

## MOURNING ONE'S OWN MORTALITY: ANALYSIS OF KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *NEVER LET ME GO*

*Perkabungan Mortalitas Diri: Analisis Never Let Me Go Karya Kazuo Ishiguro*

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### Abstract

*Mortality is one of the aspects of the cycle of life feared by humans since due to its inevitability. This article investigates Kazuo Ishiguro's work entitled Never Let Me Go, a dystopian novel set in England in a fictional world in the 90s, further. The novel tells the story of a woman named Kathy H. and is told from her perspective and highlights her life's story growing up at a private school called Hailsham. The novel is analyzed using close reading through the lens of mourning and melancholia as well as the concept of memory. Kathy H.'s narrative of remembering and retelling past events is something that is emphasized in this study. It can be gathered that Kathy H.'s narration of remembering and retelling events in her past as an unreliable narrator and as a clone reveals herself as an individual and that telling her story is her way of coping with all the losses she experienced throughout her life and her way of accepting and mourning her own impending death.*

**Keywords:** *unreliable narrator, memory, mourning, melancholia*

### Abstrak

Mortalitas merupakan salah satu aspek siklus kehidupan yang ditakuti manusia karena hal ini tidak dapat dihindari. Artikel ini menyelidiki lebih jauh karya Kazuo Ishiguro yang berjudul *Never Let Me Go*, sebuah novel distopia dengan latar Inggris yang ada dalam dunia fiksi pada tahun 90-an. Novel bercerita tentang seorang wanita bernama Kathy H. dan dikisahkan dari sudut pandangnya dan mengangkat seluk beluk kehidupannya saat tumbuh besar di sebuah sekolah swasta bernama Hailsham. Novel dianalisis menggunakan *close reading* melalui lensa *mourning* (berkabung) dan *melancholia* (melankolia) serta konsep ingatan. Narasi Kathy H. mengingat dan menceritakan kembali peristiwa masa lalu menjadi hal yang digarisbawahi dalam studi ini. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa penarasian Kathy H. mengingat dan menceritakan kembali kejadian pada masa lalunya sebagai seorang *unreliable narrator* dan seorang klon menunjukkan dirinya sebagai seorang individu serta mengungkap hal tersebut adalah caranya menghadapi semua kehilangan yang dialami sepanjang hidupnya dan juga caranya untuk menerima dan berkabung atas kematiannya sendiri yang akan datang.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** *unreliable narrator, ingatan, mourning, melancholia*

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## INTRODUCTION

Kazuo Ishiguro, the 2017 Nobel Prize winner in literature, has the ability to take the reader on a journey highlighting the importance of memories of the past and how they shaped our identity as an individual (Nobel Prize, 2017). The events inside the stories in Ishiguro's works are never explicitly portrayed but Ishiguro uses the readers' power of reading between the lines, the subtle description of the character dynamics, and the symbolism of certain objects repeated throughout the story, to create a nuanced and poignant narrative. It can be said that the characters written by Ishiguro are worth examining because they hide many aspects of themselves that are worth revealing.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* asks the reader the very question which falls along the same line of the combination of the propositions brought up by Descartes' "*cogito ergo sum*" ("I think, therefore, I am") as well as Locke's, Hobbes', and Rousseau's famous debate on human nature: Are we a product of nature? Or are we a product of nurture? Are we born a blank slate? Or are we born evil and thus need to be taught to be good? Are we truly free? The underlying question asked in *Never Let Me Go* is an age-old question about what it means to be a human being and the debatable nature of one's free will. In his novels, Ishiguro sheds light on the significance of unreliable narrators and telling the readers that those flaws in memories will give the readers a semblance of how a certain individual, especially those who had gone through some forms of major traumas, sees and understands the world.

