

H8QThe Creative Launcher

URL: <https://www.thecreativelauncher.com>

ISSN: 2455-6580

Vol. 6 & Issue 4, (October-2021)

Publisher: Perception Publishing

Published on 30th October 2021

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Identity Crisis in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53032/tcl.2021.6.4.29>

Pages: 194-197

Abstract

In *never Let Me Go*, the cloned protagonist proves unable to resist a fate that is finalized by others and 'completion' results in their inevitable death. The uniqueness of the theme of organ donations provides the focus of the clone narrator's story. We might expect a showdown scheme where the clones discover their true identity. However, Ishiguro refuses to meet such expectations. Kathy H. and her friends Tommy and Ruth are consumed with questions about themselves and their place in the world. The children attain a sense of identity through their

treasured collections, creativity artwork and delicate social structures. Part of their identity therefore always remains a mystery to them and this adds their confusion about who they are and what is their place in the world. No one appear exempt from the harsh reality offered by the ambiguity of human identity.

Keywords- Identity, Donations, Deferral, Completion, Exchanges, Existence

In psychology identity crises is the failure to achieve ego identity during adolescence. The term was coined by German psychologist Erik Erikson. During this stage adolescents are faced with physical growth, sexual maturity, and integrating ideas of themselves and about what others think of them. A self image is formed by the adolescents and endeavors the task of resolving the crises of their basic ego identity. Sometimes individuals face obstacles that may prevent the development of a strong identity. This sort of unresolved crisis leaves individuals struggling to "Find themselves". They often seem to have no idea who they are, what they are, where they belong or where they want to go.

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki Japan, in 1954 and came to Britain at the age of five. He is the author of six novels: *A Pale view of Hills*, *An Artist of the floating world*, *The Remains of the Day*, *The Unconsoled*, *When We Were Orphans*, *Never Let Me Go*, and *Nocturnes*. Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* is a novel about the human clones who have no identity of their own. These Hailsham students are socially accepted donors for the real people. Kathy Tommy and Ruth are the main characters, all of whom are clones. These three students-among-others are considered advantaged because they are fortunate enough to be raised at Hailsham under the guidance of Hailsham's guardians and allowed certain privileges. Being a Hailsham student Kathy feels proud "I am a Hailsham student which is enough by itself sometimes to get people's backs up" (*Never Let Me Go*, 3).

In Hailsham students were identified with their artwork creativity and personal collections. Kathy explains at one place "Exchanges we had at Hailsham four times a year spring, summer autumn, winter, we had a kind of big exhibition cum sale of all the things we'd been creating in three months since the last exchanges" (NLMG, 15) and when all the creative work finished "The guardians decided how many yours particular masterpiece merited and then on the day of the exchange you went along with your tokens and bought the stuff you liked" (NLMG, 16).

All the students at Hailsham treasure their collections so much is the each collection hints at their identity and therefore their own identity. The students desperately represent their individuality through small collections. Kathy felt how one was "regarded at Hailsham, how much you liked and respected, had to do with how good you were at creating" (NLMG, 16).

This suggests that humans often attempt to create self image through means of creation in other aspects of their lives. John Mullan says, "So deep have these expectations been rooted that the students' failure to be explicitly appalled by their fate is something's felt as an offence against realism" (105).

Tommy's unhappiness at Hailsham could stem partly from his lack of artistic talent. When Ruth explains Kathy "You've got a point Kathy. It's not nice. But if he wants it to stop,

he's got to change his own attitude. He didn't have a thing for the spring exchange. And has he got anything for next month? I bet he hasn't" (NLMG, 16). Exchanges become a motif of identity because it highlights each student's own particular preferences and choices.

All of the students at Hailsham diligently attempt to improve their art in order to have their pieces selected for "the gallery" which is an extensive collection of their best works. This thing changes the students' mind about their own self-worth, causing them to doubt their individuality and meaning. Madame, curator of the gallery turning up usually twice sometimes three or four times each year to select from students' best work, she always keeps a peculiar distance from the students. Kathy Ruth and a group of friends adapt an idea to test her reaction to their presence. It was a light-hearted matter for the students but soon they become nervous to see her face and the curiosity disintegrates when Madame reacts in horror causing the students to acknowledge that something about them is unacceptable. Kathy explains her feelings by these words "waiting for the moment when you realize that you really are different to them, that there are people out there, like Madame, who don't hate you or wish you any harm, but who nevertheless shudder at the very thought of you of how you were brought in this world and why and who dread the idea of your hand brushing against theirs. The first time you glimpse yourself through the eyes of a person like that it is a cold moment. It's like walking past a mirror you've walked past every day of your life, and suddenly it shows you something else, something troubling and strange" (NLMG, 36).

