

War on the Posthuman

Narrative as Resistance and the Reinvention of the Self in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

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ABSTRACT

Within a world of grand narratives, testimonies from the margins carry the potential to rewrite history. Through an examination of Kazuo Ishiguro's renowned novel *Never Let Me Go*, which places an emphasis on the posthuman subject, this paper approaches the documentation of one's experiences as a revolutionary act. The memoir kept by the cloned protagonist Kathy H. not only sheds light on the inhuman practices exercised by the state, but it also provides a fictional space for the self to be perpetuated. When one's fate is decided beforehand, when the potential of identity development is confined, the documentation of one's experiences constitutes a subversive act that allows the subject to regain control over their self-realization. This is portrayed through the interplay between the narrating, the experiencing, and the narrated self, whose interdependence can be translated into the fluidity of identity. The physical body is complemented and sometimes even replaced by the textual body, while the self is liberated within the ongoing process of becoming offered by the imaginative and reconstructing act of autobiographical narration. Ultimately, the preservation of one's memories constitutes an act of agency that illuminates the dark, silenced side of history.

KEYWORDS

memory, narrative resistance, posthumanism, Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

INTRODUCTION

The world today always anticipates the future. The present has become an evasive entity, and before it is grasped, it has already become the past. Yet history, though still in the hands of the state for the most part, has become *histories* and *her-story*. Testimonies of a once-evasive present rise to the surface, oftentimes in the form of art, and shed light on silent voices, oppressed identities, and censored histories and her-stories. In times of war, climate change, and relentlessly advancing technologies, the creation of an artwork not only allows one to preserve a memory, but also constitutes a medium through which one can make sense of the world and even of oneself, by providing a fictional space for the self to develop on its own terms. For the oppressed and the downtrodden, for those whose present and future are decided and imposed by external sources, creating a fictional space of one's own is not only a sheltering act of self-preservation, but it is an act of agency and resistance in itself. The documentation of memory in the form of writing, in

particular, creates a meeting point for the personal and the collective, providing an often-conflicting version of events in comparison to grand narratives promoted by hegemonic regimes, while simultaneously liberating the self through the promotion of an ongoing process of becoming.

To demonstrate the significance of writing as a way of actively producing memory, creating an alternate history/her-story, and providing a fictional space for the self to develop freely, the present paper turns to the literary example of Kazuo Ishiguro's renowned novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005). Therein, Ishiguro employs the narrative device of metafiction, which is implemented as a diary written by the protagonist and clone, Kathy. Living in a world in which cloned—hence posthuman¹—individuals, including herself, are ascribed a predetermined fate that ends with organ 'donations' to the point of death, Kathy takes it upon herself to narrate this horrible reality and thus create her own alternate history that contradicts the hegemonic grand narrative promoted by the state. Tracing the past and present through the documentation of memory allows Kathy to make sense of the world, but also to reclaim possession of her *self* and play an active part in its development and realization, even in retrospect. In this light, by examining the discourse of memory production as manifested in Ishiguro's novel, this paper seeks to show that within an advanced and technologically mediated world, subjectivity and experience are manifested beyond binaries. Memory and the self are fluid, always in a process of becoming, producing personal histories that are charged with the potential of resistance against hegemonic grand narratives.

THE CLONE'S TALE

Born in Nagasaki, Japan, in 1954, Ishiguro moved to England at the age of five, and he has lived there ever since. Given his own history, the author commonly adorns his novels with a sense of displacement, in-betweenness, inconclusiveness, and disconnection. Dislocated identities, unreliable narrators with reconstructed memories and nostalgic remembrances can be found in most of his novels, including *The Remains of the Day*, and of course *Never Let Me Go*. *Never Let Me Go* is Ishiguro's sixth novel, published in 2005. It was originally titled *The Student's Novel*, foreshadowing the conception of the protagonist's diary. The story itself is set in the 90s, in an alternate version of England in which human cloning is standardized and practiced for allegedly medical purposes, as the reader is informed early on. The story is presented through the eyes of Kathy H., an adult cloned individual who narrates her life from a young age up to the present. Kathy was raised in a boarding school named Halisham, which was specifically designed to educate clones with the help of teachers known as guardians. The school, however, does not provide cloned children with standard education, as happens with 'naturally-produced' human

