

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

“Poor creatures” and “Frankenpeople”

A comparative analysis of alternative species in
Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and
Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003-
2013)

Auteur : Marion Bouzet

Promoteur(s) : Prof. Véronique Bragard

Année académique 2019-2020

Master [120] en langues et lettres modernes, orientation germaniques,
à finalité didactique

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Véronique Bragard, for her precious insight, guidance, and constant support throughout the elaboration of this dissertation. Her enthusiasm and encouragement have made the writing process thoroughly enjoyable.

I would also like to thank my parents and sister for their unconditional support during the past six years. They have helped me in all sorts of ways, for which I am eternally grateful.

My close friends – Mégane, Betul, Belinda – have provided me with the encouragement I needed throughout the ups and downs. For that, I thank them with all my heart.

Of course, special thanks go to Célia and Marjorie, as well as a big round of applause for their own journey. These last few years would not have been half as fun without them.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the professors I have met along the way. They have all, in various ways, helped me grow as a person and reach this destination.

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Introduction

More than ever before, books and films have been defying the limits of the human species by exploring the unlimited possibilities of imagination. From *Star Wars'* Yoda and *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* to *The Avengers'* superheroes, enhanced humans and humanoid species have fascinated the public for decades. But why exactly? Why do we find stories about alternative species, sometimes resembling humans in appearance or in personality traits, sometimes differing to a high degree from what we are used to, so appealing and interesting, but also unsettling at times? Why are we able to connect with such species? It may simply be because narratives of this type grant us an escape from our sometimes-harsh reality, but there perhaps may be deeper, underlying reasons behind this.

This ability that we have to connect with and relate to species that are different from us emerges at a young age already. As children, we experience an array of emotions when watching non-human species go through various life events: fear when Paddington Bear faces taxidermist Millicent Clyde who wants to add him to her museum collection; sadness when Walt Disney's Bambi loses his mother; or yet happiness when Woody the Cowboy and Buzz Lightyear find their way back to Andy's house in *Toy Story*. And adults are not much different. This occurred to me a few years ago already, when, reading Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) for the first time, I experienced strong emotions and a yet stronger feeling of empathy towards a species of clones which I had never encountered in real life (and probably never will). How could it be that I felt such emotions towards a species that essentially did not exist – or at least not in the traditional sense of the word – but that was mostly, although not entirely, the result of imagination?

These alternative species mainly appear in specific genres that allow the imagination to go beyond the limits, such as science-fiction and dystopian fiction. Such genres are therefore ideal when it comes to understanding the ins and outs of alternative species. These species range from talking animals in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), to emotionless cyborgs, or yet from living objects to made-up alien species, as in Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977). However different they may be from one another, these various species nonetheless have, it seems, at least one thing in common: in pieces of creative fiction of this type, one can usually witness confrontations between human beings and

alternative species. These confrontations often take the form of fights or invasions and depict new species as the enemy. By confronting both species in such circumstances, these stories, it seems, manage to comment on our own human condition.

Consequently, they invite us to reflect on our relations with non-human species and to question our own norms, especially when it comes to our tendency to think of ourselves as the most superior species of all. By blurring the boundaries between types of beings, be they vegetal, animal, human, or technological, the authors and creators of new species challenge visions of the human that were established long ago. Are human beings really that exceptional? Vincent Message, in *Défaite des maîtres et possesseurs* (2016), approaches this question in a rather disturbing yet eye-opening way. His novel introduces an extra-terrestrial species which is characterized by their tendency to imitate the behaviours of others. As they come to earth, they slowly take on human roles, habits, and behavioural patterns, which, of course, also include negative aspects. The extra-terrestrials thus become human-like, whereas real humans start to be exploited by them, thereby reflecting our own relations with animals. In times when a significant portion of the population is becoming increasingly aware of the impact of our anthropocentric views on the ecosystem, pieces of creative fiction such as Vincent Message's give food for thought as to the possible ways to redefine our worth and our place on this planet as perhaps not so central, but rather converging with other, non-human species.

