or impersonalised? For example, in (1) below the social actor is a particular person, only one individual, while in (2) we have a whole institution, a group. The impersonalisation such as in (3) not only adds more weight to the statement, but it can also be used to hide "who actually believes what and who is responsible" (Machin and Mayr 2012: 80). By mentioning a whole institution, it is no longer clear who actually wishes what or, in cases when, for instance, crimes are discussed, who is responsible. Similarly to impersonalisation, individuals can be described not as part of an institution, but as part of a group, as part of a collectivity. Generally, the effect of individualisation in contrast to collectivisation as illustrated in the examples below is to humanise versus to dehumanise a group. Participants' presence can also be hidden or eliminated through naming strategies (anonymisation (3) and suppression (4)).

(1) Professors John Peters wishes for all students to have access to research grants.

(2) The university wishes for all students to have access to research grants.

(3) Some people place the blame on teachers, says a reliable source.

(4) Inflation is affecting all national economies. The **choice of pronouns** itself can also be an important naming strategy. One can use '**us**' or '**we**' versus '**them**' "to align us alongside or against particular ideas" (Machin and Mayr 2012: 84). In this way, text producers can present their ideas as 'our' ideas, creating an 'other' who opposes them. Moreover, these pronouns are quite vague – who is 'our', 'we' or 'us' – and they can be used to conceal information.

- **The representation of actions – transitivity**

In a discourse analysis it is important to ask who does what to whom, who plays the main role and who suffers the consequences, who is a subject and who is the object. Again, it is relevant to see what is present and foregrounded and what is absent or backgrounded. Particularly what is absent is extremely important when it comes to transitivity, because agency and responsibility can be removed and left implicit, thus hiding the blame. Passives for example, can be used to reduce negative acts, while actives clearly place the blame on the doer. When analysing who does what to whom, we should look at the participants (people, things, or abstract concepts), at the processes and at the circumstances – where, when and how something has happened (Machin and Mayr 2012: 105). Generally, when it comes to transitivity, it is relevant to determine which social actors are activated and which are passivated. Those active are the ones who make things happen, who have power and responsibility, while those passive most frequently lack power and things happen to them.

- **Nominalisation and presupposition**

Nominalisation and presupposition are also two very powerful tools when it comes to conducting a critical discourse analysis and both help us to reveal what the writer or speaker tried to hide in a text. As the name suggests, nominalisation involves replacing a process with a noun, while presupposition enables a text producer to "imply meanings without them being overtly stated, or to present things as taken for granted and stable when they are clearly contestable" (Machin and Mayr 2012: 13). Transforming a verb process into a noun construction creates ambiguity, and this can be done intentionally in order to remove agency. Presupposition, on the other hand, is not about meanings which are concealed, but rather about what is assumed as given, as natural and common sense, in a text. For CDA it is relevant to look in particular at what is presented as given, but is highly doubtful and contestable. Things assumed to be known are most often ideological and can be used as the basis for a logical argument. So, when conducting a text analysis, we should always ask ourselves what is presented as taken for granted, but is rather contestable, thus hiding ideologies.

