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## **Unreliable Physical Places and Memories as Posthuman**

### **Narration in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go***

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Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) is, at face value, a story of clones, brimming with obfuscation and misplaced acceptance. This is a novel about systematic control and the complex depletion of identity that results. While this novel is often viewed as a trauma narrative or a speculative memoir, I argue that it exceeds the limitations of both of those genres. *Never Let Me Go* is a fragmented example of the unreliable natures of physical place and memory. Individually, neither memory nor place are equipped to convey a complete, reliable posthuman<sup>1</sup> narrative. Easily defined as a posthuman novel, *Never Let Me Go* revolves around and is immersed in the tension of posthumans, in this case clones, existing within and serving a human-centric agenda. Throughout the novel, the posthuman clones are tasked to assimilate seamlessly to the human world, as they are obediently grown and harvested for supplemental human organs. The foregrounding of this tension throughout the novel moves the narrative out of the confines of the human and into the uncertain realm of the

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posthuman. Reading *Never Let Me Go* through a posthuman lens is critical if one is to fully appreciate the complex and unstable tension that permeates Ishiguro's novel, as Kathy, the clone narrator, continually punctuates her reminiscences with self-doubt and tries to navigate physical places where she does not experience full privileges due to her posthuman, othered status. The novel's physical places, most often remote and rural, are not experienced through a human narrative lens, but rather through an artificially constructed posthuman perspective. This constructed posthuman perspective mirrors Michel de Certeau's argument that:

the city-panorama is a 'theoretical' (i.e. visual) simulacrum: in short, a picture, of which the preconditions for feasibility are forgetfulness and a misunderstanding of processes. The seeing god created by this fiction, who [...] 'knows only corpses', must remove himself from the obscure interlacings of everyday behavior and make himself a stranger to it" (124)

Through the construct of the posthuman experiences of the novel's main characters, remote places take on a type of regulation and control most commonly found in urban, cityscapes, and as Ishiguro carefully crafts

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and highlights the structures of physical place and memory throughout the novel, he establishes the overall narrative through the intersection of regulated, monitored physical place and memory.

*Never Let Me Go* is the story of clones who are created and maintained so that they can one day supply replacement organs to humans. The clones are raised in institutional boarding schools, such as Hailsham, where they never fully learn what they are or why they exist. While a heavy emphasis is placed on maintaining health, to ensure quality organ donations, and expressing humanity through art, in an attempt to humanize, and thus normalize, the clones to the public. It is blatant to both readers and clones, during their time at Hailsham, the clones, as well as the readers, do not know the whole story, and consequently, the Hailsham grounds become an unreliable place. Not until the students are preparing to leave Hailsham is there a clearer expectation of how their clone destinies will unfold. It is at Hailsham that the reader truly starts to see the complicated posthuman dynamic that Ishiguro creates between the clones and their environments, by way of the constant surveillance by the guardians, Hailsham's educator-authority figures, and Hailsham's panoptic

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physical structure. Early in the novel, the pervasive control in place at Hailsham is revealed:

The pond lay to the south of the house [...] if there were no guardians around, you could take a short cut through the rhubarb patch. Anyway, once you came out to the pond, you'd find a tranquil atmosphere [...] It wasn't, though, a good place for a discrete conversation – not nearly as good as the lunch queue. For a start you could be clearly seen from the house. And the way the sound travelled across the water was hard to predict; if people wanted to eavesdrop, it was the easiest thing to walk down the outer path and crouch in the bushes on the other side of the pond.

(Ishiguro 25)

In this very early passage, the complexities inherent to the physical structure and associated surveillance of Hailsham start to become clear. Here the reader first begins to appreciate the risk of exposure and visibility in a place like Hailsham, where “eluding the imaginary totalizations of the eye, there is a strangeness in the commonplace that creates no surface, or whose surface is only an advanced limit, an edge cut out of the visible” (de

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Certeau 124). When young students can identify a picturesque pond and clearing as a threat to their privacy and have to covertly communicate in the lunch line, an imposing panoptic presence, that is more often felt than seen, begins to become obvious.