Amongst the stories that defy our vision of the human are two works of contemporary Western dystopian fiction. The first one is the aforementioned novel written by Japanese-British author Kazuo Ishiguro in 2005: *Never Let Me Go*. Although it may not seem as radically dystopian as other narratives, this novel envisions a society in which the underlying workings are anything but utopian. It depicts a world in which clones, hardly distinguishable from humans, are created with the aim of saving human lives by donating their vital organs, leaving the reader to wonder whether the improvement of human lives is really worth the cruelty that it generates. The second story is Canadian author Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy (*Oryx and Crake* [2003], *The Year of the Flood* [2009], and *MaddAddam*, [2013]). These books offer much more obvious dystopian elements: humanity as we know it has been (almost) completely wiped out and the tendency of scientific progress to always go further has led to the creation of hybrid species, such as the liobam, a blend of lion and lamb, or the fluorescent

rabbit. Yet bioengineering is not exclusively used for animal species. Indeed, Crake, the story's mad scientist, has also succeeded in the elaboration of a whole new kind of beings that look much like humans, but are also extremely dissimilar from them. Although they appear to be quite different upon first inspection, both stories, in their own way, offer insight into what it means to be human in an era in which progress seems to have the upper hand, sometimes at the expense of what is intrinsically part of the human essence.

In this dissertation, I argue that the reason behind this strange fascination of ours for alternative species, is perhaps that those alternative beings actually allow us to explore and reflect on our own species, and on what makes the *Homo sapiens* supposedly so special – a fact which, in itself, can be disputed as, it turns out, humans are far from being perfect as a species but are actually quite stupid. In other words, this study aims to disclose what the two pieces of creative fiction just mentioned have to say on the human nature by specifically looking at what may appear, at first sight, as non-human species. Additionally, it intends to understand whether humans should move away from the established norms in many Western societies, such as anthropocentrism, to perhaps start imagining a different future for the human race.

To achieve this aim, various concepts relating to the human species in most Western societies will be explored. Amongst these is the Anthropocene, which refers to the current era and argues that the earth has been so badly damaged by human beings that it is bound to carry those scars forever. Closely related to that are the discussions around posthumanism, a term which suggests moving away from anthropocentrism and consequently implies to start considering other species as equally valuable. This, of course, would have real implications on our daily lives, starting with our relation to meat and to pets. These topics, rather than being particular to one field of study, have been dealt with in various research areas, in the last few decades especially. Sources that have attempted to approach them include Margo DeMello's *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (2012) which explores human-animal relations in the field of animal studies, Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet* (2007), which also looks at relations between species, and David Herman's *Narratology Beyond the Human* (2018), which focuses on the representation of non-human species in fictional texts. What these sources have in common is that they highlight the complexity of the debates on the Anthropocene, the posthuman, the human-nonhuman relations and other closely related

concepts. This complexity also lies at the heart of this dissertation, which gives particular attention to works of fiction.

The present study is divided into three chapters. The first one consists in a theoretical framework on the issue of anthropocentrism. It proposes a different way of looking at the categorization of species, mostly humans and animals, as a continuum rather than as a clear-cut dichotomy. Additionally, it tackles the topics of alternative species and their representation in fiction, in order to open discussions on the possible redefining of the centrality of the *Homo sapiens*. It finally discusses concepts such as posthumanism and transhumanism, which often shed light on how alternative species are defined.

The second chapter delves into Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and the clone species. This segment explores the various ways in which Ishiguro's clones appear as animals, as humans, and as machines respectively. It starts by looking at how the clones sometimes act as animals, but also examines how they are treated as animals in their relationship with people around them. When it comes to the human sides of the clones, particular attention is given to the roles of art and creativity in the clones' lives. The penultimate section of this chapter examines the more mechanical facet of the clones, with a focus on resistance and rebellion against the system. It finally shortly attempts to consider the clones as separate and unique individuals.