**Otherness and othering**

Getting closer to the text analysis, there is one more concept left to discuss, namely 'othering'. We have already mentioned in the article that structural oppositions as well as personal pronouns ('we' and 'us' versus 'they' and 'them') can be used in order to 'other' a particular group, creating a division and portraying it as somewhat inferior and deviant from the norm. So through a process of 'othering', one group which represents the norm is portrayed in opposition with another devalued group, which is different from the norm and ends up being excluded, oppressed, and discriminated against. This is why it is relevant to analyse this process, since it plays an important role in a society where various groups or categories are constantly discriminated based on numerous different criteria. Discourses where otherness is at play can be about several contrasting groups: the colonizer versus the colonized, the West and the East, the natives and the immigrants, men and women, and so on. So any text which involves this process of othering refers to and speaks up in the name of all these discriminated 'othered' groups. Vichiensing (2017: 129) points out that this concept of othering can be traced back to colonial times when "the other (the colonized) existed as a primary means of defining the colonizer and of creating a sense of unity beneath such differences as class and wealth". What postcolonial criticism asks us is "to think of ourselves and others in terms of [...] cultural difference" defined by Tyson (2015: 398) as encompassing "the ways in which race, class, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, cultural beliefs, and customs combine to form individual identity", all these generating distance between people. Tyson (2015: 398) further claims that this postcolonial theory can provide us with a framework "for examining the similarities among all critical theories that deal with human oppression, such as Marxism; feminism; gay, lesbian and queer theories; and African American theory". Similarly, the concept of otherness enables us to do the same thing, being relevant for all kinds of oppressed categories. In order to do so, we will not look at otherness from a literary point of view, but rather from a linguistic point of view, developing on what Kata (2012: 407) calls 'linguistic alienation' or 'linguistic otherness'. Namely, we will look at how language constructs otherness and creates an alien world, separating the clones from the normal people. In the analysis that follows we will see how language is used to create distance and reveal discrimination, but also to address powerful issues also mentioned by Kata (2012: 410), such as "the futility of trying to subvert the system" and "the basic struggle between humanity and the advance of scientific technology".

### Analysis and discussion

Due to the lack of space, illustrative examples were selected from each chapter. After introducing the reader to the framework of analysis, this section will be devoted to the analysis itself, mainly built around several relevant excerpts from the novel. A story about the fragility of life and uncomfortable truths, *Never Let Me Go* addresses two powerful questions – "what does it mean to be human?" and "what makes the oppressed stay oppressed?" (Vichiensing 2017: 129). Moreover, the issue of obeying and believing without questioning is addressed, since the clones' education involves a limited exposure to the world, numerous prohibitions, and blindly believing everything they are being taught by their guardians. A story about a group of emotional orphans, about clones seeking their own identity and voice, Ishiguro's novel follows their life cycle, from students at Hailsham, to veterans living in the Cottages, then to carers and donors that eventually 'complete'. Throughout the novel, distance is placed between the clones and the normal, so there is a continuous process of othering and devaluing, of separating 'us' from 'them', the 'copies' from the 'originals', the 'less than human' from the 'human'. The analysis below will focus on seven excerpts of the novel, which include discourses of: Kathy H., the novel's main protagonist and narrator, Ruth, Kathy's childhood friend, Madame – the head of Hailsham, Miss Emily – the head guardian at Hailsham, and Miss Lucy, also a guardian. These have been chosen in order for the analysis to include and contrast different perspectives, since we have contrasting voices of the clones, Kathy H. and Ruth, of the guardians Miss Emily and Miss Lucy, and the voice of Madame Marie-Claude, who has the most power, but lives outside Hailsham, staying away from the clones and the uncomfortable truth behind their existence. As we will see, one thing is common to all these discourses, namely their portrayal of the clones as different from normal people, as 'the other'. However, othering is done in different ways, as the clones are described either as special, or as creatures who are less human and are simply considered medical supply. The chosen excerpts, placed in the same order as in the novel, show how perspectives shift and the truth becomes clearer and clearer as we move towards the end of the novel. We start with an ambiguous discussion about 'carers' and 'donors', then we have a discourse about the ways in which 'students' are special and their health is of paramount importance. And after Kathy H.'s feeling of incompleteness of being an infertile woman is introduced, the portrayal of the clones goes more and more towards degradation and objectification. In a crisis of identity, Ruth presents her beliefs that the clones' origin is from the gutter, being modelled from trash, after

devalued and discriminated categories such as junkies and prostitutes. Then, Madame and Miss Emily refer to the clones as “poor creatures” who are seen as “medical supply” and are considered “less human”, all this objectification being done in order to make their existence less uncomfortable for the ‘normal’ people who tacitly accept and allow the inevitable fate of the clones – death.