children. Clones are produced and raised so that when they become adults, their organs can be harvested in order to battle disease in humans. In this light, Halisham teaches children the significance of preserving their health, but most importantly it encourages them to exchange gifts and produce art, the best pieces of which are chosen by Madame, a woman who often visits the school, to be kept in her mysterious gallery. Once they turn sixteen, Kathy and her friends Tommy and Ruth move to the Cottages, a place which constitutes their first contact with the outside world. While Kathy explores her developing sexuality, the clones are confronted with the anxiety of meeting their ‘possible’, namely the person they have been cloned from, which ultimately leads them to the revelation that they are most probably cloned from delinquents and degenerates. Caught in a love triangle that upsets their friendship, the trio is eventually split up when Kathy is summoned to be a carer, whereas Tommy and Ruth begin their organ ‘donations’. The most significant moment in the story comes when several years later Kathy and Tommy meet again and finally act on their romantic feelings. Following a rumor, they are led to Madame’s house and seek a deferral from their donations on the basis of their being truly in love. Tommy also brings his animal drawings to support their claim, as they were told back in Halisham that art reveals the soul. Disappointed to find that deferrals do not exist, Kathy and Tommy learn that Halisham’s encouragement of their art actually aimed to discover whether clones had souls at all. Soon after the meeting with Madame, Tommy has his last ‘donation’ and dies, whereas Kathy, before becoming an organ donor herself, takes a trip to Norfolk to contemplate all that she has been through and all that she has lost.

THE DIARY AS RESISTANCE

The strategies of oppression and dehumanization that seek to reduce the clones to their pharmaceutical function necessitate alternate spaces for becoming. To express one’s (posthuman) self constitutes a subversive act within a world that questions and represses one’s humanness, bodily integrity, agency, and indeed life itself. Despite the widely accepted assumption that the clones in *Never Let Me Go* are passively docile, I argue that the greatest challenge to this dehumanizing system is Kathy’s diary itself. Within the novel, the fictional story written by Ishiguro takes the form of a memoir written by the clone and protagonist Kathy H. The story delivered to the reader is narrated through her perspective, in a constant shift between past and present, memory and reality, building up to an open ending, although Kathy’s ultimate fate is (at least seemingly) known, and the reason why the diary is incomplete.

As a personal account of one’s life events, a diary has a distinctly autobiographical character. As a life narrative, it is also profoundly tied to the author’s subjectivity and its development. In their

Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson identify five elements of autobiographical subjectivity: memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency (2002, 16). Memory, embodiment, and agency are particularly prevalent in the creation of Kathy's diary. Ishiguro's clones live within a world where humans, as in the real world, are considered the exceptional species, authors and masters of their fate. Clones, like animals raised for slaughter, however, have their future decided for them in advance, without any prospect of altering it. In their analysis, Smith and Watson explain that autobiographical narratives have been traditionally considered evidence of human agency. This sense of agency stems from the ability to communicate events in accordance with one's own free interpretation, thereby also expressing one's true self. As such, autobiography has been traditionally defined as 'a narrative of agency' according to Smith and Watson (42).

Of course, the agential potential of an autobiographical narrative such as the one in *Never Let me Go* is far more complex than a series of statements based on free choice. To understand agency as produced by a text, one must first consider the context in which the text is written as well as the multiplicity of ideologies within it. What comes into play is the politics of discourse. A transgressive autobiographical narrative uses the discourse available to the author, the same discourse used by the state, which in the case at hand is oppressive and dehumanizing towards cloned individuals. In the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault (1990) has identified discourse as 'a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable' (100) and which is 'both an instrument and an effect of power' (101). However, Foucault argues that discourse also constitutes a point of resistance, opening up space for opposition (101). Its decontextualization and re-formation allows its emergence as a revolutionary tool that counteracts hegemony, and instead facilitates the radicalization of identity, the validation of embodied experience, and the promotion of multiplicity. Judith Butler (1997) has also delved into the agential power of discourse in her *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. Therein, she recognizes the agency of language, evident in its ability to act and directly affect bodies and events. She contends that although this performative capacity of language is primarily used by the political system, it can be reconfigured and employed as a means of subversion. Ishiguro's writing of Kathy's diary appeals to this function of discourse. By relating the horror of Kathy's personal experience, the diary's language breaks with its dehumanizing context, operating instead as proof of the clone's humanness while simultaneously unsettling the linearity and fixedness of identity. As such, the diary as a genre of humanist agency here validates posthuman subjectivity and agency instead.

