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Are they better humans than us?: The human side of clones

When thinking about someone being more human than human beings in general, one would probably think of Superheroes with powers that strengthen and intensify the abilities humans already possess. One may also think about the humans that are known for helping others and working hard on trying to make the world a better place. For some reason some of the people winning the Nobel Peace Prize comes to mind, but also everyone else. Although they all work for different things, like environment issues, human rights and world peace, they all have a common goal to change and better the world. Most humans are always in search of something to explain their own existence. They wonder how humans came to exist, why they're here and most importantly what their fate is. Some believe in the Bible where God created earth and everything on it, including humans. They believe that God created Adam and Eve as the first humans on earth confined to the Garden of Eden and that everything on earth expanded from that. Others believe in the more scientific explanation of Darwin's theory and the Big Bang where the humans originated from apes and through evolution became human beings. They also believe that earth itself came to exist, in short, because of an expansion in space which caused galaxies and eventually earth to form, more commonly known as the Big Bang. No matter what theory one chooses to believe in, you have an answer as to how humans came to be. Searching for why they are here and what their future will bring are much harder questions to answer. In Kazuo Ishiguro's novel "Never let me go" these questions are somewhat answered as they know exactly how their lives will end and why they exist. They are cloned to become organ donors for their originals, and this will eventually kill them. The novel raises a lot of questions and doesn't exactly answer them in a clear way. What does it mean to be human? Is knowing your own fate a good thing? Does

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knowing the reason behind your creation make you more human in some way? All of these questions really raise a major one; Are the clones actually better humans than us?

I argue that using the concept of using the narrator as the storyteller of their own lives and combining it with the concept of what it means to be human we can read “Never let me go” with characters that holds more humanity in them than most humans in general.

In “Recollecting Memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*” Silvia Caporale Bizzini argues that the characters in these two books are able to process their past and reconcile with their future by acting like the narrator and telling their own stories as well as of those around them. Bizzini argues that the narrators in *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go* makes both the reader and the character themselves feel more like the hero of the story rather than a victim even though their experiences are somewhat horrific. She claims that the storytelling of the narrators in the books are both a “transmission of personal memories” and also a way of “Recollecting the legacy” of others. In other words, by using their own memories and including their friends and family, they are making all of their stories heard and remembered both by themselves and by others. This is also a desperate cry to not become forgotten and for their lives to not become meaningless by Kathy sharing her own story and at the same time including the people around her, especially her closest friends Ruth and Tommy. To show this, Bizzini quotes Kathy; “the memories I value most, I don’t see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won’t lose my memories of them” (Ishiguro, p. 280). Focusing on “Never let me go”, Kathy uses her memories to tell the reader her life story where she also

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includes her friends and the people around her. Bizzini suggests that the fact that the clones are collecting objects that they gather through the years at Hailsham, is actually a symbol for memories. They view the objects as treasures and as important, even if they don't actually hold any financial value, and they pride themselves on the size of the collections. Looking at the collections as memories we can connect this to Kathy's storytelling as she's collecting memories through her life and her final collection is huge and meaningful, both for her and for others. By doing this she secures her friends' memories and gives them a voice, even though they're gone. She tries to keep them in both her own memory and perhaps in others, both the reader and other characters, and thus reconcile herself with her past. Each of their stories gets so intertwined that it makes it harder for the reader to tell them apart, and thus making their stories combined as one big biography told through Kathy. Bizzini again quotes Kathy to show how their shared memories is also their shared legacy; "[A]ll our differences – while they did not exactly vanish – seemed not nearly as important as all other things: like the fact that we'd grown up together at Hailsham, the fact that we knew and remember things no one else did... Tommy, Ruth, me, all the rest of us" (Ishiguro, p. 4, 5-6). Kathy also uses her memories to distract from the fact that she's a clone in a way, and this seems to help her ease her way into her imminent death. This is where Bizzini suggests that instead of making the reader feel sorry for Kathy and her friends and just viewing them as victims of tragedy, their stories makes them more relatable and lets the reader connect more to the story. She argues that although they're kind of victims of society and the creations of others, they take control of their own life by narrating their own stories. She also claims that another reason why the reader is able to connect with Kathy and her friends is because of Ishiguro's way of leaving all the gory details surrounding their lives out of the story. He uses words like "complete" instead of dying, "students" instead of clones and he doesn't go into any details about the