Kathy, our 31-year-old the narrator, is a clone, and as the novel opens, she is currently preparing to end her career as a carer, a healthcare worker who takes care of post-op donors. As she finishes her time as a carer, she knows she must start her role as a donor, and likely, after four donations, she will “complete”, the novel’s euphemism for dying. This knowledge is what presumably inspires her nostalgic retelling of her time at Hailsham, and the systemic qualities revealed about her life as a carer, as well as her impending organ donations and completion, begin to establish the posthuman lens of the narrative.

While discussion of *Never Let Me Go* is commonly grounded in Michel Foucault’s panopticism and postcolonial concepts of power<sup>2</sup>, I argue that this reading offers a limited understanding of the role of physical place in the novel, as it neglects the ways in which posthumans interact with physical place, which Ishiguro presents as much different than how a human would navigate physical place. By augmenting Foucault’s

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panopticism with Edward W. Soja's theories on space and identity, most notably his binary shattering concept of thirdspace, this article establishes the ways in which the narrator's posthuman interactions with physical place serve to stabilize an otherwise unreliable posthuman narrative. As a clone, Kathy does not fully understand the terms of her existence until very late in the novel; in turn, Kathy's narrativization of her youth is oblivious to much of what is happening around and to her. However, the objective structure of physical places throughout the novel and posthuman interactions with these places offer the reader information of which Kathy is not aware or privileged with.

Similarly, Hailsham, the boarding school where Kathy and her friends live during the first section of the narrative, is often positioned as the most important physical place in the novel, but this understanding fails to acknowledge the circuit of care facilities that Kathy visits and the transitional nature of places like the Cottages and Norfolk, ignoring the evolving ways in which Ishiguro's posthuman characters interact with both place and each other throughout the novel. Previous research only depicts a static relationship between the clones and their environment, further enforcing the othered status endured by the clones when viewed through a

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purely humanist lens. Therefore, by discussing the four major physical places featured in *Never Let Me Go*, in conjunction with not only Foucault, but also the theoretical works of Soja, this article reveals the unreliable roles of physical places and memory within *Never Let Me Go* and ultimately determines that the physical places in this novel temper the unreliability of memory and serve to provide a more cohesive, coherent, posthuman narrative.

From the beginning of the novel, there is a sense of systemic surveillance and a need to adhere to the conventions set forth by the powers that be, a common feature to urban spaces, and unlikely for a remote setting like Hailsham. In the article “Reader Response and the Recycling of Topoi in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*,” Toker and Chertoff astutely observe, “Hailsham, the almost perfect school which other ‘donors’ admire, is not free from at least some features of an alienating environment: it is a panopticon where the students are under constant surveillance; they are, moreover, themselves maneuvered into complicity with surveillance” (169). The reader and the clones never have a full understanding of who is in charge or what has caused the creation of this near-future regime of clones, created and maintained in order to provide humans with replacement

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organs. While the highest levels of this hierarchy remain undefined throughout the novel, the omnipresence of this pervasive power structure, reminiscent of that found in urban landscapes, is unrelenting and, like many of the physical places in the novel, is a panopticon. As Troker and Chertoff suggest, the students are “maneuvered” into complying with the surveillance to which they are subjected. During their time at Hailsham, there is never talk of escape, and there are only a few isolated incidents where the students attempt to establish privacy or autonomy. As Kathy shares her memories, it is increasingly clear that she is being controlled by something beyond just the guardians or the myth of some other disciplinarian. There is a structure and control inherent to Hailsham as a physical place which is not characteristic of the school’s actual remote setting.