Exposing Kathy as an embodied subject calls attention to the bodily aspect of subjectivity and its connection to the life narrative crafted on her behalf by Ishiguro. Smith and Watson maintain that ‘the body is a site of autobiographical knowledge, as well as a textual surface upon which a person’s life is inscribed. The body is a site of autobiographical knowledge because memory itself is embodied’ (2002, 37). By referencing the embodied character of memory, Smith and Watson establish a direct connection between the physical body and remembrance inasmuch as the former is the medium of experiencing and creating the latter. The localization of the body within space, they argue, is a precondition for the production of memory (38). This location does not need to be strictly material. In a life narrative such as Kathy’s diary, the narrated body is situated within the ever-changing web of language, non-linear time, memory, gender, sexuality, cultural appropriation, and power. In the material, albeit fictional, world of *Never Let Me Go*, the cloned body is snatched and othered by the state from the start. It is owned, deemed a means to an end, taught to keep silent. The act of writing, however, creates the possibility for change by providing the oppressed body with a voice and alternate modes of embodiment, initiating a liberated process of experience and self-realization through the narrated body.

Kathy’s life narrative is fundamentally built on memory. By developing her subjectivity through remembrance, Ishiguro brings her personal narrative into conflict with the grand narrative promoted by the novel’s hegemonic and dehumanizing society. The diary is thus conceptualized as a form of personal alternate history that seeks to complement and shed light on the dark and silenced sides of the history the novel’s political system is standardizing. To further enhance the diary’s function as such, Ishiguro brings multiple voices together in Kathy’s text. This includes the voice of her child self, her adult self, and even the self she would like to become and the self that has been. Yet, it goes even further by giving a voice to her friends Tommy and Ruth and their unique temperament, as well as to the clones as a group in general. This particularly happens when Kathy as a carer comes in contact with various cloned individuals who, despite suffering after their donations, are willing to share their childhood memories from a different school or others who just want to know more about Halisham. By offering glimpses into the lives, thoughts, and diverse experience of the clones, Kathy’s text, although private and personal by essence, becomes a fictional collective memoir, a bricolage of the collective experience of the clones. This function of Kathy’s diary is aligned with the transgressive potential of the diary as a device that overcomes boundaries. As Rebecca Hogan, an important scholar of autobiography studies, asserts:

The diary records the thoughts and feelings of past selves and present self without necessarily privileging one voice or stage of life over the others, it crosses the

boundaries between self and others . . . Because diarists preserve experiences in writing, trying to record and reflect on life, diary-writing blurs or crosses the boundaries between text and experience, art and life. Diaries are elastic, inclusive texts, which mix chronicle, historical record, reflection, feelings, descriptions of nature, travel, work accomplished, and portraiture of character rather haphazardly together. . . the diary is a form open to closer relations between world and text, author and text, reader and text. (1991, 100)

In other words, the diary is a space where multiple voices and views materialize together, pushing the limits and bridging the gaps between different modes of experience and expression in a nonlinear fashion, and that is where its transgressive potential lies. In the world of *Never Let Me Go*, where the agency, individuality, and humanness of the cloned individuals are compromised from the start and no form of resistance appears possible, it is precisely the subversive potential of Kathy's diary that makes a difference through the blurring of boundaries, emerging as both a piece of art and a form of history. The fading line that separates text from experience and art from life, in particular, sets the locale where resistance may unravel.

It has long been believed that the production of art is an exclusively human privilege and, by extension, a fixed standard that reinforces humanist exceptionalism, thereby undervaluing other species and ecosystems. Ishiguro's story, portrayed through the eyes of Kathy, keeps coming back to the issue of art and the meaning behind creativity. Reminiscing her childhood, Kathy admits that 'a lot of the time, how you were regarded at Hailsham, how much you were liked and respected, had to do with how good you were at "creating"' (Ishiguro 2005, 16). As a puzzled adult, Kathy discusses the Hailsham tradition of the so-called Exchanges with Ruth, realizing that as children they were not interested in poetry at all, yet they had internalized the belief that it is important somehow. Discussing the same practice with Tommy, Kathy found out that Tommy's childish drawings during the art classes led to mockery, teasing, and eventually to his exclusion from games and groups of his peers. As a consequence, Tommy developed the habit of throwing a fit or, in another words, having a temper tantrum as a response, as this appeared to be the only way to externalize his feelings. What can be inferred from these discussions between Kathy and her friends is that Hailsham promoted a system according to which the quality of one's art determined their acceptance or their rejection from a community. This may not have been directly practiced, but the emphasis on quality was evidently internalized by the students, who then chose whom to ostracize and whom to admire accordingly. A telling example that contrasts Tommy's exclusion due to his laughable drawings is a student named Christy. Kathy and Ruth remember that this girl 'had this great reputation for poetry, and we all looked up to her for it' (Ishiguro

