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교육학석사학위논문

Decline of Welfare State in Neoliberal  
Context in *Never Let Me Go*

*Never Let Me Go* 에 나타난 신 자유주의 맥락 속  
복지국가의 몰락

2021 년 8 월

서울대학교 대학원

외국어교육과 영어전공

김준영

# Decline of Welfare State in Neoliberal Context in *Never Let Me Go*

by

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Context in *Never Let Me Go*

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## ABSTRACT

Given a version of Britain that might have existed, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) takes place in the most contemporary period of all his novels: late-1990s Britain. Continuing the anti-Thatcherite discourse present in *The Remains of the Day* (1989), Ishiguro criticizes neoliberalism embedded deeply into the daily life of contemporary Britain. The thesis examines the characters (clones destined to donate organs for humans) that rehearse the neoliberal rhetoric of freedom and self-empowerment but end up facing the System's cruelty that eventually leads to their destruction (they die after giving their last donation). Decisions made by disillusioned characters after their neoliberal fantasies break apart serve as an alternative response to hegemony.

Many critics point to the welfare state as the contemporary historical account that the alternative reality of the novel reflects in the current political climate. The benign environment of Hailsham (the boarding school for clone that the narrator spends her childhood in) and the role as a carer are considered to be part of the System that still continues today: Britain's welfare state. Such critics focus on how the function of the current welfare system is reflected in the novel. Others point to the neoliberal hegemony of the contemporary society as its historical backdrop. In that case, they focus on one aspect of neoliberal ideal that promote free market economy, such as self-aspiration or individualism. Since both claims are not contradicting one another, I claim that both perspectives need to be taken into account in order to give a more comprehensive picture of the history the novel reflects. Hence, my thesis focuses on both the welfare state and neoliberal ideals to reveal author's critical attitude toward a contemporary hegemony which he calls in an interview "American optimism."

Flashback in the novel covers a period starting from the late 1970s to late 1990s, corresponding to three different periods in the story and broadly overlapping with three historical years: the last years of the Welfare State, the years of drastic neoliberal turn under Thatcher and Major administrations, and the following years where neoliberal ideals still prospered under Blair administration. I map the three critical periods in the story to these historical moments to argue that *Never Let Me Go* is a cultural text that reveals individual's alienation and their loss of identity coerced by neoliberalism.

My thesis unfolds as follows. Following the chronological order of the story, the first part compares the values and functions of Hailsham to those of the Welfare State before the neoliberal turn. The second part analyzes the changes in each of the main characters realigning themselves to the ideals promoted by the System. The third chapter depicts images of dismantled freedom and self-empowerment to reflect disillusioned state of each character from their neoliberal ideals. Finally, the last chapter analyzes the response of each disillusioned characters when they are fully aware of their political stance to suggest an alternative response to the hegemony.

Key words: Neoliberalism, Thatcherism, Welfare State, *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro, American Optimism.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	1
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	3
<b>CHAPTER I. Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>CHAPTER II. Hailsham as Emblem of Welfare State</b> .....	16
<b>CHAPTER III. Driving Through Realms of Neoliberalism</b> .....	32
<b>CHAPTER IV. At the Dead End of Neoliberal Myth</b> .....	44
<b>CHAPTER V. Conclusion</b> .....	54
<b>WORKS CITED</b> .....	58
<b>ABSTRACT IN KOREAN</b> .....	61

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

The alternate reality in *Never Let Me Go* (2005) serve as an ideal setting that can make smooth “take off into the realm of metaphor so that people don’t think it is just about Japan or Britain” (*Conversations* 75). Unsurprisingly, much has been written on interpreting the story as an individual’s response to one’s past, personal or cultural trauma in the form of “memory” (Siefert-Pearce 1), “nostalgia” (Drag 141), or “narcissism” (Thomas 173) “that can be applied to all sorts of human situations” (Matthews 119). However, whether the story is intact from the societal and political climate of the times because it is grounded in no locatable historical setting remains to be discussed. With the portrayal of characters that suffer from the ideals that are prevalent in the actual time frame mentioned in the novel, I argue that neoliberalism embedded deeply into the daily life of contemporary Britain is implicitly and explicitly exposed by Ishiguro in *Never Let Me Go* (2005).

The narrator at the beginning of the novel, reveals the period that she is telling the story as late 1990s. With her age given to the readers as thirty-one, the flashback years that she mentions takes her back as far as twenty-five years from late 1990s. Thus, the period in the novel roughly covers the last years of Old Labor which made drastic cuts in capital expenditure compared to previous years (9.2 % according to Ferguson et al, 160) to the rise of New Labor “which lays many of the same themes” (Ferguson et al. 164) in greatly reducing the social spending on welfare. During those years, U.K. has changed dramatically. A country that had often been referred to as ‘the Welfare State’ entered into a period that came to be known as

Neoliberalism that encouraged the transition to ‘the Workfare state.’ (Jessop 355, Torfing 6, Peck 1, Peck and Theodore 428).

As I will discuss later, rather than embracing the value of community and equality as did the postwar government<sup>1</sup>, the values of neoliberalism encouraged freedom through self-empowerment. Characters in *Never Let Me Go* rehearse this neoliberal template by pursuing freedom which in the neoliberal mode came to be identified more and more as “home ownership, private property, individualism, and the liberation of entrepreneurial opportunities” according to Harvey (61).

To examine the relevance of the political interpretation of the novel, the political climate of Ishiguro’s other works will be discussed in the following paragraphs. The relevancy of such interpretation in the first place may actually contradict Ishiguro’s own comment in that he is not interested in delivering culture-specific content, and specifying settings comes last in priority when he writes his novel (Matthews 114-115). The butler that appears in *The Remains of the Day* (1989) can be interpreted as “ordinary, small people to power” (Swift 37) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1982) can be said to be about “liability of normal human beings to see beyond their immediate surroundings” (Mason 341). Even a dystopian novel about clones I will discuss in this thesis is, according to Ishiguro, intended to be about something shared by all human kind (Matthews 119). He claims in an interview that he may be simply “using” the setting as “a piece of orchestration” to bring out his major themes. (Matthews 119).

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<sup>1</sup> According to Harvey, the postwar government provided “full employment, economic growth, and welfare services” to the citizens in order to stabilize postwar consensus (9-10).

“There’s always a tension between the setting you choose and the fact that you want to use that location for universal metaphors, for stories that can be applied to all sorts of human situations. You’ve got to say to your readers that the novel is set in a particular time and place, but hopefully they’ll be able to see that it is also about things that are happening over and over again. The balance is quite difficult, but it is why great books can yield so many different kinds of reading.” (Matthews 119)

Since he aims to deliver a universal theme, setting a story at a particular place and time becomes Ishiguro’s dilemma. Ironically, despite his aim to deliver a theme that is not bound by any specific cultural boundary, he is acclaimed as “a master of the precise representation of specific places and historical circumstances” (Matthews and Groes 3). Those circumstances are “rather obliquely or hauntingly present” (Matthews and Groes 3) in the narration such as in *The Remains of the Day* when Stevens makes his travel during the Suez Crisis (although the crisis is never explicitly mentioned in his narration), or when the backdrop of Shanghai under ruin does not seem to affect the narrator in any noticeable way in *When We Were Orphans* (2000). In both novels, the historical events is never mentioned by the narrator, nor does it affect the actions of the characters. They are nevertheless “deeply embedded” in these narratives, illuminating important depth to the themes exposing “the emotional, moral, and political accountability” or “the nature of the wider or collective responsibility for the course of events” (Matthews and Groes 3). Thus, in this sense, the political and social climates of the specific setting that each protagonist is bound to turn out as essential in illustrating the universal metaphor that Ishiguro so desires to deliver.

Vorda and Herzinger claims that Ishiguro *The Remains of the Day* to be “used as a political tool.” (Vorda and Herzinger 74). The period in the story precisely overlaps with the

Suez Crisis, the event that is pointed out by many historians as the manifestation of the decline of British imperialism and the rising dominance of the United States (Fricke 29). In describing the setting, Ishiguro emphasizes the mythical aspect of it to highlight the exploitative nostalgia aroused by the political climate during the time the novel was written. Ishiguro employs the setting precisely to attack not only Imperial Britain but also contemporary Britain (1980s) at the height of the Thatcher era in which the novel was written. By highlighting the myth of the country as serene and green pastoral countryside, the novel critically comments on the political climate of the time which was identified with the nostalgia for Victorian values. John McCombe illustrates ways in which Ishiguro uses the personal narrative of *The Remains of the Day* to reflect on “a particularly tense moment in Anglo-American relations” (77). He argues that the novel is bound by a social and political climate that necessitates a “dual focus” on individual narrative as well as on historical context (McCombe 77). Decades after the decline of English imperialism, a sense of ‘Englishness’ had resurfaced through Thatcher’s nationalism, ‘Europhobia’, and the evocation of ‘Victorian values’ (Mergenthal 1998). Elif Ö ztabak-Avcı claims that *The Remains of the Day* aims to attack this “master narrative of ‘Englishness’” (49).

Whether from the the Suez Crisis that manifested the decline of British imperial power or the exploitation of British colonization, history is intricately linked to the personal trauma of the protagonists as their private narratives “fill the long spaces between the historic battles, the treaties, the summits, and the incidents of public record” (Lang 151). Ishiguro clarifies in an interview with Sean Matthews that individual lives are all “part of that society and generation” and that they cannot stand outside of it (Matthews 115). In other words, Kathy, the main character of *Never Let Me Go*, like all other characters who are according to Ishiguro, “very much part of his society and generation” (Matthews and Groes 115) cannot stand apart from the system in which the narrative is located and the larger world that covers the period

from the late 60s until late 90s.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike all of his previous novels that use real history as the backdrop, *Never Let Me Go* entails an alternative reality, or in Ishiguro's words, "a version of Britain that might have existed by the late twentieth century if just one or two things had gone differently on the scientific front" ("Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro"). With a version of Britain that might have existed, the period is the most contemporary of all his novels. Most of it is recognizable except for the one or two things that had gone very differently in late 1990s England. Among his other works, the historical background that most closely resembles the setting of the novel is found in his Teleplay *The Gourmet* (1987). Also carrying the dystopian notion of harvesting organs, and situated in a similar period, *The Gourmet* shows features recognizable in *Never Let Me Go*. The teleplay involves a protagonist, who is a wealthy middle-class gastronome on a quest driven by his desire to eat a ghost. While staying at a church solely for this purpose, he succeeds in catching one but feels sick after actually devouring it. Here, eating another human or human like being (although a ghost) is as much a cannibalism as harvesting human organs that appear in *Never Let Me Go*. They both can be seen as "a metaphor in which the middle-class comfort and wealth are retained by the exploitation of the subaltern, the working class" (Groes and Veyret 35).