### **Excerpt 1**

“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 months, until the end of this year. That’ll make it almost exactly twelve years. Now I know my being a carer so long isn’t necessarily because they think I’m fantastic at what I do. There are some really good carers who’ve been told to stop after just two or three years. And I can think of one carer at least who went on for all of fourteen years despite being a complete waste of space. So I’m not trying to boast. But then I do know for a fact they’ve been pleased with my work, and by and large, I have too. My donors have 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. Okay, maybe I am boasting now. But it means a lot to me, being able to do my work well, especially that bit about my donors staying “calm.”” (Ishiguro, 2005: 3) This first excerpt is placed at the start of the novel and offers a relevant perspective of the main character and narrator of the book, Kathy H., who introduces herself to the readers and briefly talks about her life so far and her career as what she calls “a carer”. From the very beginning of the novel we notice the use of pronouns, the separation between ‘I’ and ‘they’, the main character, Kathy H., placing a distance between herself and the others which are, as it is later clear in the novel, the normal people who have power and control over the clones. If we are to consider naming strategies, not only the pronouns, but the name of the character itself plays a powerful role. We get the illusion that, by using the name and personalising her, Kathy is humanised. However, her last name is incomplete, we only have an initial, an incomplete last name for a being considered incomplete, an orphan believed to have little personality and identity, a copy. Throughout the entire novel we see this incompleteness when it comes to family names, since none of the clones have one. Looking more carefully at the lexical choices, we identify words connected to the medical domain – “carer”, “donor”, “donation” – used in a rather ambiguous way. At a first glance, it simply seems that Kathy works in health care, offering emotional support to donors. However, as we advance in the novel we discover that the situation is rather different than expected. Ishiguro takes words from a lexical field that we are familiar with in order to naturalise and make more acceptable an unspoken, uncomfortable truth, which is surely not as common sense as these lexical choices suggests. So Ishiguro plays with presupposition in an euphemistic way, using words for medical practices which are acceptable and even appreciated and associated with high moral values (i.e. caring for a patient and donating) to refer to something that would be considered unacceptable to say the least, i.e. creating clones for donations and taking their organs one by one until they die. We could go even further and suggest that the processes of ‘caring’ and ‘donating’ are nominalised in order to hide the agents and with it the uncomfortable truth that someone has to care and to donate. The horrible truth is hidden between common sense words that are used ambiguously and the inhumanity of such actions is transfer to the victims, who are portrayed as less human and more similar to objects. Moreover, the willingness normally involved when referring to carers and donors is absent in this case, the clones having no choice when it comes to their fate. So the author’s lexical choices further hides the truth, making it more acceptable and ethical by suggesting that the clones’ deaths are voluntary. However, if we are to look at agency and transitivity, we notice that others decide Kathy’s fate and evaluate her, and their opinion is important to her – “they want me to go on”, “they’ve been pleased with my work”. We should also notice the quotation marks – “agitated” and “calm”. Here again the meaning of these words used euphemistically is not what it seems. Clones that have difficulties in accepting their deaths are described merely as “agitated” and the duty of carers, which will end up having the same fate, is to keep them “calm”, if such a word could be considered when discussing the slow and painful death that the clones are subjected to. All in all, we see from the very beginning that lexical choices normalise the abnormal, making it seem common sense and acceptable, while naming strategies create the division between the two groups – “the normals” and “the clones”, the latter being exploited, marginalised and dehumanised by the first. Moreover, Kathy H.’s informal, conversational language makes it seem that she is one of us and we are equal, when it is actually not necessarily the case. This conversational style may be interpreted in different ways – Kathy could be having a conversation with those that are discriminated, in this case the equality being valid, or with those that discriminate – in which case we are dealing with a simulated equalisation.