2005, 17), which shows that she was well received and praised by others. Through this lens, as in the real world, where art is believed to distinguish humans from animals, similarly in *Never Let Me Go*, art is a criterion that divides the students between those who are talented, capable, and worthy, like humans, and those who are daft, unskilled, and inept, like animals.

The epitome of art production in Halisham, however, was the mysterious gallery owned by Madame. Although there was no real evidence that such a gallery existed, the students had created this fantasy in order to explain why Madame took pieces of their art every time she visited the school. Kathy remembers another student, Amanda C, commending one of her creations, exclaiming ‘That’s really, really good, Kathy! That’s *so* good! I bet it’ll get in the Gallery’ (Ishiguro 2005, 26). Kathy herself, however, thought that ‘none of us are really good for the Gallery yet’ (26). Becoming part of the gallery here functions as a metaphor for becoming part of standard humankind, which clones are simply not ‘really good for’ yet. This is further supported by the true meaning behind the gallery, which is explained by Miss Emily when Kathy and Tommy visit Madame after following a rumor, according to which they could be pardoned from the donations due to having found true love in each other. In fact, it is Tommy’s idea that in order to prove the truth of their love, they would have to demonstrate their art skills, which they were told would reveal their souls and inner self; and so, Tommy brings along his animal drawings, since he never managed to get anything into the library as a kid. After a long and disappointing discussion, during which Kathy and Tommy find out that the rumor was false, Miss Emily asserts that the true reason why Madame collected their artwork was ‘to *prove you had souls at all*’ (Ishiguro 2005, 255). The soul is an immaterial entity traditionally attributed to humankind, while animals and other nonhuman beings are considered soulless. By referring to the clones’ soul as an entity in question, therefore, Miss Emily directly demotes them from the category of the human and aligns them with animals, who are thought to be soulless and thereby lesser. Even so, Miss Emily defends the practice and categorizes it as part of Halisham’s benevolent endeavor to promote the clones’ best interests. She explains that Halisham’s rationale sought to demonstrate ‘to the world that if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human beings’ (Ishiguro 2005, 256). Miss Emily’s revelation, therefore, calls attention to the link between art and humanness, as the former is considered key to the latter. Even so, although many cloned students got their artworks picked by Madame, the plot shows that nothing ever really changed as regards their fate.

Understanding the meaning of art in the world of *Never Let Me Go* sets the foundations for analyzing the significance of Kathy’s diary, because the diary is itself a piece of art created by a cloned hence marginalized individual. Karl Shaddox (2013) has particularly emphasized the

affective nature of Kathy's memoir, which highlights human commonality and evokes feelings of empathy towards the clones. He specifically contends that 'to flesh out her voice, Kathy appeals to the reader through narrative episodes that render her and the other clones de facto humans. That the reader regards from the outset Kathy's emotional experiences as resonantly familiar to their own is essential to arousing empathic consideration on the clones' behalf' (Shaddox 2013, 460). By connecting with the audience and succeeding in evoking empathy towards her and her peers, Kathy's diary can thus be conceptualized as the epitome of the cloned individual's soul, the ultimate artwork that does not only reflect posthuman creativity but manages to provide a glimpse into the inner world of the posthuman author while also 'speaking' to the inner self of the reader. Consequently, building on Halisham's ontological approach that links humanness to art and the soul, Kathy's diary demonstrates through its affective nature that cloned individuals are indeed as sensitive and intelligent as standard humans, while also showing that their experiences and concerns in life (mortality, for instance) do not differ from humankind at all. To put it more simply, as the ultimate artwork, the diary demolishes the humanistic divide and exposes the unquestionable humanness of the clones. Its transgressive force becomes even more vigorous when one realizes that, by rendering the clones true humans, Kathy's narrative debunks the myth underlining the organ donations and exposes its full horror, hence by extension signaling the need for change.