The political commentary in the work is so strong and evident that Groes and Veyret summarize it as "a politicized tragicomic gothic tale exposing the social and cultural catastrophe of Thatcherism" (32). *The Gourmet* actually begins in 1904 and then transitions

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<sup>2</sup> Ishiguro states that to "some extent there is a similar situation in *Never Let Me Go*. The characters nonetheless are very much part of that community, and they cannot stand outside it. This is why they're so passive about what they're being told to do; they cannot stand outside their situations as individuals." (Matthews 115)

right into the contemporary of 1985, juxtaposing the present London with the pre-war period London to emphasize the change in the social climate, especially, the “amoral ideology of Thatcherite notion” in which religion is replaced by “godless amoral ideology of market forces and free-market capitalism” (Groes and Veyret 38). The dystopian and gothic elements in *The Gourmet*, and also in other postmodern London Gothic writers such as Angela Carter, Iain Sinclair, and Peter Ackroyd (Todd 164-197, Luckhurst 527-546) point to the fall of collective moral values and the problematic aspects of Victorian moralism to highlight the problem of the Thatcherite notion of idealized Victorian Britain, that is, Britain at its peak of imperialism.

According to Antony Mullen, the anti-Thatcherite discourse present in *The Remains of the Day* and even more prevalent in *The Gourmet* also prevails in *Never Let Me Go* as “Ishiguro challenges elements of the Thatcherite discourse surrounding individualism” (13). Mullen asserts that the story portrays Ishiguro’s critical attitude toward individual aspiration promoted by Thatcher, through “the unfulfilled ambitions” (1) of the main characters – Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy. Agreeing with this argument, I further claim that the novel’s one of the significant moments not only illuminates but also twists Margaret Thatcher’s mocking reference to Welfare State as a ‘nanny state’ coddled by the overtaxed British citizens (Hall “The Great” 29).

In one scene of the novel, Kathy interprets the lyrics of the song entitled “Never Let Me Go” to picture a mother desperately holding on to her baby afraid that the baby might be taken away from her. Playing the role of a mother, and imagining the pillow to be her baby, she dances to the song tightly holding the pillow. The very scene is spotted and later recalled by Madam interprets what she saw as ‘two different worlds’ (272). She tells Kathy,

“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” (272)

Before hearing her interpretation, Kathy had mistakenly believed that Madam had seen through her mind in imagining the pillow as a baby. The misunderstanding between the clone Kathy and non-clone Madam bears a resemblance to a conversation in *The Gourmet* when the homeless man asks Manley whether he has ever eaten from a refuse bin. Manley mistakenly interprets it to mean “a commentary on the processes of cultural production” (Groes and Veyret, 36). The homeless man had asked the question, expecting to be taken literally, word for word. But Manley, a wealthy middle-class man, interprets it metaphorically and gives a bizarre answer: “An interesting process takes place inside a refuse bin. A kind of stewing pot of randomness. The chance factor often produces recipes far beyond the capabilities of ordinary imaginations.” (*The Gourmet* 111). Of course, the ‘refuse bin’ mentioned by Manley here is very different from the one mentioned by the homeless man.

If the miscommunication between the two characters mockingly illustrates the apparent difference in class, contrary to Thatcherite’s emphasis on classless politics, Kathy’s misunderstanding in interpreting Madam, may deliver the similar implication of clear disparity that exists between clones and nonclones despite how “humanlike” Kathy is. However, if Madam’s metaphorical interpretation is linked to a backdrop of historical events in which Kathy cannot understand due to her limited access to the outside world, the kind old world and the coming cruel new world involve the historical and political context surrounding Kathy. The transition from the kind old world to the cruel new world reflects the transition of the “outside” world in which the story takes place: the late 60s to late 90s that mark the transition of a welfare



state to a workfare state.

The Keynesian demand management had, according to Thatcher, “mistakenly” intervened in the economy. What the state viewed as a task such as “redistributing wealth, universalizing life-chances, attacking unemployment, and protecting the socially vulnerable” (Hall “The Neoliberal” 707) had put the nation in a state worse than before by enervating the moral fiber, eroding personal responsibility and undermining the overriding duty of the poor to work (Hall “The Neoliberal” 707). Therefore, the neo-conservatives asserted that the government should play only the minimum role of safeguarding the right of private capital necessary to *grow the business* without trying to disturb the natural link of competitive capitalism. Thus, it could be said that the failings of the 1945 welfare state built on Keynesian principle became the constructive framework for Thatcher and Major administrations. As the monetarist principles of Thatcher popularized, the support for the Keynesian system of benefits declined. More people came to picture a welfare beneficiary as a welfare “scavenger.” In other words, more and more people came to believe that those who received benefits did so because of their lifestyle choice. According to Deeming and Johnston, such an attitudinal shift is still an ongoing process as their analysis reveals that British citizens became more anti-welfare over the last three decades (410). Thus, the Thatcher government had successfully initiated the lasting transition from welfare to workfare state. The more efficient, but harsh and cruel world, as Madam described, came to replace an old kind world.

The cruel new world differed greatly from the kind old world in the perspective of welfare beneficent. The neoliberal values promoted by Thatcher stood in direct contrast to those upheld by the Welfare State. While Keynesian doctrine embraced state intervention and *the concept of community* (“The Neoliberal” 710), Thatcher made the infamous quote that

“there is no such thing as society” (Thatcher, “No Such Thing as Society ”). The former attempted to set the foundation on “the common good,” while the latter proclaimed that the common good either did not exist or was too contradictory to be calculated. The former consensus aimed for ‘justice’ that involved “intervention against unemployment, social insurance for the less well-off and the struggle against poverty” (“The Neoliberal” 711) while the main objective in the neoliberal mode aimed for freedom that entailed "homeownership, private property, individualism, and the liberation of entrepreneurial opportunities" (Harvey 707).

Individual freedom emphasized by neoliberalism establishes the basis of the hegemonic rationale for free market operations. The governmentality of neoliberalism, therefore, as claimed by Foucault, succeeded in defining the social sphere as an economic domain (Lemke 222). Thus, the strong interchangeable link in individual freedom and market freedom pushed the desire for social justice and social change into the private sphere, replacing concern for social fragmentation and economic displacement caused by the global market with a concern for the pursuit of the good life (Friedman 1-34, Turner 35-66). In embracing the notion that personal empowerment is a key to political liberation, subjects of neoliberalism formed “an adaptive and harmonious relationship with domination” (Brown 22). In other words, the government succeeded in turning its citizens into “auto-regulation and auto-governing selves” (Goh 10).

Protagonists observed by Goh in Chang-Rae Lee’s *A Gesture Life* (1999), Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* (1994), and *The Remains of the Day* all written in the context of neoliberalism are governed by present “techniques, rationalities, technologies, and strategies” that make them embody auto-governing

selves (Goh 10). Such governmentality of neoliberalism embedded deeply into the contemporary life of Britain is also implicitly and explicitly exposed by Ishiguro in *Never Let Me Go*. Unlike the novels that Goh analyzes for self-empowerment that rehearse the neoliberal template through characters driven by unshattered neoliberal ideals, *Never Let Me Go* offers a more comprehensive picture of the hegemony by also revealing the disillusion and cruelty of the system through the cruel reality that awaits the characters.

Three different periods in the story broadly overlapping with historical years of the decline of the Welfare State, the drastic neoliberal turn, and the Thatcher and Major administrations, I argue that *Never Let Me Go* is a cultural text that focuses on individual's alienation and their loss of identity coerced by a system identified as Welfare State at first and neoliberalism at the end. The thesis will follow the chronological order of the story: 1) Kathy's childhood in Hailsham, 2) her young adulthood spent in Cottage, and lastly, 3) her contemporary moments working as a carer.

In the first chapter, I will compare Hailsham, a privately run boarding school for clones, with the functions and values of the Welfare State. Historically, Kathy's earliest memories in Hailsham roughly corresponds to the last years of the Old Labour and the early years of neoconservative possibilities under Thatcher. The role of 'guardians' who appear as teachers and keepers of Hailsham will also be analyzed as an emblem of the State. As the period progresses toward the diminishing end of the compromise, the activities and conducts of the students embody the rising free market values of the beginning neoliberal era. Students who have been raised in a place with very limited privacy and reigning collectivity, (and the place was probably found for common good for all including clones), gradually embrace the dominant notion of the free market.

The second chapter roughly takes place near the end of the 1980s coinciding with the Thatcher administration at the peak of its popularity. Characters leave Hailsham and reside in a place called Cottage. There, they realign and strengthen the neoliberal idea of self in various ways. Ruth, by exploring her 'possible' (humans whom they were cloned after), imagines her 'possible' future that they all know will never take place. Kathy also examines her sexual urge embodying the neoliberal self that defines one's sexuality as the truth of one's identity. Tommy, hoping for a deferral (a belief that clones, who are destined to "donate" their organs at some point, may receive a temporary deferral if their drawings reveal that they are in love), puts immense effort into his drawing. All the pursuits for their mistaken illusions, which will make their life more *meaningful*, resemble the happiness imperative asserted by Sara Ahmed in her book *The Promise of Happiness* in which under the current ideological hegemony the pursuit of happiness has become a "duty" for self-fulfillment (9).

The last phase of the novel takes place within the last twelve years she served as a carer, which would roughly correspond from the late 80s to 90s, the last years of Major government, and the rise of New Labor under Tony Blair. In the third chapter, the characters, who are now living as remnants of welfare in a neoliberal world, reunites with each other in a recovery center. Tommy and Ruth have already begun their "donations" (extracting their organs which happen three to four times until their death), and Kathy has been working as a carer. The pride in her profession as a carer and in her anticipation for deferral for her 'genuine' love with Tommy shows that she has yet to be disillusioned (another rumor in Hailsham about deferral, this time, on 'genuine love'). Unfortunately, Kathy and Tommy, who encounter their former guardians, Madam and Miss. Emily, hear directly from them that no such thing had ever existed from the beginning. In this chapter, characters realize their position as a victim in the bigger historical and political context. Through the loss of Hailsham and their experiences as a carer and donors,

they begin to realize and accept their position in the neoliberal world. Their awareness of their position is portrayed through various images that they see and imagine in their head. However, such awareness still blurs and is not without hope of escaping their destined end. The final blow of guardians provides them with the historical and political context surrounding them and strips off their only hope of escaping their bleak fate.

In conclusion, the thesis examines the decisions made by disillusioned characters after their neoliberal fantasies break apart and suggests that those decisions serve as an alternative response to hegemony. Through their decisions to cling onto their memories and to one another, the characters make a choice to self-fulfillment that they know now as false. Well aware that the alienation caused by the system is not something that they can overcome in their private spheres, Kathy chooses to cling to her historical trauma by constantly going back to it. Her choice runs contrary to the neoliberal imperative that forces people to pursue a happy life by overcoming any repression that holds them back. When the illusion of Eros overcoming systematic alienation is shattered to nothing more than a false promise, ironically, Kathy and Tommy come to genuinely value each other as their relationship at last consists of the least intention to use the other for the fulfillment of self. No longer driven by the illusion of freedom through self-empowerment, Kathy and Tommy become more willing to connect with others. For instance, Kathy finds Tommy spending more time with other donors, while Kathy can empathize with the donors she tends to, willing to share what is even most dear to her: her memory of Hailsham. Stripped of neoliberal value that tells her to move on, Kathy puts no effort to overcome those traumatic memories. Instead, she willingly chooses to go back to it from time to time, stopping to dwell on the remains of others, the memories of the community she shared, metaphorically embodied as Norfolk.