### **Excerpt 2**

““You’ve been told about it. You’re students. You’re...special. So keeping yourselves well, keeping yourselves very healthy inside, that’s much more important for each of you than it is for me.”She stopped again and looked at us in a strange way. Afterwards, when we discussed it, some of us were sure she was dying for someone to ask: “Why? Why is it so much worse for us?” But no one did. I’ve often thought about that day, and I’m sure now, in the light of what happened later, that we only needed to ask and Miss Lucy would have told us all kinds of things. All it would have taken was just one more question about smoking. So why had we stayed silent that day? I suppose it was because even at that age—we were nine or ten—we knew just enough to make us wary of that whole territory. It’s hard now to remember just how much we knew by then. We certainly knew—though not in any deep sense—that we were different from our guardians, and also from the normal people outside; we perhaps even knew that a long way down the line there were donations waiting for us. But we didn’t really know what that meant.” (Ishiguro, 2005: 34) This second excerpt from the novel introduces us to Miss Lucy, a guardian at Hailsham who is, however, rather uncomfortable with the truth and would like the students to know it. In these paragraphs, Miss Lucy tries to hint at the truth, attempting to trigger the clones to ask for more details. So the paragraph is relevant from two points of view – it is an important point in the novel, when the “students” are given the opportunity to discover the truth, and it allows us to see a new perspective, of a guardian who is rather trying to be in favour of the “students”, of a voice willing to speak honestly. Again, we notice a lot of words used in an ambiguous manner. It is not clear what “special” means and, apparently, the guardians simply care about the health of their students. However, the vague language hides more than a simple concern for them to remain “very healthy inside”. But we receive no details about what this actually means and the students stay silent and do not ask Miss Lucy and further questions. Distance is placed between the two groups – the clones and the others, the students and the guardians, and also between the students and the “normal people outside”. The fact that they are placed in opposition with “normal people” clearly points out that clones are portrayed as not normal, as less than normal. The use of pronouns is also again relevant in this process of othering the students and in placing the two groups in structural opposition. This time Miss Lucy builds distance between “me” and “you”. Lastly we notice the repeated use of the mental process “to know”, but its overlexicalisation rather underlines even more the fact that knowledge of the truth is actually missing. The presence of mental processes also suggests lack of action since, in spite of whatever they might know and understand, in spite of what Miss Lucy might tell them, the students choose to remain silent and ultimately accept their fate.

### Excerpt 3

“What was so special about this song? Well, the thing was, I didn’t used to listen properly to the words; I just waited for that bit that went: “Baby, baby, never let me go...” And what I’d imagine was a woman who’d been told she couldn’t have babies, who’d really, really wanted them all her life. Then there’s a sort of miracle and she has a baby, and she holds this baby very close to her and walks around singing: “Baby, 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. Even at the time, I realised this couldn’t be right, that this interpretation didn’t fit with the rest of the lyrics. But that wasn’t an issue with me. The song was about what I said, and I used to listen to it again and again, on my own, whenever I got the chance.” (Ishiguro, 2005: 35) Going back to Kathy H., we notice that she becomes more aware of the truth and the ways in which she is different from normal people. This paragraph focuses on motherhood, since clones cannot have babies, but Kathy wishes that she could have her own child and feels different, not only from people in general, but particularly from women that can procreate and are fertile. So otherness is present once more, but two other groups are placed in opposition – the fertile and the infertile women, the latter feeling different and deviant from social norms and the expectations of getting married and having kids. In this case, presupposition is a powerful tool, since these expectations are considered the norm and common sense, they are taken for granted, not questioned. Even though this paragraph also underlines a way in which the clones, in particular the female clones, are different from normal people, it goes in a different direction, focusing on social norms and expectations that we have from women. So its relevance and power stems from this portrayal of infertile women as incomplete and somehow deviant from the norm. Othering is no longer hidden behind a metaphor, behind the fictional story of the clones, but it refers to an uncomfortable truth that we are all familiar with. You do not have to be a clone or to belong to an “othered” category to empathise, you understand this sense of incompleteness if you are simply a woman without a child. This paragraph is also relevant if we contrast it with the screen adaptation of the novel, where the incompleteness and deviance of infertile childless women is backgrounded and hidden behind a love story, with “baby” being



used to refer to a lover or a partner, not to a child, as Kathy H. sees it. The song in the novel is not about a sad love story, but rather about a woman who feels unsuitable and abnormal because she is not a mother.