Trauma can be physical in nature, but it can also occur in the mind. According to Anne Whitehead, mental trauma is a result of a powerful stimulus that mentally disturbs a person greatly to the point of damaging the barrier in their mind (Whitehead, 2009). In another study, it is said that trauma is described as a "disturbance of a psychobiological rhythm" (Husvedt, 2015), meaning that its nature is fluid according to the environment in which that trauma occurred and the damage can take many forms, be it physical or psychological. Based on these notions, a trauma that occurs in the mind manifests itself in the form of damage resulting in flaws inside one's mind, particularly in one's memories, manifesting as errors and inconsistencies. Trauma can also affect a person's sense of self. The self is constructed through the building blocks of memories acquired over the course of one's lifetime (Whitehead, 2009). In the explanation regarding "Rousseau's Chains of Association" in the first part of Rousseau's *Confessions* memory grants a person a way to recall happy moments from the past to console themselves and that memories are perfect, though he admitted parts of one's memories can be forgotten, he assumed they are forgotten because they were unimportant (Whitehead, 2009).

To counter Rousseau's proposition as an extension to the nature of memory, Freud added that when one experiences trauma like loss, there is also a degree of defense mechanism when one tries to overcome the grief by fixing those gaps and missing pieces in one's memories and tries to make sense of it all (Freud, 1959). This would result in the imperfect nature of memory. The presence of trauma can be identified by these occurrences in one's mind: fright where one is unprepared for danger, fear where one has an aversion toward certain objects, and anxiety where one expects danger (Freud, 1961). When people try to make sense of things after something traumatic occurred to them, there are two possibilities that might occur which are that they would wallow by thinking about the problem over and over again which sometimes result in "melancholia", where one would never overcome the feeling of attachment to the loss, or they would overcome the loss by "mourning" where one accepted the loss, grief, and move on (Freud, 1959). In parallel to Freud's melancholia, there is also a concept called "persistence" where a person is haunted by a memory, making them repeatedly think about something, hindering them from doing other important activities (Schacter, 2001).

The notion of the unreliability of the human mind is discussed extensively in *The Seven Sins of Memories* where seven categories that cause one's memory to be flawed are identified,

which consisted of transience, absent-mindedness, blocking, misattribution, suggestibility, bias, and persistence (Schacter, 2001). In *Memory, Trauma and the Spirited Life: Remembering and Identity* the transformative power of memory and how it is able to repair itself to help in a process of reconciliation with our past is highlighted (Burrell, 2023). It can be gathered from all the statements above memory is perfect due to its imperfection, revealing that even when there are traumas that occur in the mind there are still ways for the mind to heal itself or deal with the trauma using a form of defense mechanism.

It can be seen from many of Ishiguro's work that those "seven sins" come into play in many of his narrative styles that requires its narrator to remember, recall, and retell the memories from their past. These "sins" affected their memories in such a way that it altered them or even completely erase them. In a review of Ishiguro's works, it is stated that his use of memory serves as a form of testimony (Wong, 2015). For example, in his previous works such as *A Pale View of Hills* (Ishiguro, 1982) and *The Remains of the Day* (Ishiguro, 1988), the stories also revolved around the themes of remembering past events and highlighting the significance of one's memories, particularly through the eyes of an individual who has experienced some form of trauma. In an analysis of Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day*, the main character copes by imperfectly reconstructing and rationalizing the events that occurred in the past to deal with all the regrets and losses he had experience throughout his life to make sense of his present (Khalaf, 2017). Certain things are recalled by the characters, which are seen as symbols, as part of the details in Ishiguro's works. For example, the repeated images of rope in *A Pale View of Hills* represent the suicide of the narrator's daughter, haunting her memory (Ishiguro, 1982) and Stevens' way of repressing his memories to deal with his traumas in *Remains of the Days* (Ishiguro, 1988). These elements shed light on the traumas that occurred to these characters which are not explicitly told but revealed along the way. This gives a semblance how the human mind functions which parallels the idea that many fictional literary works are mimetic manifestations of reality.

Due to the dynamic nature of memory, it is often explored in many fictional literary works and thus later analyzed. There are several examples that showcase such analysis. An analysis of *Mercy* by Toni Morrison showed that readers do play a part in giving more context to the story where many things are often not directly said, but implied (Raynaud, 2017). Another analysis is of Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and *Solar* that explores the psyche of the characters in the novel using Žižekian theory of processual subjectivity and the analysis concludes that, depending on the person who reads those two novels, one can either appreciate or becoming overcome with apprehension toward the characters in the story (Barati & Eslamieh, 2015). The usage of photographs in novels can also reveal one's memory and trauma. This concept is explored in an analysis of *Austerlitz* by W. G. Sebald where the photographs used in the story become a visualized metaphor of a person's memory therefore one's trauma can also be reconstructed through these photographs (Bán, 2010).