While Troker and Chertoff and others<sup>3</sup> focus heavily on the oppressive and traumatic panopticism of Hailsham, they fail to fully recognize the ways in which the clones cope with their othered status within this panoptic environment and operate as more than just pawns in this posthuman narrative. Kathy’s memories of youth and friendship may not divulge much about the hierarchical power structure within which Kathy

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lives, but this is not grounds to think that Kathy and the other clones are completely ignorant, either by choice or by design, of the politics of the world around them, as her seemingly secondary recollections about the physical place within which she spent her childhood reveal more.

Referring back to the previously quoted passage about the surveilled nature of the pond on Hailsham's grounds, within the context of the novel, this passage seems merely to be a woman looking back on a time in her youth when privacy was a rare and beautiful commodity, coveted by many, attained by only the few and the vigilant. The want for privacy is not unusual for an adolescent, and this can be seen simply as an example of how the clones are not that different from their human counterparts, thus clouding the boundaries between the human and posthuman. This can also be seen as a typical function of the memoir. However, this passage is more than the result of a teenage angst born of a lack of privacy. This passage demonstrates the inherent power of the physical places that surround Kathy and her peers. Despite the expanse of Hailsham's grounds,

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the constant awareness of potentially being observed and monitored suggests the indoctrinating and omnipresent effects more common to a panoptic cityscape. Kathy's description of the necessity to continuously maintain a false appearance of ease and general vigilance within the Hailsham grounds easily solidify what Foucault suggests is essential to the success of the panopticon:

The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately. In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions - to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide - it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap. (Foucault 197)

The unrelenting visibility to which Hailsham subjects its residents facilitates the perpetuation of the panoptic mechanism. The students can always be observed and thus, are virtually effortlessly maintained. However, the panoptic mechanism that Ishiguro constructs in his novel is

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not limited to Hailsham and its grounds. Hailsham itself is situated in a way that allows for the institution to fall subject to constant supervision and submission, placing this panoptic institution within an even larger panoptic mechanism. To this end, Kathy reflects:

Hailsham stood in a smooth hollow with fields rising on all sides. That meant that from almost any of the classroom windows in the main house [...] you had a good view of the long narrow road that comedown across the fields and arrived at the main gate. [...] A car was a rarity, and the sight of one in the distance was sometimes enough to cause bedlam during class (Ishiguro 34).

While Hailsham is panoptic for its students, it is simultaneously subject to a more obscure panopticon.

It is unclear who sits in the center and watches over Hailsham, but there is no doubt that Hailsham is subject to the same mechanism that it represents. Foucault establishes the roles within the panopticon as the visible and the unverifiable, asserting, “Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being

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looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so” (198). As Hailsham ultimately exists within two parallel panopticons, it is able to occupy both roles. The visibility is clear enough through Kathy’s narration, and the unverifiability is only established through closer analysis of the physical places described in Kathy’s memories; therefore, Kathy’s seemingly offhanded description of her physical surroundings supersede the limited arguments that position *Never Let Me Go* as merely an example of memoir or speculative memoir.<sup>4</sup> Kathy’s descriptions of her environments go on to establish a posthuman understanding of physical place and hierarchy. This difference in perspective further illustrates the ways in which othered bodies experience symptoms of urbanization as they navigate both public and private physical spaces in this novel.

Regardless of the fact that the students are vulnerable and subject to constant surveillance, Hailsham is, among the clones, held as a beacon of hope and prestige. At the end of the novel, Miss Emily, one of the guardians, admits, “Hailsham was considered a shining beacon, an example of how we might move to a more humane and better way of doing things [...]” (Ishiguro 258). As I will discuss later, the donors that Kathy cares for during her time as a carer beg her to regale them with stories about

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Hailsham. Hailsham is mythologized as a type of Atlantis among the clones and held as the best of the boarding schools where youth clones were housed. By recognizing the panoptic nature of Kathy's physical surroundings, it is reasonable that her memories would be infiltrated by this influence. As her youth became the product of the panoptic mechanism that both is and controls Hailsham, her adult years away from Hailsham and as a carer were also prescribed, in accordance to her previous training.