In his *Illuminations*, Walter Benjamin (1968) connects the art of writing with the realization of one's mortality: 'Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death' (93). Of course, Kathy and her peers have lived in the shadow of death ever since they found out about the inescapability of 'donating' their organs. Kathy herself notes that, as the clones become adults 'jokes about donations faded away, and we started to think properly about things. If anything, the donations went back to being a subject to be avoided, but not in the way it had been when we were younger. This time round it wasn't awkward or embarrassing anymore; just sombre and serious' (Ishiguro 2005, 87). In this light, the diary as an object that outlives its creator becomes a fictional space where the posthuman self may develop and live on without the body, thus exposing the strange interplay between life and art. Kathy's autobiographical narrative embodies the transformation of life and live experience into art, while at the same time, as an artwork, it provides a space for life to flourish beyond humanistic oppression. In other words, life becomes art and art becomes life. The following question may arise here: how can an inanimate object harbor life? To begin with, Kathy's creative process primarily builds on a nostalgic recollection of the past. As Camacho and Perez (2018) observe, it is 'the lack of future prospects and of relief in the present prompts in Kathy a nostalgic longing for the past' (101). The title of the novel already indicates a doomed attachment, a sense of loss,

the fear of letting go, which can then be identified throughout the plot, not only between Kathy and Tommy, and even Ruth, but regarding life itself as it is slowly slipping away. According to Hilary Dickinson and Michael Erben, this fear of letting go is connected to infancy and the fear of letting go of one's 'imagined ideal childhood' (in Camacho and Perez 2018, 101). Indeed, this could explain the emphasis and constant return to Kathy's years in Halisham. However, as it has so far been established, the cloned students' years in Halisham were hardly ideal, although seemingly carefree and idyllic. Kathy herself oftentimes becomes aware of this when, looking back, she realizes how the guardians manipulated the children to prepare and accept their dark future. Still, Kathy's childhood as a perceived safe place to turn to and never let go is mainly related to the nature of memory as a process of reconstruction. In other words, the story narrated by Kathy is, in fact, a 'partially imagined version of the past' (in Camacho and Perez 2018, 101). Kathy herself is aware of the inaccuracy of her memory, as she sometimes mentions that 'I might have some of it wrong' (Ishiguro 2005, 13), 'I don't remember exactly' (25), 'the way I remember it' (138), 'my memory of it is that ...' (146), and at other times she uses Ruth's or Tommy's recollections of an event to inform the reader about what happened. Memory, then, is itself a piece of fiction, and here translates itself on paper, forming a textual body able to outlive the physical body.

Most critics of *Never Let Me Go* agree that Kathy's nostalgic narration of the past originates from the realization of mortality (Camacho and Perez 2018, 100) and an attempt to fully grasp the situation (Yeung 2018, 8), the situation prescribed to her as her life. Furthermore, it has been shown that nostalgia 'is a mental exercise that fulfils such functions [such as the] enhancement of the self, support of the cultural worldview, and [the] bolstering of relational bonds' (Yeung 2018, 8). What is significant to consider here is the 'temporal distance between the narrating and the experiencing self' (Yeung 2018, 7), but also their relation to the *narrated* self. By reconstructing and thereby re-experiencing the past, memory at the same time unavoidably reconstructs the self, and proceeds to narrate it as such in the diary. Memory and writing as creative processes that work together allow Kathy to narrate and even embody a partly imagined version of herself. This co-mingling of the narrating, experiencing, and the narrated self, escapes the hegemonic shaping mechanisms of Kathy's society, not only because it sheds light on the creative capacity of a cloned individual but also because it defies mortality by giving the narrated self the opportunity to live on and even be reconstructed over and over by the readers of the diary. The boundaries imposed on the clones by society are further demolished as the fluidity between the narrating, the experiencing, and the narrated self gives Kathy the power to influence and fashion how others see and understand her as a subject. Instead of conforming to an image of 'something troubling and strange' (Ishiguro 2005, 29), Kathy's narrative and its deliberate display of the clones' thoughts,

feelings, and experiences, exposes their overt humanness, hence also their monstrous treatment by their society.