Kazuo Ishiguro has a specific way in which he tells stories about trauma and memory. Ishiguro embedded hints about the characters' traumas by masking them in a seemingly mundane passages when, in actuality, they are hiding the pains of the narrators of the stories. In one study, *Ageing Without Remembering: Fantasy, Memory and Loss in Kazuo Ishiguro's The Buried Giant*, the theme of aging and how the elderly are treated as burden are discussed, revealing human's vulnerability and the cyclical nature of traumas (Falcus & Oró-Piqueras, 2020). In *How to Employ Nagasaki: Kazuo Ishiguro's A Pale View of Hills (1982)*, distortions of memories of the main character of the novel, Etsuko, due to traumas is explored, divulging the flawed nature of the human mind (Akiyoshi, 2020). *Memory in T/Rubble: Tackling (Nuclear) Ruins* examines the themes of the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima in *A Pale View of Hills* and the unreliability of the human minds (Parlati, 2019). Due to these reasons, Ishi works are something to be worth noting and analyzing.

Although *Never Let Me Go* is more recent in terms of its release, 2005, Ishiguro still retained his style and sentiment as shown in his previous works mentioned before, which is the use of the first-person point of view and the recalling of past events experienced by the narrator of the story. Since its release, Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* have been analyzed by many and, for this article, several research will be used as a comparison in terms of their result.

*Clone Stories: 'Shallow are the souls that have forgotten how to shudder'* uses the lens of psychoanalysis to highlight the bioethics aspects in the story of how the dangerous concept of human cloning in the fictional narrative can serve as a way to make readers comprehend the issue other than through the media (Marks, 2010). *The Clones' Apprenticeship: Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go as Bildungsroman* delved into the structure of the story and the way the character is portrayed in a bildungsroman (Guesse, 2016). *The Othering in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go* explores how the characters inside of the story are dehumanized (Vichiensing, 2017). In *Reading Never Let Me Go from the Mujo Perspective of Buddhism*, the novel is read using the perspective of the *Mujo* doctrine where things are seen as impermanent (Taketomi, 2018). *Posthuman Biopredicament: A Study of Biodystopia in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go* addresses how the narrative highlights human nature and universal human experiences in the scope of a biodystopian story (Yan, 2019). *"Shadowy objects in the test tubes": Biocitizenship, Disposable Bodies, and Wasted Lives in Hanif Kureishi's "The Body" and Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go* brings the arguments about the biocitizenship of the clones and their bodies as merely replacement organs for their original human's bodies (Karmakar & Parui, 2020). The speculative aspect of the novel is discussed in *School and Schooling, and the Boundaries of the Human in Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go* where the clones are seen as humans deserving of their rights (Buchweitz, 2020). *Language and Betrayal: Posthuman Ethics in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go* also discusses the posthuman ethics in the story and asks the readers what it means to be humans (Mattar, 2021). *Saviors, Nāifs, or Orphans? The Posthuman Condition in Literary and Cinematic Perspectives on Human Cloning* explores the clones as multilayered characters even with their lack of imagination due to the limitations put on them and their mindsets that became even more complex as they grow (Lacko, 2021). *An Ecological View in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go: The Landscape of Nagasaki Implied by the Narrator* explores Ishiguro's intent of conveying a critique about consumerism and the ruined state of Nagasaki after the nuclear bombing in 1945 (Kato, 2023). *Exploring the Humane in the Posthuman: A Critical Analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's Transhumanist Narratives* discusses the biological, social, and cultural aspects of humanities where the essence of being human lies in having empathy, compassion, as well as benevolence and not just in having a physical form (Panda & Bhattacharya, 2023). *Mortality and Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go* (Yeung, 2017) shares the same sentiment with this article since it also talks about memory and the acceptance of mortality.

Based on all the research stated above, the gap from all the research above is the direction and the approach of the research. This article employs a different perspective using Freud's mourning and melancholia and concepts of memory by Whitehead, Burrell, and Schacter as a base to investigate the motivation and explore the identity of the main character.