As a carer, Kathy spends much of her time alone, driving from care facility to care facility. The reader is not given much detail about Kathy's personal life at this time, and by this point in the novel, this lack of cohesive detail has come to be expected. She spends a great deal of time driving from one isolated care facility to another, which becomes another example of Ishiguro using physical place to augment Kathy's narration. While at Hailsham, the control was obvious; however, the perpetual nature of the circuit Kathy travels between the various care facilities is seemingly unregulated. She performs her carer duties and travels from place to place without any immediate sense of subordination or observation. As Kathy drives Tommy, her love interest and patient, back to his care facility, she explains:

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I kept us on the most obscure backroads I knew, where only our headlights disturbed the darkness. We'd occasionally encounter headlights, and then I'd get the feeling they belonged to other carers, driving home alone, or maybe like me, with a donor beside them. I realized of course, that other people used these roads; but that night, it seemed to me these dark byways of the country existed just for the likes of us, while the big glittering motorways with their huge signs and super cafes were for everyone else.

(Ishiguro 272-73)

This scene positions Kathy and Tommy in a type of dark abyss, where, while they adhere to their approved clone trajectory, it is difficult to imagine anyone intervening if they were to go astray. Even though Kathy's route is identified as being made up of back roads, her journeys are depicted as a traditional, urbanized commute to and from work. Further reifying the posthuman nature of Kathy's tireless adherence to her prescribed route and life is de Certeau's assertion that:

The language of paper is 'urbanized', but the city is subjected to contradictory movements that offset each

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other and interact outside the purview of the panoptic power [...] Beneath the discourses ideologizing it, there is a proliferation of tricks and fusions of power that are devoid of legible identity, that lack any perceptible access that are without rational clarity – impossible to manage (128).

Kathy travels anonymously and seamlessly among other commuters, never knowing them and never interacting with them, as if part of a typical, human, urban transportation ritual. However, since her posthuman identity is not made legible to others in this commute, Kathy is not afforded an opportunity to “interact outside the purview of the panoptic power” to which she is continually subject.

While it has been established that the near-future world of *Never Let Me Go* is steeped in panopticism, the panoptic concepts of place put forth by Foucault do not go far enough to explain the relationship that the clones in Ishiguro’s novel have with the physical places around them. While the core places in this novel, Hailsham and the circuit of care facilities Kathy visits, are subject to the pervasive panopticism of the society, this is a structural element that, while directly influencing the clones’ quality of life, is not a facet of reality that is recognizable to the clones. In order for the

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clones to thoroughly be oppressed by the panopticon, they must be aware that they exist within the panopticon, a realization that exists tangentially but ultimately lacks an appreciation for the scope of the panoptic power being wielded against them. This is seen in Andrea Kowalski's "How to Create Inhumanity," as she explains:

In the alternate society of *Never Let Me Go*, the societal schism between the clones and normal humans is manifested through three societal customs: childhood normalization, deluded fantasy, and minimum humanity. Childhood normalization is the process in which the abusive treatment of the clones becomes accepted within society and by the clones themselves: the way in which realities are "told and not told" (Ishiguro 81). Deluded fantasy is the society-wide denial of the clones' fate: a series of illusions that uphold class division through false hope. (Kowalski 11).

As the clones have no true concept of the outside world and are subject to the limited information rationed to them by the guardians, they cannot truly appreciate the othered state in which they live and are only

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equipped to perform a superficial, conditional “minimal humanity”, so as to simultaneously adapt to the human-centric society in which they participate while still maintain their non-humanity as the hybrid, marginalized other. Despite being broadly aware of their futures and their roles in society, the clones remain unable to truly grasp the severity of their reality, even when they seem to be positioned outside of the panopticon of Hailsham. While it may seem strange to the reader that the clones are not fully aware of their othered status or oppression, it is essential to remember that they are not oppressed or othered humans. The clones are posthuman and consequently experience these physical places and social conventions from a posthuman perspective. Building on this, Ivan Stacy writes, “In contrast to the physical constraints and unidirectional vision of the panopticon, the clones actually use their freedom to move and license to observe. However, their observations are never carried out with sufficient reflexivity to allow them to successfully bear witness to their own position” (239). To more thoroughly address this seemingly liminal state of otheredness, I turn to Soja’s *Thirdspace* and *Postmodern Geographies*.