## CHAPTER II

### Hailsham as Emblem of Welfare State

According to Cambridge Dictionary, “Hail” means “to publicly praise or show approval” (“Hail”) while “sham” indicates “something that is not what it seems to be and is intended to deceive people” (“sham”). The combination of the two leads to mean praising something deceptive. Whether or not Ishiguro was intentional in this, the name penetrates the essence of its role in the context of neoliberalism. As a private boarding school for clones with facility and education incomparably superior to those government homes where most clones are reared in conditions too despicable to even mention, Hailsham has been a utopia known to clones, one of the few places where they were not treated as infrastructures, and made those clones feel safe and secure. The place is hailed among clones as one place that is benign and kind to them and makes the world seem not so cruel after all. Yet, the harmless place has ultimately nurtured a “collectivity of sheep waiting to be eaten” (Robbins 202) with their tragic fate and repressed them through a strategic and meticulously planned education. What appeared as a harmless shelter ends up aligning those under its care with the cruel reality, to serve as excellent carers and donors in the context of a profit-driven society.

Hailsham’s benign environment is linked to the memory of a clone’s tranquil and innocent youth (Teo 43). The tranquil landscape linked to nostalgia is also found in Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* where the atmosphere of such nostalgia the setting creates is intended as a mock nostalgia which the text attempts to deconstruct as a site of moral decay aroused by xenophobic and reactionary nationalism. Ishiguro intends to portray the good old world of England in the text that represents the nostalgia for mythic England used as a political tool by

the Conservatives to recall the lost glory resulting from “socialized” politics (Ishiguro, “Interview” 139). However, the tranquility and innocence of Hailsham that clones leave behind does not resemble the similar Conservative atmosphere in *The Remains of the Day* because while the tranquil scenery of England in *The Remains of the Day* represents a political tool aroused by a xenophobic atmosphere that views outside influence as a threat, the same atmosphere (the fear of those who are different) fosters the destruction of Hailsham in *Never Let Me Go*. People’s fear of superior clones who would take their place in society diminished the support of Hailsham. Ms. Emily explains how it all came to an end:

“It concerned a scientist called James Morningdale, quite talented in his way. He carried on his way. He carried on his work in a remote part of Scotland, where I suppose he thought he’d attract less attention. What he wanted was to offer people the possibility of having children with enhanced characteristics. Superior intelligence, superior athleticism, that sort of thing. Of course, there’d been others with similar ambitions, but this Morningdale fellow, he’d taken his research much further than anyone before him, far beyond legal boundaries. Well, he was discovered, they put an end to his work and that seemed to be that. Except, of course, it wasn’t for us. As I say, it never became an enormous matter. But it did create a certain atmosphere, you see. It reminded people, reminded them of a fear they’d always had. It’s one thing to create students, such as yourselves, for the donation program. But a generation of created children who’d take their place in society? Are children demonstrably superior to the rest of us? Oh no. That frightened people. They recoiled from that.” (264).

Another notable difference between nostalgia concerning Hailsham in *Never Let Me Go* and that aroused by mythical England in *The Remains of the Day* is the degree of change in the

attitude of each narrator at the end. In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens overturns the lessons of Hayes Society, no longer dwelling on nostalgia but moving on to live his life following his desires around his interests (Goh 53). However, Kathy, even after she is disillusioned with Hailsham's role in the cruel reality, chooses to dwell in its memories and shows no intention of getting over it. Nostalgia is something to be overcome in *The Remains of the Day* but the only thing that one can hold onto until the end in the latter. If the former was used for bashing the Right's Xenophobia, the latter portrays what happens as a result of such phobia. Therefore, while carrying the same Anti-Thatcherite notion in *The Remains of the Day*, the novel appears less critical toward the post-war liberal world or the welfare state that Hailsham represents.

By providing clones collective lives under the care of guardians, the institution upholds values very similar to that of a welfare state. I will further elaborate on this resemblance by analyzing the role and function of Hailsham in three major areas: its caretakers known as Guardians, its infrastructure, and lastly, the education it provides. The very foundation and the dual role it plays resonate with the voices of its advocates as well as the critics' view of the welfare state.

“Whatever else, we at least saw to it that all of you in our care, you grew up in wonderful surroundings. And we saw to it too, after you left us, you were kept away from the worst of those horrors. We were able to do that much for you at least” (261).

Here, Ms. Emily, the founder and the leading figure of Hailsham, explains that the institution played a vital role in alleviating the worst possible treatment of clones, protecting them, at least for a limited time, from the harshness of the outside world. To that end, she had to “fight the battle for many years” (263) against the world that preferred to believe that the organs used for the cure “appeared from nowhere, or at most that they grew in a kind of vacuum” (262), not



from clones who can think and look just like them. When people began to reluctantly question the source of organs, they convinced themselves that the clones were “less than humans, so it didn’t matter” (263). Hence, Hailsham had been founded as a vocal movement that demonstrated that if clones “were reared in humane, cultivated environments, they could grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being” (261).

While it was clear that Hailsham had been brought into the world as a tide against the mainstream ignorance, nonetheless, the school did nothing to end the donation program. It could not even grant the clones under its care a temporary relief from their tragic fate. When Kathy and Tommy audaciously approached their former instructors at Hailsham in hopes of receiving such relief rumored among the clones as deferral, the truth is revealed that the rumor had never been true.<sup>3</sup> Not only is Hailsham unable to challenge the absurdity of humanely rearing clones for their inhumane destiny, but Bruce Robbins goes so far as to say that such institutions divert the clones’ attention from encountering systematic injustice (206). Kelly Rich also highlights the role of Hailsham that seeks to supplement this injustice with the humanizing superstructures (185). To both Robbins and Rich, the alternative reality of the novel reflects the current political climate in that the institution as well as the characters carry a deep resemblance of a welfare state (Robbins 206, Rich *State* 185).

Hailsham, an institution advocating for the rights of clones, calls forth recognition of clones as human like beings, but at the same time, its philanthropists do nothing to challenge the donation program that exploits the organs of clones. Stefanie Fricke further claims that it stabilizes the system “by giving it a more humane appearance and instilling society’s values

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<sup>3</sup> Miss Emily clearly tells them “But this dream of yours, this dream of being able to defer. Such a thing would always have been beyond us to grant, even at the height of our influence” (261).

and ideology into the clones” (33). These dual functions of Hailsham ring parallel to Ian Gough and James O’Connor’s criticism of the welfare state. They highlight their role in securing capitalism by providing services and a healthy well-educated workforce that ultimately increases productivity and reduce the cost of industry (Lowe 33). Also, by eradicating the worst abuses of capitalism, the welfare state legitimizes capitalism and installs a general impression of social justice. However, just as the movement of Hailsham has been a voice against the tide that preferred to think of clones less than humans, the set of values of welfare state contradicts those of capitalism, referred to as a “Trojan horse within the citadels of capitalism” (Dearlove and Saunders 319). This dual role of the welfare state as criticized by Marxist sociologist Ian Fergusson, Michael Lavalette, and Gerry Mooney in *Rethinking Welfare* eradicates the worst abuses of capitalism but ultimately “does not alter the fundamental exploitative relations of society which cause so much harm in the first place” (2) as shown in the revelation that Hailsham did nothing to end the donation program. Like in Bertolt Brecht’s poem, *A Bed for the Night*,<sup>4</sup> it had provided a bed for a night to a homeless, a temporary haven from the harshness of reality.

### 1. Pastoral Rule of Guardians

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<sup>4</sup> I hear that in New York  
At the corner of 26th Street and Broadway  
A man stands every evening during the winter months  
And gets beds for the homeless there  
By appealing to passers-by.

It won’t change the world  
It won’t improve relations among men  
It will not shorten the age of exploitation  
But a few men have a bed for the night  
For a night the wind is kept from them  
The snow meant for them falls on the roadway.

The caretakers of Hailsham known as guardians carried out the role of Hailsham in sheltering the clones, by deceiving them about their real place in the world. The care and protection provided by guardians induce the clones to forget their infrastructural status in the society and pacify their otherwise bleak future. Ms. Emily acknowledges their deceptive role when she expresses a satisfaction at Kathy's unease to her comment that people questioned their souls (260),

A thin smile appeared on her face. "It's touching, Kathy, to see you so taken aback. It demonstrates, in a way, that we did our job well. As you say, why would anyone doubt you had a soul? But I have to tell you, my dear, it wasn't something commonly held when we first set out all those years ago(260).

Ms. Emily makes plain through her smile the guardians' role in pastoring the clones so that they would take for granted the existence of their souls, or in other words, have no doubt about their humanity. However, at the same time, the guardians with their scheme and plans nurtured the clones as healthy willing organ donors, rearing them to accept their "special" destiny laid out for them by the state without questioning it. For this end, guardians play a dual role of caring and protecting the clones but at the same time subtly instilling the society's values and ideology in them. Robbins points to Miss Lucy especially as representing a welfare state, in which the main role is not simply alleviating the worst abuses but bearing the anger caused by the system's deeply embedded injustice (Robbins, 207). I further claim that all guardians represent the welfare state in educating and treating the clones as beings with souls indeed, while, at the same time, assisting them to come to terms with their infrastructural role in the bigger world.

Hailsham, an institution that Kathy spent her entire childhood from late 60s to 70s, represents a time period just before the neoliberal turn of Britain with policies of Thatcher and

Raegan took place. The governing rationality of the authority figures of Hailsham is markedly different from that of neoliberal hegemony that emphasizes self-governing and freedom. According to Foucault, before a movement from “the pastoral of souls to the political government of men” (“Security” 227) took place, rulers exercised pastoral power in which they acted as a shepherd, taking care of the welfare of his sheep, while those under his care gave the rulers his or her abiding loyalty and obedience (Goh 183). Within the novel, the end of Hailsham represents a break from the pastoral model and the rise of liberalism as political rationality. The authority figures of Hailsham exercise pastoral power over the clones, who become their collective sheep. In their rumor that their artwork showed what their souls were like inside, they gave the guardians the right to exercise exhaustive jurisdiction over their souls. However, this pastoral relationship is also a deceptive one in that the shepherds never quite considered the clones as their sheep and could not guarantee their welfare, let alone salvation of their souls, from the beginning.