The third chapter analyses Margaret Atwood's *Crakers*, but also brings them together with Ishiguro's clones in various comparisons. It tries to expose the essence and fundamental nature of the *Crakers* by broaching numerous topics. Amongst those are the bodily incarnation of the *Crakers* as well as the aspects of their lives which are closely linked to and influenced by their hybridity. It also looks at their approach to death, their relation to sex and the ways in which the latter somewhat challenges the gender roles established in many Western societies. It further considers art and creativity by analysing the *Crakers*' approach to language, writing and storytelling, and music. It then addresses the evolution of the species throughout the trilogy and how this evolution may help reassess their categorisation as posthumans rather than as humans. Last but not least, this chapter raises the issues that stem from a paradox worth highlighting as regards the meaning behind the humanizing and dehumanizing of a species.

Chapter 1: The human species and its alternatives in fiction

1.1. A new era

For centuries, most Western societies have held an anthropocentric view of the world, according to which human beings are the strongest and most important link in the chain of the universe. The *Homo sapiens* is indeed generally placed at the top of the pyramid of living species, superior to all animals and plants. This can be observed in various human behaviours: a family going to the zoo to observe or feed captive animals, people creating machines to cut down trees, thereby leading to abusive deforestation, or parents buying their child a puppy to play with. These are all examples of humans' central and powerful position in the scope of the universe.

This anthropocentric view, however, is increasingly being questioned as people are becoming more and more aware of humans' role in the survival of the planet and of the species that inhabit it. In *Sapiens: A Brief history of Humankind* (2011) – which is exactly what its title suggests – Yuval Noah Harari, going back as early as possible in the history of the first sapiens, explains that “[t]he most important thing to know about prehistoric humans is that they were insignificant animals with no more impact on their environment than gorillas, fireflies or jellyfish” (4). Since then, things have severely changed. Due to the humans' impact on the planet, many scholars argue that there has been a shift from what was called the Holocene, or the “post-glacial geological epoch” (Crutzen 2006, 13), which would have started more than ten thousand years ago and lasted until today, to the Anthropocene. Unlike their prehistoric predecessors, humans now do have “more impact on their environment” (Harari, 4) than other animals. As Braidotti puts it in her book called *The Posthuman* (2013), the Anthropocene refers to “the historical moment when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet” (5). The irreversible mark that human beings have left on their habitat has, in other words, led to this concept, which then suggests the need for a change of attitude. Indeed, with the era of the Anthropocene comes the realisation that, if the human species continues to act as it has in the last decades, they will destroy the very planet they rely upon. This goes hand in hand with a feeling of guilt or concern for the future of the human species, although this feeling is not shared by the whole population.

It is worth pointing out that, as explained in an article written by Robert Macfarlane called “Generation Anthropocene: How humans have altered the planet for ever” (2016), the idea of the Anthropocene comes with its share of criticism. The author notably mentions the criticism that this name takes on a universalist view since it “assumes a generalised *Anthropos*, whereby all humans are equally implicated and equally affected”. Yet, as the article develops, there are inequalities, such as between the poor and the rich, which lead to differences in the way certain groups of people or parts of the world are or feel responsible for the state of the planet.

Due to humans’ actions, such as the removal of animals from their natural habitats or overhunting, and the visible consequences of such actions (the most important one being climate change), it has become hard to deny that the earth has been forever altered in a negative way. This leads to important questions regarding the human species and its potential future or end. Indeed, with animal species going extinct or being endangered on a regular basis because of humans’ impact on the ecosystem, one can wonder what the consequences will be, not only for the *Homo sapiens*, but for all other species as well, as the survival of one species depends, to a great extent, on the survival of the others. While some believe that the human species is doomed, others think that it should be scientifically altered to be able to survive in these new circumstances. Amongst those possible alterations are, for instance, advances in medical fields to repair, in a sense, what can go wrong with human beings, but also progress in technology to create enhanced versions of ourselves. In the past decades, this interest in the future of humans has thus led to attempts to redefine what it means to be human in the era of the Anthropocene, or in a world that is constantly changing.