#### **Excerpt 4**

“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? A woman like that? Come on. Yeah, right, Tommy. A bit of fun. Let’s have a bit of fun pretending. That other woman in there, her friend, the old one in the gallery. Art students, that’s what she thought we were. Do you think she’d have talked to us like that if she’d known what we really were? What do you think she’d have said if we’d asked her? ‘Excuse me, but do you think your friend was ever a clone model?’ She’d have thrown us out. We know it, so we might as well just say it. If you want to look for possibles, if you want to do it properly, then you look in the gutter. You look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that’s where you’ll find where we all came from.” (Ishiguro, 2005: 78) Here we see Ruth, another Hailsham student, rebelling. This paragraph focuses on her belief that they are modelled from what she calls “trash”, that they are clones of people from “the gutter”. In the novel we see the clones trying to find their “models” or “possibles”, to discover their “originals”, the persons that they are shaped after. This does hint at the human need of connecting with our roots, at the important role that parents play in children’s lives, so behind the text are all the presuppositions connected to these beliefs (ideologies). In this case we have a contrast between people with no origins, with no parents, coming from the gutter and being modelled after trash and those coming from a normal family, who are dignified. There is a structural opposition, even if the second group is not present, but only implied. On the other hand, there is an association between the clones and many other devalued categories – “junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps, convicts”, association which makes the clones be perceived as less valuable and less worthy of our sympathy, thus making the truth easily acceptable. With respect to lexical choices, there are numerous words connected to human degradation and filthiness which make the clones seem even more alienated, devalued and inferior. We will later see that this is a step towards the objectification and dehumanisation of the clones. The text which addresses the issue of missing identity, could also hint at the struggle between humanity and the advancement of technology, at the fear that robots will take over and the dystopic universe in which birth will no longer be considered the norm and neither will parenthood. Cloning could be a scientific progress, but at which cost? With respect to transitivity, it is interesting to notice the absence of the agent in the passive sentence “We’re modelled from trash”. Thus, responsibility is completely removed and the power of the victims is taken away, being portrayed similarly to objects to which things happen. They do not act, they are mere recipients.

#### **Excerpt 5**

Poor creatures. What did we do to you? With all our schemes and plans?” She let that hang, and I thought I could see tears in her eyes again. Then she turned to me and asked: “Do we continue with this talk? You wish to go on?”” (Ishiguro, 2005: 121) At the surface, these words of Madame, the head of Hailsham, seem to express sympathy and mercy towards her clone students. However, all she does is to even further emphasize the superiority of “the normals” in opposition to the inferiority of the clones who are dehumanised by being called creatures”. In spite of an apparent guilt, Madame does not hide her actions. In the sentence “What did we do to you?” she includes herself among the doers, avoiding, however, to provide more details about her deeds. Maybe to balance power, she then gives her former students the opportunity to decide whether they want to continue the conversation or not – “Do you wish to go on?”. Otherness continues to be built if we look at the contrasting pronouns “we”, “our” versus “you” and at the word “creatures” which portrays the clones as less human. This distance together with dehumanisation could be interpreted also as ways for Madame to better cope with her guilt.

#### **Excerpt 6**

“We were the first, along with Glenmorgan House. Then a few years later came the Saunders Trust. Together, we became a small but very vocal movement, and we challenged the entire way the donations programme was being run. Most importantly, we demonstrated to the world that if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being. Before that, all clones—or students, as we preferred to call you—existed only to supply medical science. In the early days, after the war, that’s largely all you were to most people. Shadowy objects in test tubes.” (Ishiguro, 2005: 124) Going towards the end of the novel, the truth is gradually revealed mainly with the voice of Miss Emily. She claims to have started a movement against these inhumane practices, so things have changed for the better. However, if we ask ourselves what is missing from the text, we do not see any concrete details about what



has changed. There is agency and responsibility, but with respect to generalised, abstract, non-specific actions such as “we challenged” and “we demonstrated”. Who, how and what was challenged and demonstrated? What solutions were found? We also notice the passive “was being run” – here the agent is again suppressed and the ones responsible for running this cloning program are absent. Moreover, the text continues to suggest that the clones are inferior and not human. Miss Emily claims that, in order for them to become as sensitive and intelligent as a normal human being, they needed rearing (similarly to animals) and that their humanity had to be demonstrated. So we continue to have two opposing groups – the normal human beings and the clones. Objectification goes even further as the victims are called “shadowy objects in test tubes”. Again we have terms from the medical field, with clones being described merely as a resource. The language continues to be partly abstract and non-specific. It is not clear, for example, what “to supply medical science” means – it seems to be something commonly known and acceptable, as a duty and a moral obligation, when in fact it refers to the donations that eventually lead to death (‘completion’). All this ambiguous language powerfully contrasts with the truth which is here said out loud – “clones”.