Ms. Emily especially, as their headmistress, tells the clones that she “did all the worrying and questioning” (260) for them, so that they could carry on without a care and that while she remained steadfast, everyone in the school did too. Her belief was true to a certain extent because Kathy admits that, although they did not fully understand why, Ms. Emily’s presence gave them a sense of security in Hailsham.<sup>5</sup> The security of sheep depended on the shepherd’s firm conviction. Likewise, the sheep looked to the shepherd for approval and atonement for

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<sup>5</sup> Kathy narrates, “We were all pretty scared of her and didn’t think of her in the way we did the other guardians. But we considered her to be fair and respected her decisions; and even in the Juniors, we probably recognized that it was her presence, intimidating though it was, that made us all feel so safe at Hailsham” (39).

their wrong doings. Whenever Ms. Emily showed anger to any of the clones, they would feel “dreadful” and even with no negative consequences, “wanted to do something straight away” (44) to redeem their souls.

Even with such unquestioned authority over clones, Ms. Emily admitted that she had to fight against not just those outside who claimed that the clones were less than humans but also against her own feelings of dread in seeing them as properly human (269). By confessing her own dread, she admits of the firm barrier that exists between the guardians and the clones. Despite such feelings, she does not pursue those feelings but rather represses them to continue “doing what was right” (269). Such repression is embodied throughout the whole program of Hailsham itself as “Hailsham’s great trick is to refuse its infrastructural status: it shelters its clones from the outside world for as long as they remain under its care” (Rich, “States” 190).

Clones imitate flock with their loyalty when they pretend to be secret guards for their favorite guardian. In their fantasy, they suspect and make a list of people plotting to kidnap their favorite guardian. However, no matter how much convinced they are of their own fantasy, deep down, they managed to find a reason not to challenge the suspects, avoiding any direct confrontation. Thus, Kathy and her friends made sure their scheme stayed within the bounds of fantasy, never attempting to merge it with reality. At the same time, they are unwilling to cross the line of perceiving its fallacy, because, as Kathy narrates, they were not prepared to cross the line to find “something harder and darker” awaiting them beyond that line. This precarious game of loyalty more accurately reflects the relationship the clones share with their guardians: the rulers treat the clones with care and discipline, but never encourage them to challenge the bounds outside of Hailsham and repress the knowledge of what life will be like outside “in some vague way” (116).

The guardians repressed the knowledge of donation so that clones “take it in at some

level,” and the information is in their heads without having them examine it properly (82). Miss Lucy might be the only shepherd that clearly exposes the fate awaiting them outside of Hailsham, pointing to the specific details of the process that had rather been kept in the dark.

“You’ll become adults, then before you’re old, before you’re even middle-aged, you’ll start to donate your vital organs. That’s what each of you was created to do. You’re not like the actors you watch on your videos; you’re not even like me. You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided. So you’re not to talk that way anymore. You’ll be leaving Hailsham before long, and it’s not so far off, the day you’ll be preparing for your first donations. You need to remember that. If you’re to have decent lives, you have to know who you are and what lies ahead of you, every one of you” (81).

Miss Lucy performs a role of welfare state that goes beyond being “just a therapeutic agency that preserves the system by cushioning its worst blows and dispelling violent anger” (Robbins 207). For clones to have decent lives, she had told them they needed to cross the bounds and know what is lying beyond. Later again, she erupted into outbursts when she told Tommy that it was not his fault that he is not creative, and that “it was wrong for anyone, whether they were students or guardians, to punish him for it, or put pressure on him in any way. It simply wasn’t his fault” (28). Miss Lucy seemed to counter the myth that Hailsham is deceptively maintaining: that being creative matters and would make a difference in their lives. Her comments alleviated the rage in Tommy by having him accept that it is not his fault. Thus, although Miss Lucy appears to counter the values of Hailsham, ultimately, she functions in a way similar to Hailsham with her rage resulting from her refusal to see clones as infrastructure entities just like Hailsham’s treatment of clones as humans. Robbins labels Miss Lucy as “a bearer of anger” (Robbins 207), who displays a more sympathetic role of welfare state than

that of simply alleviating the worst pains. The purpose of her outburst shares the altruistic objective also found in Hailsham: she wants her students to have more decent lives by knowing the truth, while Hailsham conceals it to give them a decent childhood so they can cherish it for the rest of their lives.

## 2. **Benign Infrastructure of Hailsham**

Hailsham's kind, beautiful boarding school environment denies the rationalizing logic of neoliberalism which informs clones about their infrastructural fate with "bare-bones infrastructures." At the same time, however, Rich points out that these humanizing superstructures supplement the cruel world by feeding the clones back to the larger system (Rich, "State" 185) by its palliative effect in assuaging the bleak reality for clones. But the architectural arrangement that leaves them no privacy to communicate secrecy succeeds in having clones internalize the disciplinary gaze of the guardians. The beautiful boarding school as well as its surroundings also foster the fear of uncertainty and a sense of surveillance that ultimately rear them as a collective sheep that will be sacrificed to the cruel hands of the System.

With sports pavilion like "those sweet little cottages people always had in picture books," (6) a pond "with ducks and bulrushes and pond-weed" (6) and the North Playing Field where a dozen boys can play football, Hailsham embodies wonderful surroundings as emphasized by Miss Emily (261). Its benign environment, according to Rich, serves as a meaning making superstructure either to forestall or repress the knowledge in clones of their infrastructural purpose (191). While Hailsham provides infrastructure far superior to those provided by the government under the neoliberal logic, I disagree with Rich that "the cultural attachments it offers to the clones are merely palliative" (*States* 192) because the way it is arranged also entails a disciplinary structure that forces one to internalize disciplinary practices as discussed by

Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*.

According to Foucault, architectural devices can also embody discipline on people like Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon that arranges the building in a way that makes it possible for an observer to see all inmates without him being seen (Foucault 1991a: 202-203). In Hailsham, with its collective living, all places are not fit for a secret talk as "the whole place seemed to sense it within minutes" (22). Ironically as Foucault describes how darkness afforded the prisoners protection against the daylight and the overseer's gaze (Foucault 1980f: 147), Kathy describes the crowded "lunch ques as one of the better places to have a private talk" (22) rather than quiet ones because those places carried the risk of being overheard by people passing by. Even in one of the most tranquil places as a pond, she has to worry about being overheard through the sound travelling across the water as well as by the people who could be eavesdropping by crouching in the bushes (22). Such arrangement with maximum visibility forces one to act as if one is constantly being watched, internalizing the disciplinary gaze so that even when the prison guards or those who are more benignly referred to as guardians in *Never Let Me Go* are not there, the clones will still behave as if they are being watched. This partly explains why it is impossible for them to escape their cruel fate and also explains why Hailsham is so special to them.

Other core places of Hailsham that regulate their behavior of running away are the dark woods and the fence that marks the end of Hailsham boundary. The presence of dark fringe of trees in the woods was like "they cast a shadow over the whole of Hailsham" (50). The woods were positioned in a place where they just had to turn their heads or "move towards a window and there they'd be, looming in the distance" (50). The grotesque rumors concerned a boy who attempted to run away but whose body was found two days later tied to a tree with the hands



and feet chopped off (50). Another rumor involved a girl who “climbed over a fence just to see what it was like outside” (50) but was not allowed to return back and so wandered off in the woods as a ghost. Such rumors caused students to be terrified of the woods.

Looking at the wood became a form of punishment the students imposed on each other as they internalized the regulation and discipline of the institution, strictly observing the behavior code promoted by the school. For instance, when the school’s emphasis on the harmful effects of smoking made talking about it a taboo, a student asking the guardian whether she herself ever had a cigarette was wholly unacceptable. The students punished the girl by “hauling her out of bed, holding her face against the window pane and ordering her to look up at the wood” (51) because by asking that question, she had done something “embarrassing” to them all. This reveals how discipline is operating as a form of self-regulation and how collective guilt and shame arise from the collective identity of the students.

Fence also plays a similar role as the woods in that it marks the boundary of Hailsham that the students must not cross. Their desire for freedom as exposed in the student’s chanting to see “the American jump over the barbed wire” (111) in a movie entitled *The Great Escape* is repressed by the presence of the fence. This is most clearly revealed when students impersonate a soldier committing suicide by touching an electrocuted fence thinking how funny it would be to live in a place “you could commit suicide any time you liked just by touching a fence” (78). Rich aptly points out that such a scene reveals “part coping mechanism, part registration of the horror of their bounded, controlled lives” (“States” 193). However, I add to this that the response Miss Lucy shows afterwards reinforces the restrictive behavior permeating the school.

Then—I kept watching carefully—she pulled herself together, smiled and said: “It’s

just as well the fences at Hailsham aren't electrified. You get terrible accidents sometimes." She said this quite softly, and because people were still shouting, she was more or less drowned out. But I heard her clearly enough. "You get terrible accidents sometimes." What accidents? Where? But no one picked her up on it, and we went back to discussing our poem. (78)

By commenting about the "terrible accident", Miss Lucy in a way admitted the harmful effects that can happen to those who attempt to escape through the fence. Her vague comment about accidents aroused unease and a sense of uncertainty in the narrator. Thus, the statement itself succeeds in imposing an uncertain fear of crossing the fence. Such fear aroused by a sense of uncertainty is also present in Miss Emily as Kathy describes her as the guardian that they "were all scared of" (39), and although she does not explain exactly why one predictable cause can be a sense of uncertainty she aroused among students. Whenever a student has violated a rule in front of her, "there was no predicting" (44) of how she would react to it: "Sylvie may have got a full portion that time, but when Laura got caught running through the rhubarb patch, Miss Emily just snapped: "Shouldn't be here, girl. Off you go," and walked on" (44). This fear of uncertainty is more explicitly stated when Tommy explains to Kathy that what worries him so much about his fourth donation is caused by the uncertainty of whether he will end his life afterward. He would not be as worried if he only knew, but he would never be told for sure what would happen to him (279). Such fear provoked by a sense of uncertainty is also prevalent in the education of Hailsham through the "told and not told" (88) method.

### 3. "Told and not Told" Method of Education

Education in Hailsham is equally deceptive in that while humanizing the clones with literature, music, and geography lessons, such harmless information distracts them from clearly

perceiving the reality of their fate. Information concerning donation is “told and not told” (73), implying that they are “special,” not because of their divine self-worth, but rather because of the role they will fulfill in the future: the donation of their organs. Information concerning donation is vaguely given to them and also in careful doses so that by the time they leave Hailsham, they are fully aware of what lies ahead of them.

Tommy suggests that the guardians had, throughout all their years at Hailsham, timed very carefully and deliberately everything they told them so that they had a vague idea of donation even as early as seven (82). Such information is “told and not told” (76) through careful strategies and planning so that when they are older, they find out more about the details of donation but nothing hits them as a surprise because somehow, they have always been informed about it. One of these subtle mechanisms that build up their notion of donation lies in the way Madam collects their artwork. Since they were young, the notion of having their works taken away by Madame had been considered a great triumph (38). Soon enough, mentioning someone’s work as good enough to be taken to the Gallery (the supposed place where Madam displayed all their artwork) had become a huge compliment (32). A sense of honor and privilege of having their works taken away bears an odd resemblance to the special respect displayed by the doctors and nurses when a donor goes on to his/her fourth donation (278). Most donors usually pass away after giving their third donation. Thus, donor who is able to give fourth donation is treated with special respect by medical nurses and doctors that are involved in the donation process. Thus, it could be said that Hailsham attempted to institute the notion of honor and privilege in the process of exploiting what had been rightfully theirs.