In *Thirdspace*, Soja argues, “Two terms are never enough [...] There is always the Other, a third term that disrupts, disorders, and begins to

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reconstitute the conventional binary opposition into an-Other that comprehends but is more than just the sum of two parts” (31). This is important to consider because within Foucault’s panopticon a distinct binary is constructed. There is inside Hailsham and outside Hailsham. There are the clones and humans. These are the type of binaries that flood most common interpretations of posthuman societies, like the one in *Never Let Me Go*. However, Soja’s understanding of thirdspace complicates the dynamic of Ishiguro’s novel, as it is generally understood. While it is typically accepted that the clones are oppressed and commodified by the humans that control the panoptic environment of Hailsham, popular interpretations understand the clones to be nonhuman and directly oppositional to humans, in a clear and unwavering binary. When the concept of a hybrid state of posthumanity and thirdspace are applied to *Never Let Me Go*, it immediately problematizes the power of the panoptic mechanisms, as well as the autonomy of the clones. Soja explains:

Whenever faced with such binarized categories (subject-object, mental-material, natural-social, bourgeoisie-proletariat, local-global, center-periphery, agency-structure), Lefebvre persistently sought to crack them open

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by introducing an-Other term, a third possibility or ‘moment’ that partakes of the original pairing but is not just a simple combination or an ‘in between’ position along some all-inclusive continuum. This critical thirding-as-Othering is the first and most important step in transforming the categorical and closed logic of either/or to the dialectically open logic of both/and also... [sic] (Soja, *Thirdspace* 60)

Kathy and her clone peers exist as an example of critical thirding-as-Othering. They occupy the liminality between human and nonhuman. Clones are capable of providing life-sustaining organs to humans, yet they are unable to reproduce and are othered to the degree that they are incarcerated by the panoptic society in which they exist. Just as the clones fit most comfortably within the dimensions of thirdspace, when they explore the world outside of the strict panoptic confines of Hailsham, or later, the circuit of care facilities, they occupy physical representations of thirdspace.

As the clones move from Hailsham and into the Cottages, they are no longer under immediate and obvious surveillance. They explore the woods,

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they mimic the characters they see in television shows in an attempt to perform convincing displays of humanity, and they even go to visit Norfolk, which they have mythologized to be the place where all lost things can be found. Both the Cottages and Norfolk are places in which the clones are seemingly free, more able to experience the easy mobility of a cityscape without enduring its surveillance. Their physical place is no longer obviously dictated by the panoptic mechanism. Even the potential for escape seems to exist. For the first time, the clones have the opportunity to shed their clone identity, and the surveillance that accompanies it, in order to more fully assimilate to human life. When Kathy and her friends visit an art gallery in Norfolk, the woman working at the gallery asks, “Are you art students?” without any hint or insinuation that she is speaking to nonhumans, who will have the opportunity to be anything other than carers and eventual donors (Ishiguro 163). Despite the fact that Ishiguro uses the term “nonhumans” to describe the clones, the complexity of identity and environment that the clones experience throughout the novel, especially in Norfolk as they search for possibles<sup>5</sup>, reifies my reading of the clones as posthuman. However, this physical iteration of thirdspace is not reliably free of the panoptic confines the clones had endured at Hailsham.