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surgeries. The place they go after being operated on is called a “recovery centre” but there isn't any other mentions of something specific in regard to the medical part of things. By omitting all these details from her storytelling Kathy strengthens the connection to the reader and makes her even more relatable as a human rather than as a clone.

By connecting the past of the narrators of each story to their future the reader gets a fuller picture of the protagonist and of the characters around her as Bizzini suggests. She also argues that Kathy telling own own story prevents her from stepping into the more cliché categorization as a victim and rather makes her experiences just a part of her life and a path to where she and her friends are now. Furthermore, she claims that the narrator as storyteller makes them play a more active role in their own life, which makes them more relatable, and also helps the reader feel more connected to the story. By sharing their thoughts and emotions, and by doing so through Kathy makes the reader see the humanity inside the clones as they can easier relate to them.

In «Ishiguro`s Inhuman Aesthetics» Shameem Black argues that to answer the question of what it means to be human one must recognize the inhuman in humanity.

Black argues that by raising the question of what it means to actual be human you are able to read Ishiguro`s “Never let me go” in a way where you can see the internal struggle with this question in the characters, or clones, in this creation of a dystopian world. The text sets up a society that mechanizes the clones and forces us to try and define what really makes us human, which then leads us to the realization that we are actually more like the clones then we think. A dystopian world where the clones serves as a storage facility for spare organs for the “real” humans. She claims that the reader appreciates Kathy as the narrator not “in spite of

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her affiliation with automata” but rather because of all the things that sum up her life as “simulacrum”. In other words, instead of looking at Kathy and the other clones as a human-made contraption that imitates humans, you should view them as a representation or an image of a human being. To clarify further, she’s not a gadget or a robot that is programmed with features in advance, but she’s rather someone who represents a human by having real emotions and learning most things as humans most do. Black also claims that on the other hand that some of the mechanical behaviour shows by the lack of resistance and questioning about their pending fate and the fact that they don’t really interact with the real humans, as they rather seem contempt with the lives they’re living. She suggests that the only one that seems to have a reaction against this way of living is Tommy with his outbursts of anger, although it’s clear that he doesn’t understand that this might be the actual reason behind his tantrums. Black also suggests that the story, although science fiction, almost mirrors the concerns people have in real life about the growing inequality in society both in England and on a global level. The most vulnerable, in this case the clones, are exploited and used to help and benefit the more fortunate which can be compared to how the less fortunate are treated in our own society. Black argues that through empathy, understanding and relating to others’ experiences we can understand what it means to be human. Also realizing the “less human” sides of ourselves, that none of us is actually “perfect humans”, is what makes us human. This is also helping us to relate to the more inhuman aspects in the story as we can recognize the same flaws in ourselves and in our society as well. Black also compares the students at Hailsham to the students in our society as the school serves as a mechanical fabric where the students move up one grade at a time systematically. They do as they are told, often without questioning it, while not bearing in mind all the pain and suffering they might encounter through their lives and not thinking about their imminent death. I “Never let me go”, art is a