To view all the aspects of education carried out by Hailsham as contributing factors in rendering them as an effective medical supply is certainly wrong as the institution had been a

voice against the tide of neoliberal rationale. Although somehow the students knew that they were different from the non-clone humans (referred to as ‘normals’ in the book), they did not know what that meant, partly because they were treated like normals. Certainly “a sizable superstructure of meaning-making” (Rich 635) practices have contributed to such consciousness when the school merited the artwork of each student with exchangeable tokens. The value of their masterpiece, determined by guardians, was exchanged into respective tokens that they could use to buy the artwork of other students (16). Such practice encouraged not only the children’s aspirations to excel as pointed out by Robbins (206), but in a more general sense, their humanism because it involved a process that was distinctly human in the perspective of Marxists. Marx conceived work as a creativity that distinguished man from animals. Mankind used their “creative abilities to produce goods which they would consume, exchange or sell” (Ferguson et al. 83). However, the school’s value in promoting humanism in clones by giving them full control over their production conflicted with the notion of donation that enforced the loss of such control.

The practice of acquiring personal possessions by exchanging their goods priced by tokens developed in students a keen eye for pricing up anything that they produced. This enabled them to perceive the injustice apparent in the act of Madam, taking away their artworks in the name of donation. Students began to question whether it was fair for her to take their best artwork without giving them any token in exchange. The controversy triggered one of them to go up to their head guardian, Miss Emily, to demand their rights for tokens. Nurtured as a sheep under the overriding authority of a shepherd, Kathy recalled the act as so radical as to be called “suicidal” (39). One important implication highlighted by the incident is that students were capable of perceiving the injustice involved in the process of exploitation. The question remains then as to why students did not go up to Miss Emily to demand their rights

for their organs. The answer lies in the attitude of the students regarding the donation process, which is subtly manipulated by the school's authority figures.

Hailsham, while vaguely informing students of their identities and their roles in the bigger society, manipulated their attitudes so that rather than properly examining what lies ahead, students chose to avoid the subject altogether or treat it lightly as if a joke. The unease and the awkwardness in the guardians dealing with such an issue placed the subject in the territory of embarrassment and inappropriateness (69). When they reach the age at which they were fully capable of perceiving the seriousness of their situation, the students were required to develop a coping mechanism by turning the whole process into a joke (84). The guardians played an active role in rendering such manipulation as they got older, by more explicitly bringing out into the surface the information of their donation followed up by their provocative lecture on sex (83). Covering up the process of donation with a more provocative subject, the guardians with these deliberate teaching skills hindered the students from properly examining the subject as it was. It can even be said that such a strategy forced them to think of the donation process as more or less similar to sex, the natural process of their body. The education of Hailsham all in all managed to smuggle into their heads the basic facts of their future while forming attitudes that enabled them to come to terms with the deep injustice of the System.

## CHAPTER III

### Driving Through the Realms of Neoliberalism

“To some extent, it's American values spreading round the world. And this can be a very positive thing in that you don't restrict yourself, you strive to fulfill your potential. I guess what I'm saying is that, on the other hand, there can be casualties of that kind of worldview. You put a lot of demands on yourself for that reason, because the flip side of saying, "Yes, you can achieve anything" is, "I haven't achieved very much; it must be my fault.””

“...But I'm wondering if it's time to try to construct a voice, a way of writing, that somehow takes on board some of the post-Freudian tensions of life--that comes not from buckling up, not from being unable to express yourself, but from just being pulled left, right, and center by possible role models and urges, by a sense that you're missing out. That would involve a different kind of voice, would imply a different way of writing, and would lead to a very different-looking novel.” (*Conversations*, 172)

While Mullen points out that Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* can be read as a reflection of the continuities of Thatcherism into the twenty-first century (2), he also acknowledges that such revelation may not immediately be obvious because of the years that they spend in Hailsham (2). I disagree with this view because as analyzed in the previous chapter, Hailsham carries a historical significance as it represents a postwar liberal world that gave rise to a welfare state in which the government took it as its responsibility to take care of its citizens.

While Robbins and Rich both interpret the whole text as a story on Britain's welfare state (Rich, "States" 191; Robbins, 206), the current chapter aims to portray how the characters break away from the former ways of life and enter into a world driven by wholly different desires which Ishiguro names "American values" in his interview above.

The "American values" broke away from the post-war measurement of a decent life that defined it in terms of "community welfare or moral fidelity" (Foucault, "Governing Soul" 258) and instead redefined good life as personal fulfillment that depended on the choices one makes to accumulate personal pleasures (Foucault, "Governing Soul" 258). These "American values" are not something entirely new in the story. Even in Hailsham they appear as a symbol of liberation as students think of an alternative future, they would enjoy in America<sup>6</sup> or chant for rewinding a particular scene in a movie *The Great Escape* where the American jumps over the barbed wire on his bike (99). Their chanting to rewind the scene reveals the desire for American optimism that already pervades in the minds of the students. However, students were more directly affected by such hegemony as they left the ways of Hailsham behind and assimilated to the new order of the Cottages. The similar transition had been taking place in the bigger world as Thatcher made clear her intentions of breaking away from the post war liberal values, demeaning the formal state as a nanny state that had impeded the growth of a self-empowered nation. The early years that the clones spend in the Cottages, occur in their late teens, the period that loosely overlaps with the 1980s, the decade of highest popularity enjoyed by neoconservatives. Thus, the new era of neoliberalism dominates the conditions surrounding the

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<sup>6</sup> Miss Lucy sharply rebukes them at this of the sheer impossibility of such harmless optimism by revealing their political situation: "None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars" (81).

clones and the initiatives they take during this period.

When Kathy left Hailsham, she was sent to the Cottages where she would eventually receive her training as a carer. Set in the time period covering the peak of Thatcher's popularity, Kathy and her friends realigned their notions of good life in terms of maximization of individual happiness in self-interested pursuits, and transformed themselves to embody emotional and mental characteristics of self-governance. Kathy in her attempt to discover the root of her sexual urge, Ruth in her journey to meet her possible future, and Tommy in his practice of animal drawing, hoping for a possible deferral, each pursued after their own neoliberal ideals.

### **1. The Cottages as the Emblem of Neoliberal World**

Critics of neoliberalism claim that neoliberal agenda is increasing inequality around the world by cutting the funds for various state welfare programs, "leaving increasing numbers of the poor working-class population to fend for themselves in the most heartless manner" (Ferguson et al. 2). The Cottages seemed to embody these harsher conditions as students encountered a world "that had only the most tenuous links with Hailsham" (116): the remains of a farm that had gone out of business years before. With houses converted from the old farmhouse, barns, outhouses, stables, hills that Kathy describes as "oddly crooked" (119), gutters leaking and overgrown grasses everywhere, the Cottages seem to hold the bare-bone infrastructure in line with neoliberal agenda that seeks to reap optimal profit from its medical supplies.

The major crisis of the Labors that most significantly contributed to the two decades of neoconservative reign came from the "Winter of Discontent" of 1978 -1979 that marked the industrial conflict "on a scale unprecedented since the 1920s," (Moore-Gilbert 163). Winter



therefore is a recurrent motif in the Cottages, as Kathy recalled how “a lot of the time, outside the summer months, being chilly” (117). Even the sunny day of their arrival ended with a chill as Kathy describes how in a few months the beautiful and cozy looking overgrown grass will turn into “puddles frozen over and rough ground frosted bone hard” (119). The many fireplaces and lack of canisters to heat up big boxy heaters again leave readers with the impression that the place is less than humane. With a cold that made them put on two or three jumpers and their jeans stiff and cold (117), the world of Cottages reflects the cruel and inhumane conditions that await the clones. Kathy’s description of having sex at the place portrayed a rather comical picture of their pathetic situation:

When I remember sex at the Cottages, I think about doing it in freezing rooms in the pitch dark, usually under a ton of blankets. And the blankets often weren’t even blankets, but a really odd assortment—old curtains, even bits of carpet. Sometimes it got so cold you just had to pile anything you could over you, and if you were having sex at the bottom of it, it felt like a mountain of bedding was pounding at you, so that half the time you weren’t sure if you were doing it with the boy or all that stuff. (127).

Words like pitch-dark, freezing and blankets made of carpet and old curtains form an odd combination to indicate human condition kept at its lowest dignity. Such chill that surrounded the clones reflects ‘the mean and lean world’ of neo-liberalism brought on to the world by the Winter of Discontent.

Thomas Lemke explains that the art of neoliberalism for Foucault involves socializing citizens into a self-governing individual “by encoding the social domain as a form of the economic domain” (200). The neoliberal’s mantra on free market principle coerced individuals

to assume power over oneself, taking on the risks and responsibilities that come with seeking the good life under free market conditions (Goh 7). The clones likewise feel obliged to transform themselves into self-regulating individuals in the post-Hailsham world of the Cottages that lack any visible form of restraint or guidance. No longer the flock under a shepherd, the clones find themselves not knowing what to do at sudden coercion of freedom.

Although there is no fence or a terrible rumor about clones going off bounds at the new place, Kathy and her friends stayed within the confines of the Cottages. They were awestruck by the clones who have been there before, freely roaming in and out, even taking trips for days. As a docile flock of Hailsham used to the confines of its bounds, they had to learn to transform themselves into self-governing individuals pursuing their own destinations. They were no longer to be the sheep waiting for the instructions of their shepherds.

The only authority figure who came to the Cottages barely talked to them. This “old grumpy guy” (116) came twice a week to keep the maintenance of the place just as the role of the state shifted from reforming policies to simply maintaining economic competitiveness as a consequence of the Thatcherite attack on the public sector in the 1980s and 1990s (Ferguson, et al 133). When the clones attempted to put Keffers in the place of their guardians, and greeted him like their shepherd, “he was having none of it” (117) and simply stared at them as if watching mad men. His reluctance to take the place of a shepherd resembles neoliberalism that “seeks to limit the scope and activity of governing, instead promoting self-governing through individualism and entrepreneurialism” (Rich, “States” 184). Clones were forced to become independent and self-governing individuals, put some distance to the authority and freely plan their own journeys. Within a year, even Kathy learned to become an independent, auto regulating individual, taking a long solitary walk and literally mobilizing herself through

driving.

