

Human Relations in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go: Bonds in a Utopian World
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Abstract

Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go offers a vivid display of human relations inside a utopian world which is an amalgamation of scientific advancements and deteriorating humanism. In this conflict of utopian and dystopian setting, human clones are created for the sole purpose of organ donations. Despite their (clones') predestined end there is a flourishing of bonds of love, friendship and compassion among them. This paper purports to bring forward Ishiguro's treatment of human relations through clones in such constrained and pseudo-humanistic framework which relates with the concept of Margaret Atwood's "ustopia".

Keywords

Human relations, Utopia, Bonds, Memory

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Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, holds treatment of human relationships as one of the central themes of the novel by creating a balance to novel's pseudo humanistic setting. The narrative centers on Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy, whose bonds originates against a world which denies their existence as living beings and considers them as a utility. Ishiguro, a master of his craft, created a ustopian (*Ustopia*, a concept devised by Margaret Atwood, is a blend of utopia and dystopia) society—a world which is based on the premises of utopia by cultivating clones in a controlled environment for prolonging human life also deals with a dystopian world by considering these clones as soulless bodies. In the novel characters' emotional turbulences are caught up between a systematic exploitation beings in the name of scientific advancements and progress. This paper examines the treatment of human relations in the novel, focusing on how the humane elements sustain inside clones through love, friendship and other relations in an environment which reminds them of their unfortunate end through donations.

Friendship: Tranquillity and Conflict

Friendship in *Never Let Me Go* is depicted as both, a sanctuary from the worldly pain, and also as source of tension and conflict. Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy's bond begins in childhood at Hailsham, a boarding school that fosters the clones inculcating values and emotions inside them and on the same time also making them aware of their grim destinies. Their friendship evolves as they face the harsh realities of their existence, and this bond acts as a source of solace from the darkness of the outer world, a darkness which is going to consume them. Kathy, the narrator, reflects on the enduring nature of their bond:

I was talking to one of my donors a few days ago who was complaining about how memories, even your most precious ones, fade surprisingly quickly. But I don't go along with that. The memories I value most, I don't see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them. (280)

This sentiment displays the strength of their connection, even as they witness moments of misunderstanding and betrayals. Another instance which can be found in the novel which reflects on the same comes early in the novel where Kathy talks about the tape Ruth gave her and how she has still kept it as a memory of her friend: I still have it now. I don't play it much because the music has nothing to do with anything. It's an object, like a brooch or a ring, and especially now Ruth has gone, it's become one of my most precious possessions. (75)

Friendship becomes as a source of tension and conflict as well, Ruth, for instance, often manipulates Tommy and Kathy, as her action originates from her insecurities due to a cordial relation between Kathy and Tommy. Her attempts where she tried to sabotage Kathy and Tommy's growing relation created tension in the novel and elucidated the emotional complexity of their friendship. This act of Ruth also led her to a redemption which highlights the positive aspect of . Her confession to Kathy in the novel acts as a evidence to it:

She laughed and said: "Because nothing. I'd like you to forgive me, but I don't expect you to. Anyway, that's not the half of it, not even a small bit of it, actually. The main thing is, I kept you and Tommy apart." Her voice had dropped again, almost to a whisper. "That was the worst thing I did. (228)

Love as a source of hope and defiance

Love in *Never Let Me Go* serves a source of multiple aspirations. Kathy and Tommy's relationship throughout the novel, since their childhood to their end becomes a symbol of hope and humanity in a world which has created them to serve a sole purpose of donation.

From childhood camaraderie to a profound emotional bond, their emotional journey where love germinated in form of care towards each other and later on developed as a ripe feeling, provides them a spark of life in the dimness of demise. Tommy and Ruth going to Madame to ask for a deferral on the foundation of their love shows a deepening bond which suppresses pessimism and sometimes realities through the hammer of optimism. Tommy and Ruth went to Madame for a deferral but to their disappointment they were denied...It's something for them to dream about, a little fantasy. What harm is there? But for the two of you, I can see this doesn't apply. You are serious. You've thought carefully. You've hoped carefully. For students like you, I do feel regret. It gives me no pleasure at all to disappoint you. But there it is."

Despite this revelation, their love persisted and now it acted as a haven for them where they were able to find a transitory solace in each other's company. Ishiguro has dealt with the theme of love meticulously and have explored various aspects of it in the novel.

Ruth's recognition of Kathy and Tommy's love further strengthens its significance and her encouragement for pursuing a deferral shows her acknowledgment of their bond and love as something sacred. In the novel the search for love in other forms have also been displayed by the author. Kathy in her childhood

holding a pillow and pretending to be a mother who is holding a baby in her hands reflects a pursuit of love in several roles and forms. The treatment of love as a creator and destructor of bonds in the novel also provides an insight of its birth even in the harshest conditions and environments.

Memory as a driving force

Memory as a narrative device in *Never Let Me Go* plays a crucial role throughout the novel, it not only allows the narrator to preserve her relations but also reflects on their significance in her life. The treatment of memory by Ishiguro is not constricted to an element of past, memory here also acts a driving force in the present life of the narrator. Her reminiscences of past reflects that how all the incidents and relations helped in shaping the identity of the narrator, the retrospective account framed in the novel becomes a revelation of present. Kathy's recollections and her act of clinging to old memories show the human desire to be associated to a relation in one's life and sustain it. Kathy's act of keeping the cassette tape with her even though she hardly listens to it symbolizes the character's desire to get back to those moments of joy and intimacies in her life. The recollections of Hailsham, cottages and her trip to Norfolk in this poignant narrative reaffirms the value of bonds and relations and how they shape one's identity.

Kathy's reflection on memory in the last part of the novel emphasizes its enduring role and significance: I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them. (280)

Human Relations in a Utopian Framework

The utopian world of *Never Let Me Go*—a mixture of utopian ideals and dystopian realities—shapes identity and relationships of the characters in a very unique way. Hailsham, a boarding school for these clones who are predestined to a morose end tries to nurture them and create an individual thinking inside them. With the help of art and other activities it strives to prove that these clones, despite being cultivated artificially, are humans too and they too have a soul. It was later revealed in the novel by Miss Emily when Kathy and Tommy went to Madame in hope for a deferral: ... You said it was because your art would reveal what you were like. What you were like inside. That's what you said, wasn't it? Well, you weren't far wrong about that. We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to prove you had souls at all. (255)

The pseudo-humanist framework in the novel creates a paradoxical scenario where human relations and their significance is not displayed by humans but are

done by clones which are considered soulless. Treatment of love, friendship, compassion, camaraderie in the lives of clones challenges the ideal framework created by the humans in the novel which is leading to a certain dehumanising extent. In a world designed to suppress identity and neglect existence of other beings, the resilience comes in the form of human relations elucidated by the author.

Conclusion

Never Let Me Go, becomes Kazuo Ishiguro's par excellence masterpiece where treatment of human relations creates a resistance towards its utopian setting. By dealing with elements of love, dreams, desires, memory the author has created a strong endurance of human connections and bonds in this utopian world.

The novel through its poignant and captivating narrative offers a strong critique and satire on the society and its downgrading values through clones. The novel also questions the blind run towards scientific advancements without comprehending its outcomes. On the wall of dehumanised framework Ishiguro's craftsmanship has created a mural of values of human emotions and connections, reflecting their significance in the adverse conditions.

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