This article discusses the narrator as a subject, meaning that the issue that would be underlined in the analysis of the story is the way Kathy H. as the main character and narrator of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* copes with all her losses, including her own impending mortality. Therefore, the points above lead to these research questions:

1. How does the memory of the past become the means to mourn the loss in *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro?
2. How does it shape the identity of the main character?

These two questions are intended to explore how the narrator as an unreliable narrator intentionally and unintentionally select what memories to forget, what memories to remember, and why they are important.

## METHOD

This research employed a qualitative paradigm using the method of literary analysis using close reading. This frame of thinking is the foundation of how the object of the research is analyzed. The research focuses on the phenomenon happening in the story which is modeled after a psychological phenomenon that can occur in real life. The researcher then explores how the two aspects are connected. In this case, the researcher tries to understand how the memory of the past becomes the means to mourn the loss in *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro and how it shapes the identity of Kathy H., the main character.

There are several steps taken to analyze the story. The first step is to determine research object and the approach in which the research is going to be conducted. The chosen object of research is then decided to be Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. The reason why this text is chosen is due to its focus on memory and memory's role in shaping the identity of the main character which can reveal how they deal with trauma and how they overcome their losses. The approach employed in this research is literary criticism and close reading. Since the object of the research is a literary text, it is fitting for it to be criticized using available means of analysis in the form of literary analysis. In this case, the story is mainly dissected using Whitehead's, Burrell's, and Schacter's concept of memory as well as Freud's concept of mourning and melancholia.

The next step is to gather the primary source which is retrieving the novel that is a literary text. After gathering the primary source, the data is collected. The data is in the form of quotes from the book relevant to the two research questions above and the issues explored. The focus of the data will be the main character's point of view and how the main character perceives the world. The quotes are then chosen and processed by applying analysis using literary criticism where the data is interpreted by the researcher and compared to, in this case, existing psychological phenomenon in the theories employed used in the analysis. The overall analysis is then used to form a coherent conclusion.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To summarize the dystopian novel *Never Let Me Go*, it tells the story of a woman named Kathy H. The story is set in a fictional 90's England and told through her point of view, a thirty-one-year-old woman, a "carer" at Hailsham (Ishiguro, 2005). Kathy tells the reader of her memories, of her past with friends who had long since passed away, mainly Ruth and Tommy. In the story, Kathy recalled the times of her youth, and she also recalled her time when she went on a journey along with Ruth and Tommy to find out who they truly are and whether they could escape their duty as a "donor" which are people that are raised to donate their vital organs one by one. It was revealed in the later part of the story that they are clones destined to "complete" their tasks to donate their organs for the humans that they were modeled after. To "complete" means to die since eventually they would not be able to live without all their vital organs. In the end, they all accepted their fate to die after they all completed their fourth donation.

For Ishiguro, during his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 2017, writing fiction is his means to preserve the past (Nobel Prize, 2017). This sentiment is reflected in *Never Let Me Go* since the main character, Kathy, tries to preserve her past by telling her story to the reader. When connecting these points with Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, two points are analyzed in line with

research questions: one, memory as the means to cope and, two, the shaping of the identity of the main character.

### **Memories of the Past as the Means to Cope in *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

Memories of the past become the means to cope with loss in *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro. There are two types of losses portrayed in the novel, the sense of loss from having others dying and the impending mortality of the self. In the book, Kathy H. stresses the fact that the act of recalling her past is her way to preserve the memories of those she had lost in her life, as shown in this particular passage:

“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. I suppose I lost Hailsham too. You still hear stories about some ex-Hailsham student trying to find it, or rather the place where it used to be. And the odd rumour will go round sometimes about what Hailsham's become these days—a hotel, a school, a ruin. Myself, for all the driving I do, I've never tried to find it. I'm not really interested in seeing it, whatever way it is now. Mind you, though I say I never go looking for Hailsham, what I find is that sometimes, when I'm driving around, I suddenly think I've spotted some bit of it.” (Ishiguro, 2005: 280)

It can be said that preserving the memories is the only way that Kathy H. is able to preserve the memory of the reality she once knew before her friends, Ruth and Tommy, died. This is in line with the concept of the mind's capability of using happy memories to reconcile with the bitterness of the present (Burrell, 2023) and also Whitehead's concept where the mind has a way to heal in order to deal with the trauma and that can somehow modify those memories (Whitehead, 2009).