## 2. **Kathy and her attempt to discover her true self**

By identifying the domain of neoliberalism in the realm of the social sphere, Foucault emphasizes that power is not always repressive but can also be productive, even wearing the guise of welfare. He claims that the hegemonic power of neoliberalism exerts power upon individuals by allowing them to exercise power over themselves. (Foucault, "History" 140). One way it does this is through happiness imperative. Happiness has become a duty in modern men as "free" individuals are compelled to pursue after happiness (Ahmed 195). Thus, by pursuing happiness, individuals render themselves as neoliberal subjects harmonizing with the hegemonic ideals (Foucault "History" 140). In the Cottages, characters of *Never Let Me Go* pursue after this happiness, each in their own way, attempting to liberate from their bleak future by discovering their true self and striving for their full potential.

A prominent way that people strive to pursue happiness is by confessing their sexual urges. Foucault explains throughout the whole three volumes of *The History of Sexuality* and also in an interview 'Critical theory /intellectual theory' how the modern West developed the notion that by examining their sexuality and their past, they can discover their true selves (73). Freud puts sexuality at the center of selfhood by providing "an all-encompassing narrative of the self in which sexual pleasure was legitimated and turned into the primary site of the formation of the psyche as a whole" (Illoutz, 49). However, for Foucault, the moment people discover their truth in sexuality is not a moment of liberation but a domination as they realign their sexual instincts to the *norms* of society (Foucault 1988c 39). Ishiguro uses Kathy to embody an individual in search of this truth. She attempted to liberate herself by finding the truth behind her sexual drive. This can be seen when she confessed her dirty secrets to Ruth.

Kathy told Ruth that she felt “something not quite right” with her because her sexual urge was so strong that it had compelled her to pull one nighters “with just anybody” (128 ). Ruth admitted that there is something wrong with Kathy, blaming the possible fault on food. As the answer Ruth provided had not been a huge help, Kathy kept searching for the truth that would truly liberate her. She intently looked through the faces of models on porn magazines to find the person she had been cloned after, and to find the truth behind her sexual urge, because the clones believed that when they saw the person they were copied from, they would get some insight into who they were deep down. She told Tommy that the reason why she was having such strong sexual desire must have come from somewhere, perhaps from her own original:

“All right, Tommy. I’ll tell you. It may not make any more sense after you’ve heard it, but you can hear it anyway. It’s just that sometimes, every now and again, I get these really strong feelings when I want to have sex. Sometimes it just comes over me and for an hour or two it’s scary. For all I know, I could end up doing it with old Keffers, it’s that bad. That’s why... that’s the only reason I did it with Hughie. And with Oliver. It didn’t mean anything deep down. I don’t even like them much. I don’t know what it is, and afterwards, when it’s passed over, it’s just scary. That’s why I started thinking, well, it has to come from somewhere. It must be to do with the way I am.” I stopped, but when Tommy didn’t say anything, I went on: “So I thought if I find her picture in one of those magazines, it’ll at least explain it. I wouldn’t want to go and find her or anything. It would just, you know, kind of explain why I am the way I am.” (181)

Such efforts of Kathy proved futile not only because of her failure to spot her “possible” but also because her urges after all did not reveal anything “special” about her. Tommy had already

told her that he got it too sometimes. Ruth admitted much later that it was the same for her as she “couldn’t resist doing it with other people sometimes” (232). What Ishgiuro is implying through such revelation is confirmation of Foucault’s opinion on people’s search for their sexual truth: that it does not bring you liberation. Just like Tommy’s comment,<sup>7</sup> even if they had found their possible, nothing would have changed their political situation.

### 3. Ruth and Her Journey to her Possible Future

Ishigiruo in his interview with Shaffers said the current world suffers from post-Freudian tension of life that comes from “just being pulled left, right and center by possible role models and urges” (*Conversations* 172). People are haunted by their thoughts that their lives are not good enough, dreaming of possible futures they would be leading one day. This he calls “American values spreading round the world” as people strive to fulfill their full potential without restricting themselves. Also acknowledging the positive aspect of it, he nonetheless emphasizes the flip side of such values: the casualties it causes, by pressuring an unrealistic demand on oneself. Such American values affect the thoughts and behavior of the clones in the Cottages as they speculate on their models, dream of their possible futures, copy the behaviors from American programs and suffer from urges that are latent or perhaps even nonexistent. Ruth is portrayed as a character “who always wanted to believe in things” (284) exemplifies a subject wounded by pursuing further than anybody the promise of neoliberal hegemony.

In the Cottages, Ruth changed the way she behaved with Tommy, adopting the mannerisms the veterans (those clones who have been in the Cottages longer than them) display (121). Kathy aptly noticed that such mannerism originated from the way characters behaved in

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<sup>7</sup> Tommy tells Kathy “I don’t see how it matters. Even if you found your possible, the actual model they got you from. Even then, I don’t see what difference it makes to anything.”

an American series on TV (121). By directly copying the behaviors of American characters, clones showed how much their lives were dominated by so-called “American values” as mentioned by Ishiguro in his interview.

With a “possible” defined as a “person who you were modelled from” (139), the novel literally embodies the concept of possible role models, pulling people to different directions.

“The basic idea behind the possibles theory was simple, and didn’t provoke much dispute. It went something like this. Since each of us was copied at some point from a normal person, there must be, for each of us, somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life. This meant, at least in theory, you’d be able to find the person you were modelled from. That’s why, when you were out there yourself—in the towns, shopping centres, transport cafés—you kept an eye out for “possibles”—the people who might have been the models for you and your friends. (139)

Clones were eager to search their possibles because they believed by finding their models, they could gain insight into who they were deep down, and also get a glimpse of what their life held in store (140). Thus, for them the “possible” symbolized their dream future, an alternative life they would be leading. The talks on their plans for the future briefly occupied the realm beyond fantasy as long as Haislham was behind them (142). With the predestined lives of clones, the author obviously does not share the same optimism. The deeper they embrace the hegemony of pursuing happiness, the deeper casualties they receive as they encounter greater anxiety of not being able to be in their desired state. Ruth became the most affected victim of such a worldview as she “took it further than anybody else” (143) to explore the myth.

Ruth one day came across an advertisement in a magazine that pictured “a beautifully modern open-plan office” (144) that captured her heart. She was bombarded by the image into

believing she would be working at such an office one day. Her vivid description of her ideal future based on the picture had convinced even Kathy who knew where it all came from, to start “wondering if maybe it was all feasible” (144), that they would all carry on lives together one day on such a place as she described. Also drawn to Ruth’s description and somehow believing that such fantasy may actually be a realm of possibility for Hailsham students, the veterans reported to Ruth that they might have seen her possible. Although Kathy later revealed that the veterans used possible as a pretext to go on a trip, not actually expecting to look for their possible (151), Ruth, taking it further than anybody else, decided to go and check it out herself. They in fact get so close to her possible, closer than they had ever wanted (163). Finally, they all came to agree in silence that she was not Ruth.<sup>8</sup> Disillusioned Ruth’s outburst revealed more clearly than ever their political situation: “But look, it was never on. They don’t ever, ever, use people like that. Think about it. Why would she want to? We all know it, so why don’t we all face it. We’re not modelled from that sort ...” (166)

Ruth, disillusioned from “Hailsham forged consciousness, one drawn to beautiful managerial environments as the pinnacle of her personal development” (195) instruct her fellow clones to “look in the gutter” (166) for their true identity, stripping them from any personhood (195). However, I differ from her argument in that the illusion had not only been deceptively forged on the clones through Hailsham but rather coerced to a greater degree by the world lying beyond the institution. Ruth realizing the sheer impossibility of absorbing the hegemonic ideals that tell her to strive for her highest potential, instead drew her identity to the bottom most group of the social ladder:

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<sup>8</sup> Chrissie points out “Well, I think we’re agreed, aren’t we? That isn’t Ruth.” (164)

“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” (166)

She went on drawing the clear political barrier that stands between them and the normal, acknowledging that the behavior of the normal that they have encountered would have been totally different if their identities had been revealed.

“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“ (166).

Ruth’s final lecture pointed to the places that hold their identities: the lowest and the darkest part of the world stripped naked of any neoliberal promises.

“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” (166).

The lack of visible fence and terrorizing woods appear to have bestowed them a sense of freedom not found in Hailsham. However, as they explore further into the realm of the neoliberal world, instead of discovering themselves liberated, they find themselves even more dominated by the System. Despite the fact that Hailsham had *told and not told* them about their identities and their roles, Kathy’s search for truth behind her overwhelming sexual drive and Ruth’s journey to her dream future left them unsure of who they were and their role in the



society. Partly disillusioned by the neoliberal promise that by relieving her dirty secrets and exploring sexual urges she will discover who she really is deep down, Kathy admitted that such attempt is stupid. Ruth who is also disillusioned by her unattainable dream future blurted out their bleak political situation that had never been mentioned outright because it always made them feel “sombre and serious” (88) if not “awkward” (69). With separate rooms and solitary walks, the students of Hailsham drew away from their collective identities and gradually embodied independent autoregulating selves. The transformation appeared near complete as Tommy is also disillusioned (by the cruel revelation coerced by Ruth’s bitter comment and Kathy’s cold resignation) of his optimistic belief that his drawing may serve him useful in the future. This last conflict involving Tommy’s theory and his drawings reappeared later and functioned as the final blow in the powerful tide that unraveled their lives that had been tightly interwoven until that point.

## CHAPTER IV

### **At the Dead End of Neoliberal Myth**

In line with the neoliberal mandate, Hailsham alumni have all moved forward to their separate ways, scattered as carers and donors all across the country. Kathy admitted that they have deliberately avoided talking about Hailsham for ages because she “felt there was something dangerous about bringing it up” (209). However, the news of its destruction triggered her to seek out her deepest and most treasured memories of Hailsham: the memories of Ruth and Tommy, turning away from neoliberal mandate of auto-governing self. This is the first step the characters take in the novel that go against the flow of neoliberal tide that emphasizes individuality over society.

All characters are aware of their fate as clones whose destiny has been set as donors who will lose their life after their fourth donation. Ishiguro reveals this consciousness of disillusionment of neoliberal ideals through various dismantled images they see. However, the notion is not clearly brought onto their consciousness since they are not aware of their political situation surrounding them. This chapter will cover the period in which the characters’ disillusionment of neoliberal ideals transition from rather bleak and vague image of themselves into more concrete picture with clear lines surrounding their situation through the help of their formal authorities. In order to illustrate this more clearly, the historical context surrounding this chapter will first be explained. Then the images of hindered freedom and powerless individuals will be portrayed through the sceneries that they actually encounter or imagine in their head during this period. Lastly, the relationship of power, knowledge and truth as defined

by Foucault will be explained in order to illustrate their powerless stance.

### 1. **Living as a Remnant of Welfare State**

As a carer whose role is to attend the clones who have their vital organs systematically removed up to four times, Kathy plays a role similar to Hailsham as she assuages her donor's pain so that they can give more donations. Her belief that she is making a meaningful difference in a donor's life reminds readers of Ms. Emily's confession that she was at least able to give them a decent childhood. While the text is critical toward the Welfare State on its deceptive role of feeding its clones back to the bigger world, its critical stance toward the System to which the Welfare State belongs gets more intensified: neoliberalism. Kathy's role as a carer in the neoliberal world reveals that she is part of a bigger reality, namely the biggest welfare sector of the System: National Health Service.