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way of showing of the humanity of the clones by trying to prove if they have souls or not through their artwork. Black suggests that this shows that Hailsham actually was just an experiment to show perhaps the world, or at least someone, that the clones are real humans and what's being done to them is inhuman. It seems like they are trying to actually save the clones from their fate, but their mission fails as we later find out due to Hailsham being closed down. Black claims that Kathy is cloning her own memories by sharing them with others and points to this quote from the book; "What he wanted was not just to hear about Hailsham, but to remember Hailsham, just like it had been his own childhood" (Ishiguro, p. 5). The person in question here is someone Kathy works as a carer for during his final stages, and realizing he grew up in much less fortunate circumstances, she lets him "copy" her memories through empathy towards him. By empathizing with him, she further humanizes herself and at the same time become an original herself despite being a clone. Humans often strives to help others and care for them in their time of need. By Kathy caring for other clones as they are recovering from their donations, and when they are close to completing, she is actually mirroring this behaviour. She also takes care of her friends, which basically is her family, and mimics someone taking care of their sick or dying family member.

By viewing the clones as images of ourselves we can easier connect with them and some type of common ground which again makes the story less eerie and more relatable. The inhuman aspect in the life of the clones therefore gets easier for the reader to swallow as they can find something in their life to connect to and to relate to. For this reason, the reader is also able to feel some kind of empathy towards something that isn't quite human but at the same time pretty similar. In one way empathy is what makes us human, but in another way it's also letting us see the humanity in others. And by accepting our own faults and flaws as humans, we can relate to others easier as well.

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When comparing the two, the biggest similarity in Bizzini and Black`s articles is that they both seem to make a case for the relatable aspects of humanity in Ishiguro`s “Never let me go”. They both make the point in some way that by Kathy being the narrator, the reader can easier relate to her and the other clones and this makes it easier to feel empathy towards them. This is also making us able to view them as strong beings that overcome the hurdles life brings them. As hardship in life is generally a thing most humans will experience in one way or another a least one time in their lifetime the reader can easier feel a connection and find some familiarities in the characters. Both of them connects the clones to humans by mentioning the thing that really stands out as something they have in common, the fact that they all will die. They each make a case that the characters make themselves human in the readers eyes trough the act of storytelling and thorough memories, and at the same time they both point out that they`re not. Making the characters relatable to the reader seems to be a huge agreement between the two writers, and they both suggests that this might be exactly what Ishiguro meant to do in the novel. By omitting a lot of the details surrounding the medical aspects, renaming everything that has to do with, such as completing (dying), and almost leaving out the fact that they`re clones completely, Ishiguro almost forces the reader to view them as humans from the start. Furthermore, both Bizzini and Black mentions that Kathy is telling the story and sharing her memories not only for her own sake, but also for the people around her. They both suggest that even though we come to the realization that the characters are in fact not human but instead clones of humans, it`s still impossible to not view them as humans due to all the human qualities they inhabit. As these qualities mirrors those of our own, the characters also mirror us as human beings.

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Although the articles offer some similarities, there are also some contrasts in both the arguments as well as the way they approach it. Bizzini main argument is that by Kathy being the storyteller she draws the reader closer into the story. It also makes us realize that she rationalizes the calmness towards the pending death with the memories she holds on to, and this helps the reader to feel less sorry for her and instead view her as strong and brave. She's making the point that the characters are not viewed as victims and that their own reconciliation, through recollecting memories, with their past, present and future forces us to do the same. Therefore, the text makes us naturally view them as the heroes of their own story and their lives being lived to the fullest within their abilities. Much the same way we live our own lives to our abilities, not knowing how and when our lives will end. Another difference between humans and clones is that the clones know that they will die at a relatively young age whereas humans on the other side usually die of old age, with the exception being that something tragic happens to them at an earlier stage in life. Black on the other hand argues that by seeing the flaws in our own humanity we are better able to see the humanity in others, including the clones in the novel. She also directly compares this dystopian world with the modern world we live in, which furthers our understanding of both the world in the novel and the characters living inside it. Where Bizzini gives the narration full credit for humanizing the characters, Black however gives props to humans themselves for recognizing the same flaws in themselves as they do in the characters. When it comes to sharing the stories of the other characters Black claims that by letting another character "clone" her memories and making them into their own memories, she's actually letting her story and legacy live on through others. Bizzini on the other hand is claiming that she is securing her legacy and making her, and her friends remembered just by narrating their collective story to herself and to the reader. If you view the characters as an image you can clearly see that Katy's actions mimic those of