Due to the nature of confinement of Hailsham, with its routine, limits of information of the outside world, and day-to-day activities, Kathy often finds it hard to place at which time it was exactly when certain events occurred. This is in line with Schacter's concept of the imperfect nature of memories where one may misattribute or forget (Schacter, 2001). However, even though there are some things that are forgotten, Kathy remembers the things she felt well, especially about her friends, as stated in the quote above when she said that she will always remember Ruth and Tommy. She made it clear that the two had become a part of her childhood and had her time growing up with them up until Ruth's and Tommy's final day until she was the only one that was left.

The coping mechanism that Kathy displays can be dissected using mourning and melancholia (Freud, 1959). In the beginning of the story, Kathy is still haunted by her past losses of her friends, and this is seen as a sense of melancholia. The other two things that stood out the most in the book and can be seen as melancholia are the repetition of the song *Never Let Me Go* by Judy Bridgewater and mentions of babies. The title of the song, “*Never Let Me Go*”, in itself is a type of allusion to a type of memory that haunts a person, a form persistence to never let go (Schacter, 2001). This haunting of recurring images and scenes of the past can be classified as a type of persistence which in turn become the source of Kathy's melancholia. To be constantly haunted by the past can greatly affect a person's outlook toward their future. For example, in an analysis of several novels about First World Wars published at the turn of the twentieth century, unresolved traumas present in the characters inside of the stories in those novels are mostly consisted of hauntings in their memories and it affected the process of transitioning from melancholia to mourning (Branach-Kallas, 2017). Persistence can make it difficult for a person to function normally because their mind would constantly think back to those traumatic memories, disrupting their minds. In Kathy H.'s case, by recalling and retelling

her story made her able to mourn and have her mind validate her experience. It can be said that, as the story progresses, she overcame her melancholia in the end through her mourning by accepting those traumatic losses she had experience. Kathy was able to process her grief by telling her story to make sense of her trauma and finally accept her predicament which is her own death after donating all her vital organs.

In his 2017 Nobel Prize speech, Ishiguro had talked about the war that happened in Japan (Nobel Prize, 2017). This issue is first brought up in his first book which is *A Pale View of Hills* that talks about war victims, mainly women and children, and how they try to cope with the persistent memory of the horror they saw after experiencing such horrifying trauma (Ishiguro, 1982). In the aftermath of the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan faced even more threat of mortality due to trauma and this is shown in the suicides and infanticide that occurred during that time. This can be seen as the reason why there are images of babies mentioned in *Never Let Me Go*. In the novel, this sentiment was shown through the incident where Madame caught Kathy cradling a pillow like it was a baby as she was listening to Judy Bridgewater's song entitled *Never Let Me Go*:

“...She was out in the corridor, standing very still, her head angled to one side to give her a view of what I was doing inside. And the odd thing was she was crying. It might even have been one of her sobs that had come through the song to jerk me out of my dream.

When I think about this now, it seems to me, even if she wasn't a guardian, she was the adult, and she should have said or done something, even if it was just to tell me off. Then I'd have known how to behave. But she just went on standing out there, sobbing and sobbing, staring at me through the doorway with that same look in her eyes she always had when she looked at us, like she was seeing something that gave her the creeps.” (Ishiguro, 2005, : 71)

To Kathy after talking to Tommy, Madame's expression of sadness and horror at the sight of Kathy cradling the pillow is interpreted as her realization that the clones formed their own individuality and are humans in their own right. The reader might interpret the reason why Madame cried is due to her entertaining the possibility of the clones escaping and living lives that they will never have. The reader can also interpret this as Madame's guilt in knowing that these children will be sacrificed to sustain the life of another. It can be said that this is Ishiguro's way of directly showing the reader the consequences of dehumanizing human beings. This leads to the next point regarding trauma and memory affecting in the shaping of the identity of the person.