Some parallels can be drawn here between Kathy's diary and the Judy Bridgewater cassette, where Kathy first hears the song 'Never let me go'. Critics have primarily attributed the significance of the song to the overall nostalgic feeling and sense of loss that permeates the novel (Ogston 2014, 120–21), as discussed above. However, there is more to it than that. Like Kathy, the cassette is a copy of a so-called original, yet its ability to evoke diverse feelings makes it unique. For instance, once when listening to it as a child, Kathy imagined a woman who could not have babies but by some miracle managed to give birth to one. Giving life to this affective image, she grabs her pillow and dances to it. At the same time, Madame who happens to take a glimpse of little Kathy while she is dancing, listens to the song and imagines something entirely different. She envisions 'a new world coming rapidly. More scientific, efficient, yes. More cures for the old sicknesses. Very good. But a harsh, cruel world. And I saw a little girl, her eyes tightly closed, holding to her breast the old kind world, one that she knew in her heart could not remain, and she was holding it and pleading, never to let her go' (Ishiguro 2005, 182). When Kathy finds the cassette again as an adult, during her trip to Norfolk with Tommy, she is not really interested in whether it is the same one, since the memory of what she felt is evoked and cherished either way. The value, therefore, exists not in the object itself but in the meaning behind it. Similarly, Kathy's value as a subject that matters is irrelevant to her status as a clone; instead, it stems from her inner world, the feelings, and experiences she embodies. Still, in the world of *Never Let Me Go*, a cloned individual's value is traded with their dispensability, or to put it more finely, in their ability to be used as organ banks. Here is where the subversive power of the diary lies. Like Kathy and the cassette, the diary is also a copy; the copy of Kathy's life. Similarly, the narrated self is a cloned version of a cloned individual. The cassette triggered Kathy's revolutionary vision, whereby a sterile woman gave birth to a baby, overcoming her predetermined fate. The diary's revolutionary power as a posthumanist tool operates in a similar manner. The cloned, textual version of the self retrieves the true value of Kathy as a subject by providing a fictional space where the self can manifest, live on, and communicate with the reader. Kathy's memoir as a textual body thereby overcomes her predetermined fate by overshadowing the dispensability of the physical body and instead embodying subjectivity in a process of becoming.

Unfortunately, the construction of a textual self does not prevent the physical body from meeting its demise. By the time the diary reaches the imagined reader, it is presumed that Kathy has died following her donations. As such, the diary is left to represent both a textual embodiment of Kathy's life as well as a textual clone of the self that has taken the place of the physical body.

What comes into play here is a re-examination of the subject as a posthuman entity, while simultaneously negotiating modes of recognizability. Clones are by definition posthuman subjects, inasmuch as they are technologically mediated by birth. Beyond this, however, some of the main premises of posthuman subjectivity listed by Braidotti (2013) are hybridity, relationality, expansion, and a fluidity between categories (60–61). Also, the posthuman predicament conceptualizes life itself as an ‘interactive, open-ended’ process, rather than a humanist ‘pre-established given’ (60), thus by extension questioning ontological categories like the organic-inorganic, birth-manufacture, flesh and metal (89). In this light, the fluidity between categories and the multidimensional hybridity of Kathy’s subjectivity fortify and expand the horizons of posthuman ontology. Ultimately, Kathy lives in her present, in her memories, and in the diary’s text simultaneously, while her textual self is also reconfigured by each reader’s understanding, in what Braidotti would call ‘a relational interconnection between the self and others’ (2013, 49). Additionally, by encountering the textual self of Kathy, the reader encounters a subjectivity which is framed by embodiment, namely Kathy’s affectivity and even her sexuality as portrayed in the diary. Embodied and embedded, therefore, as posthuman subjects are defined by Braidotti, the complex and scattered, fluid nature of Kathy’s subjectivity as crafted by Ishiguro invites a revision of traditional modes of being, based on the principles of posthumanism. The twentyfirst-century reality of advanced technologies and the looming possibility of human cloning already call attention to the mutability of human matter, thereby deeming the humanist subject redundant. What posthumanism and Ishiguro through *Never Let Me Go* promote instead is a zoe-driven subjectivity,² stemming from an unprivileged interdependence and interconnectedness between the self and others. In Kathy’s case this becomes manifest in her relationship with Tommy and Ruth, and the role they play in filling in her memory gaps which then translate into text and her textual self, but even more significantly, it is rendered in the co-constitutive relationship with her imagined readers. As the reader of the diary is affected and reshaped by the text, so is the textual self re-constructed and developed by each reader’s imaginative capacities. Indeed, Braidotti (2013) has emphasized the significance of empathy as a posthumanist revolutionary tool that promotes communication hence the interdependence and relationality between human and nonhuman others. This subversive tool is wielded by Ishiguro in the creation of Kathy’s diary, bridging the gap between the self and others through embodiment, thus setting the foundations for forming ethical relations. In the end, what this posthuman reconfiguration of subjectivity achieves is to destabilize species supremacy and demolish the difference between original humans and less than human, cloned others. Instead, it prioritizes bodies as complex, hybrid, and fluid assemblages, and envisions the possibility of ethical human and cloned human relations based on unprivileged interdependence and relationality.