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a human, as Black suggest, whereas Bizzini claims that her humanity shows itself the strongest through her narration of her memories. As Black is arguing that we should view the clones as a reflection of ourselves, she`s also forcing us to compare them with ourselves and is making us see the differences between us and them. The biggest difference is that we go through life blind, not knowing what will happen during life and towards the end of our life. The fact that the clones knows almost exactly how their life will pan out immediately makes them different from us.

I argue that by using their memories and knowing what awaits them in the future, and at the same time struggle with this, makes them more human than most. Humankind has always searched for a higher meaning of life and their purpose in it. By knowing exactly what their purpose is and being able to somewhat prepare for how and when their life ends gives them a sort of advantage over humans and removes some of the agony of not knowing why you are here and what you are supposed to do with your life.

In “Never let me go” Ishiguro creates a dystopian world with clones, which basically is a non-human copy made from human men or women, who lives a sheltered and somewhat “normal” life at first and dies a slow and painful death at the end. The first concept is that even though most people would view the characters as victims of the society created around them, Bizzini argues that by narrating their own story they actually creates their own legacy as heroes or in other words human beings. You can see an example of this concept in this scene where Kathy is remembering when they are first experiencing an adult telling them how their life will pan out as well as reminding them of what they truly are:

‘If no one else will talk to you,’ she continued, ‘then I will. The problem, as I see it, is that

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you've been told and not told. You've been told, but none of you really understand, and I dare say, some people are quite happy to leave it that way. But I'm not. If you're going to have decent lives, then you've got to know and know properly. None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars. And none of you will be working in supermarkets as I heard some of you planning the other day. Your lives are set out for you. 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' (Ishiguro, p. 79-80).

Although this may seem like a sombre moment and, for some, the initial thought might be to feel sorry for the children, it's also an encouragement to stay positive by being realistic about their lives. By being aware and knowing the limits to their possibilities, they are able to live their lives and be happy about what they've already got and what the future will bring them. With Kathy as the narrator we get to be a part of when she realizes how they are seen by other people, especially this teacher. We also get to know how they figure out that they're not able to live their lives as they dream about, and by telling us she's also narrating the story for the other students that are present at this moment. Including her friends and fellow students, she is not only securing her own legacy but also of those around her. She does this by giving them a voice through her, and she shares it with those she cares for later in her job and she also shares it with the reader. She may not be aware herself and it can be in different ways, but her

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and her friends 'memories live on in those who hears or reads about them.

The second concept focuses more on the question of what it means to be human and the characters' lives as clones. Most people would immediately view the clones as humans, but Black argues that comparing the flaws and mechanics in ourselves and our society to theirs we can truly empathize with them and relate to them. In the scene you clearly see that it's pointed out to the students that they are in fact not human, but at the same time you clearly see the teacher caring about them enough to tell them the truth. Also, by knowing the truth and lowering their expectations they are able to live their life more freely in a way. It's also preparing them for what's ahead so that they're not as shocked or as disappointed when the time comes to face it. It does kind of has a resemblance to a talk parents would have with their kids about becoming adults and expectations surrounding their future. The more inhuman part of the clones also shows here by them just listening to the teacher and accepting what's being said. It does hold a resemblance to kids listening to their teacher and believing what is told because they blindly trust the teacher to tell them the truth. Normally no one would question facts, but some would probably ask at least some questions when the conversation explicitly tells them how their future is already decided for them. Then again, we wouldn't question things that are normal to us, and the clones live in a world where what the teacher tells them is inevitable and normal in their world. We, as the readers, also realize that aren't in fact humans even though they truly come across like that. Ishiguro sets up a world that treats them as inhuman, but the book works because we can't help think of them as obviously human.