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Hailsham, the Cottages, and the circuit of care facilities are set aside by humans as an othered place within the human-nonhuman binary. Still, this is not a reliably accurate view of these physical places. Within that binary, it would be assumed that these physical places were either controlled by humans or controlled by clones; however, neither group seems to be able to fully commit to these places, leaving these places, like their clone counterparts, within thirdspace. Building on this interpretation, Soja explains:

Each thirding and each trialectic is thus an ‘approximation’ that builds cumulatively on earlier approximations, producing a certain practical continuity of knowledge production that is an antidote to the hyperrelativism and ‘anything goes’ philosophy often associated with such radical epistemological openness. The ‘third’ term- and Thirdspace as a concept – is not sanctified in and of itself. The critique is not meant to stop at three, to construct a holy trinity, but to build further, to move on, to continuously expand the production of knowledge beyond what is presently known. (Soja, *Thirdspace* 61)

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While Hailsham and the circuit of care facilities seem to be devoid of this concept of an expanding production of knowledge beyond what is presently known, the Cottages and Norfolk embody the concept, thus giving the clones the opportunity to embody it as well. Both the Cottages and Norfolk, as liminal places, exist just outside of the panoptic mechanism, attempting to counter the panoptic functions of maintaining the stifling human-nonhuman binary.

As the clones mimic the human behavior that they see on television, they are simultaneously destroying the binary of Hailsham and immersing themselves in the posthumanism of thirdspace, where they are occupying the place that is between the human-nonhuman divide. As Kathy and her peers settle into the Cottages and eventually take a day trip to Norfolk, they are able to speak and speculate freely. No longer do they have to save their conversations for the safety of the lunch line or anxiously plan nonchalant encounters by the pond. They are free to plan their dream futures and speculate about their possibles. Their possibles, the people they were modeled after, become an extension of this thirdspace, providing a bridge between the human and nonhuman. Just as the possibles represent the concept of thirdspace with regard to the traditional binary of human and

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nonhuman, the Cottages and Norfolk represent the concept of thirdspace between the panoptic extremes of Hailsham and the circuit of care facilities, which fosters an unreliable relationship between the clones and place, with these transitional physical places fostering unrealistic possibilities for the clones' futures.

While the Cottages and Norfolk encourage an unreliable and unrealistic version of the clones' futures, Kathy's memories provide the reader with an unreliable version on the clones' pasts. During the first section of the novel, neither the reader nor the students themselves realize that the students are clones, nor is the destiny of the clones known. As Kathy reflects on her life, she can only offer her audience what she remembers, which she readily and often admits is incomplete and unreliable, but that does not dissuade Kathy from sharing her memories. Perhaps, this is because, as Alison Lansberg explains in *Prosthetic Memory*, "The unreliability of memory in the modern age, combined with the ruthlessness of the present, compels people to engage in memory projects – projects of narration and genealogy – that make the past 'recognizable' and potentially interpellative" (3). Applying the concepts that Landsberg is discussing more directly to the Ishiguro's novel, Teo suggests, "These

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memories are the clones' only real possessions, for even their own bodies do not belong to them; their lives must 'run the course that's been set for [them]' (*Never Let Me Go* 243)" (Teo 134). Despite the impulse to subordinate physical place to Kathy's treasured memories of young love and broken friendships, discussing Hailsham is necessary if these memories are to have any contextualization and resulting significance.

Hailsham's overarching importance is clear as a patient asks Kathy to share her memories of Hailsham with him, "What he wanted was not just to hear about Hailsham, but to *remember* Hailsham, just like it has been his own childhood [...] so that maybe during those sleepless nights with the drugs and the pain and the exhaustion, the line would blur between what were my memories and what were his" (Ishiguro 5-6). This is our first inclination that memories of Hailsham are subject to commodification, reinforcing their potential to be unreliable. If there is the potential for Kathy to impart her memories to another, is there the possibility that Kathy's memories were once manufactured, as is a typical posthuman treatment of memories, as is seen in novels like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* While there is no conclusive proof of this, the events of Kathy's earliest