In these words Kathy explains the truth that when someone living in illusion and then suddenly known the truth the image that Kathy represents, suggest a doubling effect, where the mirror image is an altered reflection of herself. The students in Hailsham are very creative, want to do something new to prove themselves because they are identical with their creativity.

Ishiguro often suggests to the universal human desire for knowledge of personal identity and uniqueness. The students identified themselves with their collections and artwork. Kathy recalls this in saying "May be we all have little secrets like that little private hooks created out of thin air where we could go off along with our fears and longings" (NLMG, 68). Here Kathy wants to leave the group for her individual identity. One day when Miss Lucy explained to the students that "You've been told about it. You are students, you are . . . special. So keeping yourselves very healthy inside, that's much more important each of you than it is for me" (NLMG, 68). Later Cathy realizes, "that we are different from our guardians and also from the normal people outside; we perhaps even know that a long way down the line there were donations waiting for us" (NLMG, 69). The students very well know about their future donations but they were still in search of meaningful identity.

Throughout the novel, Ishiguro uses a special word "Completion" for death and the students are often confronted with the reality of their future donations. The word completion gives a complete sense that every student is bound to fulfill his/her duty, as a donor. Most of the students realize that the "completion" is inescapable. Completion suggests that donation makes the life complete of every donor before his life's end.

Kathy and Tommy attempt to escape from this future donation, when they desperately search for deferral. By demonstrating their true love to Madame and another Hailsham

guardian will ultimately save them from their predestined "donations" and "they break the rules only in the myth they create about deferrals; otherwise, their hope for recognition and rewards evident in Kathy's self introduction, distracts them from their horrible futures" (144).

Tommy refuses the idea of deferral because he was under the process of donation and was a step closer to his completion. Kathy was the caretaker of Tommy she notices Tommy was "always fully clothed because he did not want to be like a patient" (NLMG, 233). Tommy did not want that Kathy understood him a patient because to be a patient a different identity. The word donor identified with word clone because where there is a clone, donations compulsory and "the clones never complain in a direct way about their plight" (80).

The love between Tommy and Kathy give them a new identity and a hope for deferral. At one moment Kathy feel "relief, gratified and sheer delight" (NLMG, 241) formation of these feeling appear through the love that has grown between Kathy and Tommy. Love is shown a part of identity by Ishiguro and a way of fashioning it. Love is something special that gives meaning to someone's life.

The students of Hailsham never doubt that they have souls. Kathy behavior shows stability of her character while Tommy and Ruth's relationship show instability. Kathy always has a hold on situations she never reacts and controls herself even in the worst conditions.

When Tommy and Kathy go to Miss Emily for a deferral, she denied about, the deferral. Then Tommy said "So there's definitely nothing. No. deferral, nothing like that, Miss Emily said gently: No, Tommy. There's nothing like that. Your life must now run the causes that's been set for it" (NLMG, 261).

Later in the novel reader how a sighting of Ruth's possible results in the group of friends taking a trip to Norfolk. They all want to catch a glimpse of her. The way I remembers it, sighting of possible tended to come in batches. Weeks would go by with no one mentioning the subject, then one sighting would trigger off a whole spate of them recalls Kathy. Ruth suffers a huge disappointment when it becomes obvious that she has been cloned from the woman Rodney believes is her possible, "A bit of fun for you maybe, Tommy, "Ruth said coldly, still gazing straight ahead of her. "You would not think so if it was your possible we'd been looking for" (163). Here Ruth's bitterness reveals how all of her hopes were pinned on discovering the office worker in Norfolk, was the woman from she had been cloned.

Kathy, Tommy and Ruth desperately search for answers to the questions that make up their life. The Hailsham students often find themselves fully enthralled with their predestined futures or their past, rather than being observed in their present endeavors. One other thing about the type of people the students were generally cloned from and this thought future increase their confusion regarding their identity. The students have a doubt that they have been created from "trash". The students of session are ignited from wondering if they will turn out like their genetic donor and "the clones unsettle and discount us because they lack volition and agency and because they completely accept the social order they find themselves in" (81).

Though carefully examining the role of identity throughout *Never Let Me Go*, We observe that life must be meaningful individually. The clones of novel can revolt against their completion but they not and accepted their fate of completion because at last they identified themselves with their task of organ donations. The aim of clones' life remained unfulfilled without "completion".

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