Anthony Mullen maps the novel onto the years of "the rise and development of Thatcherism, from the end of the so-called 'postwar consensus'" (6) that renders the current period the narrator faces as April 1997, a month before Tony Blair's election. His view is convincing as many critical events in the story also hold historic significance as they reflect what was happening at the time. For instance, the year of 'token controversy' in Hailsham took place in the year 1979 when Thatcher first took office. The year the students start exploring their sexuality also coincides with the year Thatcher calls for return to Victorian values. Kathy's position as a carer in such a critical time period marks her as a part of a bigger reality where the neoliberal turn carried on the meager resemblance of its glorious past of welfare state under the name of National Health Service (NHS).

NHS, as the most popular services of British welfare and therefore regarded by the public

as its synonymous term (Lowe 9), continued to face underfunding under Blair. As the NHS maintained the core services of the welfare state, Kathy working as a health carer seems more than adequate to be regarded as the remnant of the begone welfare state. Her occupation in relation to welfare is clear as Robbins identifies her as “another health visitor, another officially appointed benefactor without money” (199) while Rich regards Kathy as part of welfare portrayed as “an exceptionally violent system, one that trains the dead to bury their dead” (Rich, “Look” 644). Mullen carries further the resemblance of Kathy to an NHS worker, and thus states that she occupies the dominant medical authority over Tommy and Ruth, retaining the professional patient relationship (8). While I agree that Kathy resembles the welfare system in the contemporary world that made a drastic turn away from the glorious welfare state, Kathy’s position is intended to be portrayed in the light of a victim rather than as a passive enforcer of the dominant system which the text bitterly criticizes.

The Marxist feminists view the NHS as “a prime example of exploitation” (Lowe 36) where the sexual division of labor is reinforced by male occupying the dominant role and female occupying the subordinate role. They also argue that women’s personal needs and health are filled by predominantly male standards through the operation of impersonal machinery. They also blame the welfare state for reinforcing women’s role as unpaid carers that help reduce the cost of the economy and ensure a healthy workforce. Reflecting Kathy’s role as a carer in this light, her optimistic, system-trusting language (Robbins 202), her pride in her unpaid profession, in her remarkable performance in reducing the cost and optimizing workforce by making the exploitive situation for donors more bearable so they can give their final donations, her impersonal interaction with the doctors she calls whitecoats (208) and finally her immense emotional and physical strain she undergoes in her work(207-208) all embody the characteristics of a victim exploited by the welfare state as described by Marxists.

## **2. Dismantled images of freedom**

The neoliberal rhetoric emphasized the idea of individual freedom from the constraints of the welfare state that restricted them from fulfilling their potential. The destructive truth behind this appealing formula is demonstrated through the images of a boat stuck in a marshland and the swimmer diving into a dried-up pool. Both indicate the fate of clones awaiting their death after their last donation. Such depressing images demonstrate the author's critical attitude toward the neoliberal rhetoric of freedom.

The period of Kathy working as a carer also marks the period when she first heard about the news that Hailsham is destroyed. The destruction threatened to forever dismantle her collective identity and memories of her childhood, the one point in her life where she was refused an infrastructure status and had been treated like a human. Those moments must have become dearer to her as she realized the harsh realities that formed a stark contrast to her memories of Hailsham.

Although the years had passed since she had already left the place and its destruction would not have affected her in any physical way, the news left her disturbed and shaken emotionally to reunite with her two friends. When they make a journey to see a boat that was supposedly rumored among donors to be on a marshland, the image that they saw allowed them to gain a better picture of Hailsham and ultimately of themselves, whose previous pursuit of happiness and self-empowerment had been dismantled due to the bigger political situation beyond their scope of comprehension.

To see the boat, they drove through narrow twisting lanes, open, featureless countryside and near empty roads. When they finally got close, they had to enter the woods and get past a

barbed wire. Ruth at first was taken aback at the sight of the wire but with the help of her friends supporting her side by side, “she seemed to lose her fear of the fence” (223). Ruth even ended up helping Kathy lift up the fence for Tommy. They went through some more woods and finally arrived into the clearing where they could spot a boat sixty yards away from a tree trunk, “sitting beached in the marshland under the weak sun” (224). By helping each other get through the woods (a symbol of unknown terror in Hailsham) and passing through a barbed wire to see a boat simply stranded and rusting away, they had just reversed the scene of *The Great Escape* where an American on a bike jumps over the barbed wire to pursue his liberty.

When an individual driven by neoliberal desire jumps off his fence, instead of finding himself liberated from the realm of power, he ends up crashing into the cement of deeply embedded restraint and injustice as portrayed by the grotesque image Kathy imagined in her head: a swimmer jumping off a swimming board into a dried-up pool only to be crashed by the cement on the bottom (219). Their fixed fate as donors, their impending completion, and their somewhat disillusioned hopes of neoliberal promises leave them like the stranded boat stuck on the marshland waiting to be completely submerged by its surroundings. The boat symbolizes Hailsham in its destruction and also reveals their stance in the world that tells them to get on their bike, jump through the fence and pursue their freedom.

### **3. Dismantled images of self-empowerment**

The idea of self-empowerment as a solution to their political situation is another neoliberal mandate that the author bitterly criticizes. The images of flood and balloons that the characters encounter during this period demonstrate forces outside of individuals that render their efforts useless. Power becomes an impersonal force that acts on individuals and determines their fate.

Ruth told her two friends that the boat image reminded her of Hailsham that had appeared in her dream recently. In her dream she had been looking out at a rushing flood that was washing up everything, forming a giant lake and she could see the rubbish floating underneath. However, despite the calamity, she had felt unusually calm and nice like her mood right now at seeing the stranded boat. Both Tommy and Ruth had come to accept Hailsham in its state of destruction, helpless against the rushing tide flooding in from the bigger world. The flood resembles the neoliberal tide that had unraveled their relationship at the Cottage. Just as Tommy had overcome his outburst when he realized that it was not his fault that he was not creative, Ruth felt exceptionally calm at the sight of rushing flood washing up Hailsham. Kathy, Ruth and Tommy all have come to realize in their own way that they stand helpless like floating rubbish toward the fierce neoliberal tide that not only destroyed Hailsham but also drove them away from each other and finally had come to end their lives.

On the night she heard the news about Hailsham, Kathy remembered a sight she had seen a few days earlier: a man dressed as a clown holding a dozen helium balloons that looked like a little tribe on one hand. All the while she recalled how worried she was that one of the strings would come unraveled and fly away. She further described how the news of Hailsham closing down was like to her “someone coming along with a pair of shears and snipping the balloon strings just where they entwined above the man’s fist” (213).

Just like balloons that had only come together by a man’s tightly held fist, but helpless against the shears, clones had come together by the tightly held fist of Ms. Emily and other human advocates for clones. However, just as balloons had no power over their destiny, they could not resist the tide that pulled them left and right, each to its own direction, reflecting the infamous quote by the prime minister that “there’s no such thing as society. There are individual

men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first” (Thatcher, “No Such Thing as Society”).

In the images of flood and balloons, power is expressed as an active force that smeared and flooded. Foucault expressed power as a verb, something that is performed not possessed (*History* 98). Like balloons scattered by a cut, and a school washed up by flood, individuals become places where power is performed. The images clearly counter the neoliberal rhetoric that a self-empowered individual has the power to overcome his/her surroundings.

#### **4. Knowledge, Truth and Power**

In the story, a force outside of individuals not only determines their fate but also ratifies their identities. Truth or knowledge, according to Foucault, has to be ratified by the ones in authority in order to be accepted and reproduced (Foucault 1982: 50). Ultimately, because of the intimate relationship shared by power, knowledge and truth, the very existence of clones had been pushed into the shadowy realm of test tubes and medical supplies (261). Through the games that Kathy had played in her childhood, Ishiguro implicates how this became possible.

The mechanism of power, knowledge and truth as described by Foucault is clearly illustrated in the games led by Ruth in their childhood. Kathy recalled even before their first interaction how Ruth had already made an impression on her that forced her to act in a certain way.<sup>9</sup> On their first interaction, Ruth invited Kathy to play with her by asking if she would like to ride her pretend horse. Leading the way purposefully through children, Ruth clearly

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<sup>9</sup> Kathy recalls “I remember carrying on busily with whatever I was doing in the sand, absolutely dreading the idea of her turning her gaze on me. I didn’t say a word, but I was desperate for her to realise I wasn’t with the girls behind me, and had had no part in whatever it was that had made her cross” (46)



demonstrated that she was the dominant figure of the two. When they started playing the game of riding an imaginary horse, Kathy followed all the guidance and instructions Ruth laid out. After a substantial time spent playing, Ruth abruptly called it to an end by blaming Kathy for deliberately tiring out her horses. Of course, the tidbits about horses that Ruth told Kathy were only a pretension because there were no horses. However, Kathy accepted it as truth within the boundary of the game because Ruth clearly occupied the position of authority.

According to Foucault in *Madness and Civilisation* (1967), for something to be labeled as a ‘fact’ it has to be subjected to a thorough process of ratification by those in positions of authority (*Madness and Civilization*, 1967). This complex processing of information of exclusion and choice is again illustrated in its simplest form by Ruth and her gang playing “secret guards”. The game involved believing that Miss Geraldine was their favorite guardian and that there was a plot to kidnap her. The sole reason for their existence, therefore, was to protect her by finding out who the conspirators were. They did this by witnessing a conspiracy at work. In *Power/ Knowledge* (1980) Foucault describes how knowledge and power is interconnected because when one produces knowledge, one is actually making a claim for power. Ruth again occupied the position of enormous authority ratifying any decisions she made by pointing to the ‘real evidence’ she had known before anyone had joined. This also gave her the means to expel people by simply alluding to those dark times.

Techniques and strategies to process information as knowledge and truth while expelling others as false also operate beyond the harmless boundary of pretension. Kathy is stunned to hear so clearly that the logic of one of those pretentious games they played as a child had been also applied to the world where their own lives were put up as pawns.

“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."

"It might be just some trend that came and went," I said. "But for us, it's our life" (266).

"To demonstrate to the world that if students (clones) were reared in humane, cultivated environments it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being" (261) and to prove that they had souls, the advocates of Hailsham had collected the arts from clones and displayed it all around the country. In other words, to be accepted as beings with souls, clones had to prove themselves to authority figures through their art which was believed to expose their insides. By producing knowledge of their insides through their artwork, Hailsham attempted to voice against the neoliberal tide, claiming for power that could alleviate the situations for clones. That is why at the mention of Hailsham closing, Kathy and Laura spontaneously hugged each other, "not so much to comfort one another, but as a way of affirming Hailsham" (211). Closing of Hailsham meant the alternative truth to the prevalent acceptance of clones as medical supplies and test tubes had also been completely expelled.