In discussing the transgressive potential of the diary earlier, it was mentioned that Kathy's text gives voice to multiple others, thus providing insight not only into her posthuman subjectivity but also on clonality as a collective experience. I would argue here that an approach that conceives of the diary as a fictional collective memoir invites the further re-examination of the potential social relations between human and posthuman, marginalized others. This primarily stems from the power of literature to interweave with and thereby reshape knowledge. Nicolas Pethes (2005) has highlighted the complementarity between science and literature in a world of advanced and relentlessly advancing technologies. He contends that literary discourse can play a paramount role in the formation of knowledge, especially as regards uncharted areas that escape classical categorizations and established discourses (2005, 165). Clonality is such an uncharted area. By representing collective experience, the affectivity embodied by Kathy is understood to apply to the rest of the cloned individuals of the novel as well. Tommy's temper tantrums as well as the creativity evident in his animal drawings are some of the most telling examples in this regard. Kathy does not stand as the exception in her group of peers. Instead, she is aligned with and even partly constituted by them through relationality, as when, for instance, her remembrances are supplemented by their own. Such a collective understanding of the diary, therefore, not only sheds light on the humanness of the clones as a group, but most significantly shows that the diary as a type of literary discourse, based on individual and collective memory, revolutionizes knowledge and complements history, while simultaneously subverting state promoted grand narratives.

CONCLUSION

Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* highlights the significance of documenting one's memories, inasmuch as it constitutes a revolutionary act that paves the way to the liberation of the self as well as to the emergence of a silenced, alternate history of the oppressed. The narrative device of the diary is laden with transgressive potential that materializes on a multitude of levels. Initially, it is conceptualized as the outcome of the protagonist's creative process, hence a piece of art, which according to the novel's sociopolitical regulations provides proof for the existence of the soul, a privilege traditionally reserved for standard humans. Furthermore, Kathy's diary provides a fictional space where her posthuman self can be imagined, rewritten, and developed on her own terms, building on an interplay between the narrating, the experiencing, and the narrated self. On this account, the diary operates both as a fictional clone of the sentient self, and as a textual body that takes the place of the protagonist's physical body, replacing the experiencing self with the narrated self. Never fixed but always becoming, oscillating between categories, the posthuman subject, therefore, cannot be categorized according to humanist or patriarchal values. Instead, as Kathy's diary shows, within an advanced and technologically mediated world, a subject's

existence is manifested beyond binaries. It can be fictional and real simultaneously, physical and textual, remembered and experienced, human and nonhuman.

Using the fictional example of Ishiguro's novel, this paper has sought to demonstrate that the documentation of one's memories and experiences runs parallel to the perpetuation of one's identity, while also having the potential of giving a voice to the travails of an entire oppressed group. As such, it emerges as a revolutionary act on both an individual and a collective level, which has the ability to subvert established grand narratives and simultaneously bring alternate histories to light. Furthermore, by using the literary example of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, this paper aspires to shed light on the fluidity of humanness as a constructed entity, inasmuch as one's political circumstances can define whether they are considered human or subhuman. Through this lens, this paper seeks to complement and subvert existing analyses of Ishiguro's text by approaching the protagonist's diary as a source of transgression. Its ultimate contribution lies in the application of what is discussed about Kathy's fictional memoir to the art produced by real life oppressed individuals. It shows that art as an act of agency, and the subsequent preservation of memory, can shelter and reinvent the self when it is under attack, but most importantly, it is laden with the potential of rewriting history.

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¹ This paper follows Rosi Braidotti's widely recognized definition and theorization of the posthuman. One of the attributes she ascribes to posthuman subjectivity is technological mediation, hence why clones, who are created and bred within a lab, fall within this category. Other characteristics of posthumanity include relationality, multiplicity, collectivity, vitality, and being embodied as well as embedded (Braidotti 49–51).

² Here the term zoe refers, in Braidotti's words, to the 'dynamic, self-organizing structure of life itself' (60). An in-depth analysis of zoe, as biological life and its components, and its counterpart bios, which refers to political and legal life, can be found in Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Political Life* (1998).