#### Excerpt 7

“However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease. So for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren’t really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn’t matter.” (Ishiguro, 2005: 125) In this quote the guilt and responsibility are no longer hidden and the doers are present. Miss Emily makes it clear that people knew about the clones, they were aware of the horrible truth but decided, however, to ignore it, to put their interest first and use the presumed lack of humanity of the clones as an excuse. The implied meaning, if we are to generalise, is that we are all aware of discrimination, but we make it seem justifiable, we deceive ourselves until we believe the versions of truth that we manufacture as an excuse for our behaviour and turn such practices into something normal, natural and common sense. And thus, they become general beliefs that people do not question, i.e. ideologies appear. In this context, othering is a powerful process and instrument supporting discrimination and taking the power away from the victims. Throughout the novel, portraying the clones as the less human “other” with no identity and power has been a constant. And this excerpt spells the unspoken truth out loud – when it comes to survival and to our own interests we are capable of doing horrible things. In the novel change comes from the oppressors, whose “awakening” process undergoes in parallel with that of the oppressed. So we could also claim that Ishiguro sends us a message to act, to become more aware of the lies that we tell ourselves, of the things that we presuppose and turn into a given, into a normality. If in society, unlike in the novel, it is the discriminated that have to stand up for themselves and fight for their rights, it does not mean that the rest of the people should remain indifferent to any kind of oppression and continue to perpetuate it. However, in spite of the apparent awakening and realisation of the truth, the distance, the gap between the two groups is not closed as we continue to see the pronouns placed in opposition – “they” versus “you”. Moreover, “their” is repeated multiple times in this short excerpt, so overlexicalisation is used to point out the selfishness of the normal people, of the oppressors who place value on “their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends” and ignore the cruel fate of the clones, of the oppressed. Overall, in the selected excerpts the most dominant and easily identifiable strategy is the use of pronouns to create oppositions and to ‘other’ the discriminated group, namely the clones. In the table below we see the main oppositions existing in each excerpt. In all of them the clones are always the discriminated and powerless group who is affected by the decisions of others and is portrayed as less human, incomplete, deviant, as mere resources used for the farewell of more valuable others. Besides the use of pronoun, if we consider naming strategies, we also notice the absence of family names of the clones who are kept in the dark when it comes to their origins, and have no parents. In fact, personalisation is partial, rather generating ambiguity, if we look both at the victims and the does, since the family names of both the clones and the guardians are missing.

E. 1 – Kathy H.	<i>I, my</i> (the powerless clone) versus <i>they</i> (the powerful normal people)
E. 2 – Miss Lucy Kathy H. (narrator)	<i>you, yourselves</i> (the clones) versus <i>me</i> (the guardian) <i>we</i> (the students, the clones) versus an implied <i>they</i> (the normal people)
E. 3 – Kathy H.	<i>I</i> (the infertile) versus <i>she</i> (the mother)
E. 4 – Ruth	<i>we</i> (the clones) & <i>they</i> (the models, the gutter) vs. <i>them</i> (normal people)

E. 5 - Madame	<i>we</i> (the guardians, the decision makers) versus <i>you</i> (the clones)
E. 6 – Miss Emily	<i>we</i> (movement against cloning) versus <i>them</i> (the rest of the world) versus <i>you</i> (the powerless clones, objects, medical supplies)
E. 7 – Miss Emily	<i>you</i> (the clones, the victims, the less human) vs. <i>they, their</i> (the normal people, the humans, the valuable ones, the ones that matter)