The self-empowered state could not even grant them a temporary relief from their surroundings. Tommy's grand narrative that combines the rumor that love can grant them deferral and his theory that Madam's gallery is important because it reveals their insides convinced all of them that eros may possibly be the revolutionary force that can overturn their

future. However, Ishiguro indicates that eros holds no such power through the replies of the guardians: “There’s no truth in the rumour” (258). Here, Ishiguro counters the happiness imperative that emphasizes romance as the archetypal social norms indicating happiness that has revolutionary force to even overturn the problems caused by capitalism (Ahmed 158).

Perhaps the fact that their love had enabled them to approach their authority figure that ultimately gave them a better picture of their position in society appear to support the notion that eros can function as a force for political awakening as regarded by the Freudian Left (Marcuse 215-216, Robinson 218-219). However, it had no power to change their destined fate. Such revelation serves as an important theme throughout the story as the novel consistently illustrates characters betrayed by the promise of freedom that underlie neoliberal government rationality that one can liberate from their political situation if one embodies the emotional and mental characteristics of self-governance (Goh 20). [1]

# CHAPTER V

## Conclusion

After realizing that the rumor of deferral had never been true, Kathy and Tommy return to their normal world, enlightened more than ever of their political situation. Disillusioned Tommy and Kathy acted in ways that denied the neoliberal mandate. Tommy, realizing his ultimate destiny as a donor, started identifying more and more with other donors, breaking the bond of Hailsham that kept him apart from others. Kathy meanwhile chose to cherish the memory she holds of Hailsham, determined never to let it go. Clearly aware of their own infrastructure identity, they both denied doing art for any infrastructure use, and also refused to treat others as infrastructure beings.

Kathy noticed two major changes that took place in Tommy after their visit to Madam. First, he continued drawing pictures, but obviously not for the chance of deferral, as implicated by his refusal to do it in front of Kathy. Right after their visit, he told Kathy that he thinks "Miss Lucy was right. Not Miss Emily" (274). Miss Lucy had urged Tommy to keep on drawing not only because it served as an evidence but simply for his own sake (108). Her emphasis on doing art for art's sake on top of any infrastructural use separates the art free from the intention of its artist.

Stripped naked of self-empowered hegemony, Tommy and Kathy made choices for the sake of each other, deprived of any self-interest, denying to treat each other as infrastructure beings. Tommy, for instance, just before his fourth donation, asked Kathy to stop being his carer. He was willing to sacrifice his comfort to relieve Kathy from the emotional distress she

might have to undergo by seeing him complete. Kathy shared her most valuable possession with her donor: her memories of Hailsham. Ruth, although she had not fully realized her position as an infrastructural entity, nonetheless, with a vague idea of it becoming ever clearer as she neared her completion, faced many risks to give Kathy and Tommy Madam's address. Thus, they become closer to true donors only when they step closer to the darkest territories of neoliberalism.

Another conspicuous change involved Tommy's relationship with other donors: Kathy could not help noticing "how, more and more, Tommy tended to identify himself with the other donors at the centre" (276). The wall that had separated him from other donors had crumbled down as he perceived his position with more clarity. This new awareness he attained is related to the first of the two theoretical consciousness discussed by Marx: "one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed" (Ferguson et al. 92).

On the other hand, when Tommy pointed out to Kathy that there are things she cannot understand because she is a carer, he is classifying himself as a social work client "whose life is controlled and monitored by a supposedly caring social work department" (Ferguson et al. 92). However, readers can notice that similar changes have also occurred in Kathy as she is reminded of her Hailsham friends in the faces of donors. This gave her an unexpected tug (277). Kathy the social worker experienced the social cataclysm as it reflected her "growing disillusionment with a service which, despite the rhetoric of care, is in reality far more concerned with rationing scarce resources" (Ferguson et al. 92).

Kathy, against the neoliberal push to move on, chose to hold on to her past by dwelling

on her memories of her loss. Not long after Tommy's death, she decided to drive aimlessly to find herself in front of a ploughed land guarded by a fence in which "along the lower lines of wire, all sorts of rubbish had caught and tangled" (287). The rubbish reminds her of Norfolk, a place where everything she had lost is washed away. There she reminisced on her lost childhood and waited until she spotted Tommy in her imagination.

Kathy's fantasy revealed the more dynamic emotional turmoil underneath the veil of her calmness. Harrison rightfully claims that the novel is about "why we don't explode, why we don't just wake up one day and go sobbing and crying down the street, kicking everything to pieces out of the raw, infuriating, completely personal sense of our lives never having been what they could have been."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Freud assumes that our daily life is "contiguous with extreme pathologies" (Illoutz 42), making normal people only a few degrees away from the state of abnormal (Illoutz 43). Under this logic, characters in *Never Let Me Go* display aberrant behaviors that might be easily categorized as mental illness requiring medical intervention.

A sight of Miss Lucy "scrawling furious lines over a page with a pencil" (91) with contagious anger leaves Kathy with a confused sense of shame and fury (92). Kathy, convinced that Miss Lucy's aberrant behavior indicates an unknown danger awaiting her, watched out for any signs of something awful that lay around her (92). Tommy also displayed a great outburst, raging, shouting, flinging his fists and jumbling incessant swear words with a face caked in mud and distorted with fury (274). Tommy throwing such fits reminded Kathy of a maniac (274). As Foucault claims that the socially constructed distinction between normal and

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<sup>10</sup> Micheal John Harrison, 'Clone Alone,' The Guardian 26 February 2005, 31 Dec 2020 <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/feb/26/bookerprize2005.bookerprize>>

abnormal are often confused with madness and sanity (Mill 103), Miss Lucy and Tommy's aberrant behaviors would easily label them as mad in need of medical intervention.

With neoliberal tide that pressures individuals "to embody hegemonic archetypes of happy selves" (Goh 14), people are encouraged to seek out medical intervention to resolve their mental problems that ultimately hinders them from reaching their maximum potential for happiness. Even when the social conditions are apparent as the cause of their unhappiness, the happiness imperative holds individuals at fault, labeling them "as deprived, as unsociable and neurotic" (Ahmed 124). The author specifically points this out as the problem through the portrayal of characters that undergo extreme emotional problems due to their political situation.

Kathy's choice to indulge in what Harrison calls a "volcanic turmoil" of her nostalgic and traumatic memories of her past directly refutes the neoliberal ideal that pushes individuals to move on, and overcome any historical trauma in their past that might be holding them back. She does not follow the tide that urges her to be a self-governing individual unraveling the ties with the community. She also refused to be free from her debilitated, distorted psyche. Although it would be absolutely wrong to say that she became free of any systematic illusions, the self-narrative she created makes her voice heard to the authority, a claim of power by the marginalized.<sup>11</sup> By breaking the wall of alienation caused by the system, embracing emotions and relations of no infrastructural use, and finally defying the neoliberal mandate to move forward, Kathy and Tommy in their own way, had refused to follow the neoliberal mandate at the end.

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<sup>11</sup> A voice produced by the marginalized group, according to Foucault, may alter the status quo of the marginalized. (Foucault 1991a: 27-28).

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## 국문초록

가즈오 이시구로의 『나를 보내지마』 *Never Let Me Go* (2005)는 그의 소설 중 가장 현대적으로, 존재했을 법한 1990년대 후반 영국을 배경으로 한다. 『남아있는 나날』 *The Remains of the Day* (1989)에 만연한 반대처리즘(Anti-Thatcherite) 정서를 이어가면서 이시구로는 영국인의 삶에 깊숙이 녹아 든 신자유주를 비판하고 있다. 이 소설은 인간에게 장기기증을 하기 위해 만들어진 복제인간인 주인공들이 신자유주의의 담론인 자유와 자아 실현을 쫓아가지만 결국 그들을 멸망으로 이끄는 시스템의 잔인함을 묘사한다. 또 신자유주의적 환상이 무너진 후 환멸에 찬 주인공들이 내린 결정을 통해 헤게모니의 대안적 반응을 시사한다.

최근 몇몇 비평가들은 이시구로의 『나를 보내지 마』에서 나타나는 대안 현실의 역사적 배경을 전후 영국사에 등장했던 복지국가로 보는 경향이 있는데, 이 점은 이 소설에서 묘사되는 헤일섬(Hailsham) 기숙학교의 온화한 환경과 그 이후 기증자에게 주어지는 간병인들의 역할 등에서 잘 드러나고 있다고 본다. 다시 말해, 이러한 비평가들은 오늘날까지 지속되고 있는 영국 복지 체제의 기능과 양상이 어떻게 이 소설에 반영되는지에 초점을 맞춰 이 소설을 읽고 있는 것이다. 반면에, 다른 비평가들은 이 소설의 역사적 배경을 대처 정권 이후에 등장한 신자유주의적 헤게모니로 보면서 자아 실현이나 개인주의 같은 신자유주의적 이상이 어떻게 개선되는가에 초점을 두고 소설을 읽으려 한다. 본 논문은 이 두 주장이 서로 모순되지 않는다는 점을 지적하면서, 소설에 담긴 보다 포괄적인 역사적 상황을 파악하기 위해서는 이 두 관점을 다 같이 고려해야 한다고 주장한다. 즉, 본 논문은 복지 국가와 신자유주의가 공히 이 소설의 역사적 배경으로 작용하고 있음을 제시하면서 이시구로 본인이 "미국의

낙관주의"라 칭했던 현대 세계를 지배하는 헤게모니에 대해 이 소설이 어떻게 비판적 입장을 견지하는지를 살피려고 한다.

소설에 등장하는 시기는 1970년대부터 1990년대 후반으로 주인공이 헤일섬에서 보내는 유년시절부터 본격적으로 일을 시작하기 전 코티지(cottage)라는 곳에서 보내는 청년기, 그리고 간병인과 기증자의 역할을 수행하는 성인기로 나뉜다. 이는 역사적으로 볼 때, 복지국가의 쇠퇴에서 대처와 메이저 정부 아래 신자유주의로의 급격한 전화, 그리고 신자유주의가 여전히 번영하였던 블레어 정권으로의 시기와 맞물리기에 본 논문은 『나를 보내지마』를 헤게모니의 강압으로 인한 개인의 분리와 정체성 상실을 비판하는 문화적 텍스트로 분석하려 한다. 따라서 본 논문은 시간 순서를 따라 우선 복지국가의 가치와 기능을 헤일섬과 비교하고 헤게모니로 정렬되는 주인공들의 태도와 가치관을 분석하며 기증자 혹은 간병인이 된 주인공들이 보는 기괴한 이미지들로 깨어져버린 신자유주의 이상을 설명하려 한다. 마지막으로 각성된 주인공들의 태도를 통해 헤게모니에 반하는 대안적 태도를 살펴보고자 한다.

주요어: Neoliberalism, Thatcherism, Welfare State, *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro, American Optimism.

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