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years are undocumented. With this lack of an origin story, every memory must be viewed as merely a puzzle piece, without any larger context. Similarly, Nathan Snaza explains in “The Failure of Humanizing Education in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*,” “There are several moments in the novel when Kathy’s narration calls attention to its own construction out of memories. Moreover, these memories only become visible and significant ‘in the light of what came later’ (79)” (229). Kathy is not confident in the memories she has constructed, and based on her memories alone, I argue that the reader should not be either. Throughout the novel, she prefaces her explanations with phrases of self-doubt, such as, “so I might have some of it wrong; but” and “[m]aybe I’m exaggerating it, but” (Ishiguro 13, 56). However, Ishiguro instills the places of the novel with a sense of dominion, allowing the reader to recognize the power of these places and thus construct a more complete narrative than the one Kathy is capable of offering. In accordance with our posthuman narrator, the narrative we are engaging with is decidedly posthuman, as its completion transcends the limitations of humanism and relies on various types of nonhuman constructs – including, but not limited to, the clones and physical places.

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Just as Kathy is a clone, designed for a purpose beyond her own immediate sense of autonomy and control, the places that Ishiguro creates in his novel transcend the role of mere setting or backdrop. While I have previously discussed the larger hierarchical functions of physical place in *Never Let Me Go*, the discussion of Kathy's unreliable memory offers a path into the crucial discussion of how physical place not only determines power structures and shatters binaries but also assists in constructing autonomy for the clones. In Soja's *Postmodern Geographies*, he claims, "Just as space, time, and matter delineate and encompass the essential qualities of the physical world, spatiality, temporality, and social being can be seen as the abstract dimensions which together comprise all facets of human existence" (25). If, as Soja suggests, "spatiality, temporality, and social being" all come together to compose human existence, what role do these "abstract dimensions" play in the arguably abstract posthuman existence of Kathy and her clone peers?

In an attempt to connect to the world around them, however limited that may be within the walls of Hailsham, the clones work to overcome the feelings of otheredness that seem to lurk in the shadows of this first section

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of Ishiguro's novel. As Kathy describes her last years at Hailsham, she reveals the secret game she used to play.

When I found myself alone, I'd stop and look for a view – out of a window, say or through a doorway into a room – any view so long as there were no people in it. I did this so that I could, for a few seconds at least create the illusion the place wasn't crawling with students, but that instead Hailsham was this quiet tranquil house where I lived with just five or six others (Ishiguro 90).

Through this game, Kathy is able to overcome alienation and form subjective relationships with both the displays of nature surrounding Hailsham and Hailsham itself. With so much still unknown about the origins of the clones, their purpose, and the general hierarchical structure of the world around them, these humanized, subjective relationships with place seem to alleviate the ostracizing, othering forces that otherwise seem to be predominant.

As Kathy remembers the struggles and uncertainties of life at Hailsham, the spatial information Ishiguro provides about Hailsham serves to complete Kathy's memories. The nature surrounding Hailsham counters

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the unnatural lives within Hailsham, and when these examples of natural and unnatural are put in conversation together, the reader is provided with a more stable, complete posthuman narrative than would be attainable with Kathy's memories alone. The challenge of defining boundaries between the human and nonhuman at Hailsham becomes best accomplished when viewing the institution through a posthuman lens, as a humanist approach is no longer appropriate given the degree to which nonhuman entities define both Hailsham and Kathy's memories of this place.