Another powerful instrument that Ishiguro uses if we are to look at the lexical choices is the abstract, non-specific and misleading language that is meant to hide the uncomfortable truth and those guilty of it. This is clear if the look at the terms in the table below and at what they actually refer to. By the use of such terms in a misleading and non-specific way, to which we add the way in which transitivity is employed to hide the agent, patient or action, unacceptable deeds are hidden. Just as in this novel such horrible facts are hidden in plain sight, but people avoid looking at them, in our society also injustice and discrimination towards numerous groups considered deviant are clear, but the unaffected majority chooses to ignore it and look the other way. Thus, *Never Let Me Go* itself is a powerful novel that encourages us to ask ourselves what is taken for granted, to become more aware of the existing ideologies and power plays and to act consequently.

	What it is in the text:	What are the realities behind:
E. 1	carer, donors, donation – health care terms	cloning and murders
E. 2	students, special	clones, victims kept in the dark
E. 3	baby – apparently romantic partner	the absent child taken away from the infertile woman, incompleteness
E. 4	modelled, possibles	cloning and those cloned
E. 5	our schemes and plans – non-specific	the guilty and their deeds (murders)
E. 6	we challenged, we demonstrated – non-specific	no clear actions of the movements against cloning
E. 6	supply medical science	give organs until they die (the clones)
E. 7	uncomfortable, kept in the shadows	being accomplice to, ignoring and hiding murders

Throughout the novel medical terms and terms that imply care giving, which are normally used to refer to dignified and moral practices, contrast powerfully with the truth and also with the terms referring to dirt, filth and decay in Ruth's speech above. Behind such structural opposition the reverse is actually hidden. Since growing clones for organs that are harvested until their death is the filthy, decaying, immoral practice, while the clones are the dignified ones. Similarly, in the selected excerpts we have seen multiple ways to objectify and dehumanize the clones, when it is rather them who are much more human than the others who consciously ignore and accept their unjust deaths, being accomplices to murder. When it comes to actions and transitivity, passivation and suppression are the key words. It is not clear who are 'they' that have the power and take the decisions, or the 'we' that the guardians talk about. And Kathy H.'s choice of pronouns makes us feel as part of her group, simulated equalisations giving us the feeling that we are among the victims, while in fact we are rather, most of the time, among those who stand by quietly in front of discrimination and condone it. In the excerpts we could also identify presuppositions about what it means to be a complete woman (i.e. being a mother), but also about parenthood, the absence of origins and orphans (i.e. people with no parents, with no roots, perceived as being less dignified, as coming from the gutter). The existence of the clones itself challenges what we assume to be normal with respect to family and procreation. And advancements in medicine, science, and technology seem to challenge and put at risk our normality, as we can see in multiple novels and movies where procreation is no longer the norm. So the novel could also be addressing our fears about the future completely transforming our reality.

### Conclusions

By taking a closer look at Ishiguro's novel we have seen how important and revealing it is to ask ourselves what is present, what is absent and what is assumed in a text. Such an analysis can reveal meanings that are not overt, but rather implicit, and beliefs that could be challenged, but instead are taken for granted and made to appear natural and common sense. We have also discovered how different instruments such as naming strategies, presuppositions, or transitivity have a great potential in conveying meaning that we are not typically aware of and how language and the society shape each other. Throughout the novel, tools such as lexical choices, structural opposition, suppression, simulated equalization, ambiguity, non-specificity, generalisation or presuppositions have been used to portray the murder of the "less human", objectified and devalued clones as

the natural thing to do in order to save the valuable others. When, in fact, what Ishiguro manages to do through this process of othering is to reveal the fact that the truth is exactly the opposite, the dehumanized clones being actually much more human than the guilty others. Which brings us to the central question of this novel about the fragility of life: what does being human mean? All in all, we have seen how revealing it can be to analyse the linguistic options that the communicators have, their choices and the consequences of these choices. And otherness has proven to be a central concept in this process of analysis, being relevant in any situation when a particular group of people is devalued and treated as inferior, regardless the criteria.

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