### **The Shaping of the Identity of the Main Character**

The trauma portrayed in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* is the losses that Kathy experienced, particularly Ruth's and Tommy's death, the two people that she held most dear and her own impending mortality. She had gone through so many things with Ruth and Tommy since childhood, she had confided in them, fought with them, and discover many things with them (the fact that there was no such thing as “deferral”, for example) that losing them means that she also lost a part of herself and affected her identity as a person.

In *The Othering in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*, it is concluded that the way the story depicted how the clones are treated is a form of othering since they are separated from the society, treated differently, and the treatments they received are dehumanizing (Vichiensing, 2017). This result is quite different from this article since the focus is also different. Vichiensing focuses more on the nature of the cloning itself whereas this article analyses how the realization of being a clone affected the main character's identity. The self-realization and the awareness of the self and of one's place in this world as a “spare part” for the human she was modeled after leads to Kathy process of mourning.

In Kathy's case, her memories truly have shaped her as a person and become her *raison d'être* or reason for one's existence, even though she knew well that her whole biology is a replica of another person and that she was created to sustain the life of another. It is also previously mentioned in his Nobel Prize Speech, Ishiguro uses storytelling as his way of reconstructing the past (Nobel Prize, 2017) and this way of thinking is also reflected in this story.

Another kind of trauma that is slowly revealed in the story is the fact that Kathy as the narrator had to come to terms with her own mortality: to donate her fourth vital organ and die. It can be seen from the paragraph below that Kathy had established herself as her own person right from the beginning of the novel.

"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." (Ishiguro, 2005: 3)

What makes the paragraph above all the more poignant is the fact that she explicitly stated that she had exactly eight more months to live before her final donation.

Before finishing the book and obtaining the necessary information of the main issues mentioned in the story until the end, the reader of the story at first might disregard the number of months mentioned by Kathy as see it as something trivial. This is due to the fact that the reader does not have the whole context yet at the beginning of the story before finding out the truth in the end. The narrative in a way took advantage of the reader's tendency to take certain details for granted only to be hit with a sense of horror after knowing how significant certain details are. The reader would finally understand its significance after finally knowing that they are clones with the sole purpose of sustaining the original human they are modeled after and that those eight months signify how many more months she had left until she "completes" her vital organ donation and dies.

It can be said that in *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro agreed with the notion that humans are subjects that shaped their identities through their memories, and that treating human beings, no matter how they came about in this world, as merely organ donors, dehumanized them. Even though the donors are Hailsham clones they are still humans with feelings and a sense of self. Commodifying their bodies took away their agency.

After Kathy saw Madame crying when she saw her cradling the pillow like a baby, Kathy consulted her friend, Tommy, regarding this matter. Tommy told her that it could be because Madame knew that Kathy, being the donor that is only destined to "complete", would never know what it feels like to truly live as a normal human being, like having babies. This speculated notion is then denied in the later part of the story when Kathy met Madame again when she was older. Kathy finally understands that Madame actually cried for an entirely different reason. Madame states that:

"I was weeping for an altogether different reason. When I watched you dancing that day, I saw something else. I saw a new world coming rapidly. More scientific, efficient, yes. More cures for the old sicknesses. Very good. But a harsh, cruel world. And I saw a little girl, her eyes tightly closed, holding to her breast the old kind world, one that she knew in her heart could not remain, and she was holding it and pleading, never to let her go." (Ishiguro, 2005: 266-267)

From the quote above it can be gathered that Madame lamented the fact that Kathy will die but she felt that Kathy's existence, where she would die for others to live, indicated progress in the

advancement of technology. This can be interpreted as a social commentary of the irony of having to sacrifice human lives for the sake of the advancement of technologies to save other human lives. This can allude to the ethics of people in power's decisions to sacrifice human lives as necessary sacrifice for the sake of progress, refusing to see the identity of the humans as an individual with complexities.

A moment of rebelliousness and rejection of the system by the characters are also told, furthering the notion of the humanness of the clones. This occurs where the characters assumed that there might be a way for them to escape from being a donor by getting a "deferral" by making the best artwork for the Gallery. This can be seen as their way of resisting their fate, establishing their identities, and becoming their own person. But, as it was revealed when Kathy and Tommy consulted Miss Emily, there was no Gallery and there was no deferral,

"So there's definitely nothing. No deferral, nothing like that."