As spatial information about Hailsham solidifies the panoptic elements of the first portion of the novel, the spatial information about the Cottages serve to initiate a more substantial sense of identity and autonomy for the clones and within their relationships with each other, which continue to evolve throughout the rest of the novel. The Cottages, remote and seemingly free of any immediate panoptic control, are a physical place that becomes emblematic of Kathy's new found autonomy. As Kathy moves beyond the Cottages and settles into adulthood as a carer, this sense of autonomy seems to increase, up until the point where Kathy realizes it is time for her to become a donor. Once she becomes a donor, she will be confined to care facilities, submitting once again to the panoptic constraints

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of her youth. However, it is important to reiterate that interpreting this novel as merely memoir or trauma narrative would be insufficient. Each of the physical places that Kathy reflects on throughout *Never Let Me Go* accentuates the difference between the lifescape of the clones and the lifescape that the human reader has come to expect. Kathy's life, seen broadly, seems very similar to a typical human's life: school, moving out on her own, working, retirement, death. It would be easy for a human reader to connect with the posthuman narrator. However, the way physical place functions in conjunction with Kathy's memories prevents the reader from entirely identifying with Ishiguro's posthuman narrator. Alone, the physical places or the memories presented in the novel are only capable a fragmented view of this posthuman society. Discussed individually, the physical places and memories of this novel both fail to communicate the entire story, and such an approach would result in a narrative that merely adheres to a static, yet unreliable, human-nonhuman binary. However, through the complicated intersection of physical place and memory, Ishiguro is able to craft a narrative that occupies a posthuman thirdspace.

The society created in *Never Let Me Go* is one of persistent panoptic visibility, yet from any one perspective (whether that be the panopticon of

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Hailsham, the panopticon that contains Hailsham, the human-nonhuman binary, thirdspace, trauma narrative, memoir, etc.), the narrative remains incomplete. When considered through multiple theoretical lenses, the complex relationships between physical place and memory in a posthuman society, like the one Kathy navigates, are established, providing Ishiguro's novel with a sense of completion and reliability otherwise unattainable.

**Notes:**

1. Throughout this article, the term “posthuman” will be used to represent a type of humanity that is no longer restricted to merely the traditional concept of the human being but rather is inclusive of clones and other forms of hybridization between humans and non-humans. As the implications and consequences of a posthuman entity or reality are virtually limitless, a more limited and concrete definition of the posthuman would become excessively constricting. Therefore, for the purposes of this article, the posthuman will refer to the hybridization of the human and nonhuman and a progression past a reality that singularly privileges human beings. The term nonhuman will be used to refer to beings lacking any form of traditional humanity. Human will refer to traditional human beings.

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2. All of sources referenced in this article that specifically discuss *Never Let Me Go* focus on issues of trauma, identity, or control within the novel and situate the clones, both implicitly and explicitly, as the victims of a larger, comprehensive, panoptic structure. The novel is continually contextualized within a postcolonial framework that creates a strident colonizer-colonized dynamic, which the posthuman contextualization that I am putting forth disrupts.

3. Gabriele Griffin's "Science and the Cultural Imaginary: The Case of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*" invokes discussion of the trauma of *Never Let Me Go* through discussion of contemporary issues of cloning and biotechnology. Her article deals significantly with the condition and commodification of the clones' bodies and organs. Similarly, Titus Levy's article "Human Rights Storytelling and Trauma Narrative in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*" discusses the complexity of the trauma narrative and how it applies to the non-human clones. While Levy's article does not have the same biotechnical focus that Griffin's does, both are

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concerned with the trauma the clones endure simply as an inherent result of their existence.

4. Keith McDonald's "Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as 'Speculative Memoir'" and Rebecca Suter's "Untold and Unlived Lives in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*: A Response to Burkhard Niederhoff" grapple less with the trauma of *Never Let Me Go* and focus more on the formatting of the narrative as a memoir. While my essay goes on to discuss the reliability of memories, this differs from the more structural discussions of *Never Let Me Go* as memoir that McDonald and Suter, respectively, put forth.

5. "Possibles" are humans who potentially served as models from which the clones were made. "The basic idea behind the possibles theory was simple [...] Since each of [the clones] was copied at some point from a normal person, there must be, for each [clone], somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life. This means, at least in theory, [clones]'d be able to find the person [they] were modelled from" (Ishiguro 139).

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