If you combine the two concepts you can see that by using memories as a way of telling a story in the image of a human, strengthens the humanity within them that is already there. As

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they are learning about this early, in their teenage years, they are more prepared for their life ahead than most actual human beings. For most, adulthood means to dive into the unknown and figuring out their own paths and destiny as they go, but for the children at Hailsham this has already been decided for them and they don't have to worry about it. In some ways, Ishiguro is pointing out that we all face the same difficulty that the clones face, but that a big part of being human is accepting a determined fate: death. Of course, one could argue that the search is a part of being human and that we have to go through life unknowingly to truly live a full life. Ishiguro does have a way of dehumanizing the characters in this novel and not making it too obvious, by making us view the clones as humans as they seem to appear. By having Kathy act as the narrator, he gets away with not telling us all the gory details regarding the medical side of their lives. He also doesn't have to tell us why the clones were made to begin with and how they are made. In a way, by not acknowledging their origin story, or birth story, he's taking something away from them. Most humans know how we are made and where we come from but as we aren't told any of this in the story, it raises the question even though the story tries to make you focus on the things that are actually in there. I would still argue that knowing the answer to a huge and heavy question and mystery as that would make people live life to the fullest and it would take away some of the burden of trying to plan out your own future. By having almost all the answers at an early age makes them more human than us, maybe as far as overly human or "superhuman".

In a way the teacher is narrating their lives for them before it happens, as she tries to depict and explain exactly how their lives will pan out. This is making her serve as yet another narrator inside of Kathy's narration. The teacher's narration makes us reconsider human nature especially free will and freedom, as it makes it somewhat clear that both of these are very limited to the clones. The difference is that the teacher is forcing her narration on her

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students, and Kathy is willingly and voluntarily giving her narration to others. One could argue that giving her narration away is contributing to erasing her past, but it could also mean that by having the ability to choose your own story is what it really means to have true will. It would also mean that with being the storyteller also comes power, and this may be the only power they truly have in their lives, which may be what this book is really about.

The way we combine the two articles provides us with a new way of reading the text as well as a new way to interpret the text. Bizzini argues that by the protagonist narrating her own story, as well as the stories of the other characters, they are able to share their memories and make them live on in others. The memories of her friends already live on in her own memory, and when recollecting her own past, she combines their stories and creates a collective biography for them inside her own autobiography. This also helps them to not be viewed as victims, but rather as a strong human being that overcomes the hurdles their life brings them. She also claims that Kathy as the storyteller is connecting her more with the reader as if she's sharing her memories with us directly. Black chooses to focus more on the inhuman side of the story and raises the question of what it means to be human. She argues that we have to look at the inhuman within ourselves to actually see the humanity in others, and also accepting our own flaws and the fact that we have them. This argument also goes for the society surrounding us. If we can see that everyone and everything has some type of flaws in them, including ourselves, we can easier relate to others and thus also identify them as humans. Black also suggests that by viewing the clone as a representation of human beings creates the empathy we use to recognize the humanity in others. By combining the two concepts you can read the text as a way of learning to recognize humanity through the

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memories and story of others. By Kathy being the storyteller on behalf of all the characters, including herself, and recognizing the flaws of humanity we are able to strengthen the humanity in all of them. We can also see the teacher acting as the narrator inside of Katy`s narration, and the narration she gives is forced upon the students. She also forces them to grow up and become more realistic about what their future holds. It also serves as a reminder of what they actually were created for. Thus, creating their path in life and answering the everlasting question humans asks themselves of what their purpose is and why they exist. By knowing these age-old questions that humans have been pondering throughout history, it makes them more human than most. As many believe that only God knows the answers to these questions, they become almost godlike while still inhabit human qualities. Their humanity is also proven through the varying obstacles they have to face in life, which most humans have to go through, and death which serves as the ending of all humans` life.

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