"Tommy," I murmured, and glared at him. But Miss Emily said gently:

"No, Tommy. There's nothing like that. Your life must now run the course that's been set for it."

"So, what you're saying, Miss," Tommy said, "is that everything we did, all the lessons, everything. It was all about what you just told us? There was nothing more to it than that?"

"I can see," Miss Emily said, "that it might look as though you were simply pawns in a game. It can certainly be looked at like that. But think of it. You were lucky pawns. There was a certain climate and now it's gone. You have to accept that sometimes that's how things happen in this world. People's opinions, their feelings, they go one way, then the other. It just so happens you grew up at a certain point in this process." (Ishiguro, 2005: 261)

Even though the students at Hailsham are clones, they are very much alive, with their individual personality, and the ability to think for themselves. The purpose of teaching them in Hailsham is, in a way, their way to give the human clones a reason to live. After all, humans need a purpose to live and it was shown that even though living in Hailsham is not how a normal human being would live, the students have constructed their own lives, making interpretations of things that occurred in their lives, able to articulate their thoughts, and become their own self over time. But, in the story, the students at Hailsham are already destined to have a brief life and die anyway in the end and Kathy was forced to accept this reality.

The preservation of the memory of the past in *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro becomes Kathy H.'s means to cope with her loss by making the act of remembering the past as a way for her to mourn and overcome her melancholia. The trauma that she had experienced that disturbed her is when those close to her, Ruth and Tommy, died. She tried to make sense of what had happened in the past as well as what was happening to herself at present when she was recalling her past, because she is also facing her impending "completion", meaning that she will also die soon. It can be said that by mourning, Kathy H. as a subject can accept her reality of having been separated from the object, in this case, her past, her friendship with Ruth and Tommy, as well as her own mortality. The choice of remembering and not remembering memories that contain traumas of the past is certainly not something that can be considered easy, especially when such memories are reconstructed to make sense of one's identity. For example, in an analysis by Sistani of the novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, it is mentioned that the shaping of one's future in a community is determined by one's choice to remember or not to remember the traumas of the past and such action is a way to cope and to move forward toward a freer future from the trauma (in the case of the novel *Beloved*, it is the trauma of slavery) for the generation to come (Sistani, 2016).

In *Mortality and Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*, a similar sentiment with this analysis is shared in stating that Kathy finds comfort in remembering her past and all the losses as if it serves as a *memento mori*, a reminder that we all will face death in the end (Yeung, 2017). To extend this particular analysis, it can also be said that Kathy remembers her past as a

form of acceptance of her own death in her immediate future. At the end of the book, after she finishes recalling her past, Kathy finally accepts her impending mortality since as stated at the beginning of the book, she had only a few more months until she “completes” her donation.

The fact that Kathy accepted her mortality, confirms the notion that she had come to terms with her identity as someone who lives in this world only to sustain the life of another: the human that she was modeled after. This knowledge is her trauma. This shaped her identity as the main character of the story that makes sense of the world and her place in it.

## CONCLUSION

It can be gathered based on the analysis above Kathy's autonomy as a subject, her free will as a living being, and what it means to be human become the focus and the overall theme of the narrative: human nature versus nurture. In this case, there is no “right” stance or “wrong” stance on the debate but more on addressing this particular issue and how it can affect a person, shaping their identity. Morality is not the focus of the story but rather the humanity. To answer the two research questions above, this article finds that Kathy's memory of the past become her means to mourn, in this case, her own mortality, by giving her a sense of realization of what her true purpose in this world is to sustain the life of another and to die after.

By mourning, Kathy accepted her fate to die after finishing her task as a donor, which is a clone that lives only to die after giving her fourth vital organ. The system of the world in the book does not allow her to escape her fate. It is implied at the end of the story that she was going to donate her final vital organ and she is ready and willing to die. All of these notions in *Never Let Me Go* are told by recalling or by “rewinding the tape”, so to speak, and “never letting go” of one's past.

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