1.2. Redefining human-animal relations

As previously mentioned, the interrelations between living species make it almost impossible for one species to survive without the others. To fully grasp the role and place of the human being in the era of the Anthropocene, it is therefore important to also consider humans in terms of their relations to and with other species. With publications such as *Creatural Fictions: Human-Animal Relationships in Twentieth- and Twenty-First Century Literature* (2016), which he edited, or *Narratology Beyond the Human: Storytelling and Animal Life* (2018), which he

wrote, David Herman has been a prominent source of insight into the domain of human-animal relationships in fiction. Reinforcing the idea of an important interconnection between species, he for instance states that “accounts of who one is are inextricably interlinked with understandings of self-other relationships” (2018, 25). In other words, in order to understand who we are, it is first and foremost important to be able to consider ourselves in relation with others, be those animals or plants.

This interdependence, however, has not only been tackled in fiction, but also on a broader spectrum. Indeed, it has been and is still being broached by the field of human-animal studies. In *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (2012), Margo DeMello, a prominent figure in the field, defines human-animal studies as “an interdisciplinary field that explores the spaces that animals occupy in human social and cultural worlds and the interactions humans have with them” (4). Although human-animal studies are a fairly recent field of study (dating back to the end of the twentieth century), issues regarding the position of humans and animals in different societies have been addressed for many decades, if not centuries. The idea itself that the different forms of living are interconnected is indeed not new at all. As stated by Rohman (*Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal*, 2009), whose work focuses on the environmental humanities and animals studies, “Darwin’s work had scientists, theologians, politicians, and eventually the average European rethinking the most elementary contours of human identity and the human connection to other sentient life” (2). This means that the position of the human compared to that of other species has been in awareness for centuries, given as it was already tackled in Darwin’s theory of evolution.

It is worth adding that Darwin’s ideas on evolution, although they are almost two centuries old, are still relevant today. The survival of the fittest, for instance, is the force that drives many of the humans’ technological advances. A fear of death and a strong desire to be invincible lead humans to explore various ways to help them live longer, be that through scientific progress or by exerting their superiority on supposedly weaker species or on nature. The survival of the fittest, however, may as well be renamed the survival of the richest. Indeed, having better chances at survival often comes with a price. Owning an expensive car full of technologies and gadgets that help control the vehicle or give one more chance at surviving potential accidents, for instance, is not within everyone’s grasp. Similar to how, according to

Darwin's theory, certain species can adapt more easily, certain humans, too, are better equipped than others in the struggle for life.

So far, the relation between human beings and other species has thus most often been seen as a hierarchical one, in which humans are superior to all, followed by animals and plants. This idea dates back to as far as Aristotle himself, who made a distinction between three categories: humans, other animals, and plants. According to his rational animal theory (see Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I ch. 13), the human subject can be differentiated from animals because of their ability to think rationally. Animals, then, do not have this capacity, but act mainly according to instincts. Plants, at last, neither have the rationality nor the ability to act at all and are therefore at the bottom of the pyramid. Although this hierarchical model has been agreed upon by many scholars and philosophers, including Descartes, Kant and Heidegger, it is important to note that this vision is not universally shared, as it is mostly entrenched within Western cultures.

Centuries after Aristotle, Darwin introduced a different opinion regarding the differences between humans and animals. Whereas it was often believed that human beings distinguish themselves by their ability to think self-consciously (that is, by their rationality), Darwin posed the following question: "how can we be sure that an old dog with an excellent memory and some power of imagination, as shewn by his dreams, never reflects on his past pleasures or pains in the chase? And this would be a form of self-consciousness" (Darwin qtd. in Rohman 2009, 5). Here, he considers the idea that animals, too, could have some sort of self-consciousness. As explained by DeMello (2012):

Darwin proved that not only are humans and all other animals related but also that we together feel pain, share emotions, and possess memory, reason and imagination. Rather than seeing humans and animals as categorically different, Darwin showed that all animals, including humans, share a continuum of mental and emotional capacities. (41)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the thin line between humans and animals was also tackled by Freud, who "evokes our animal heritage when he notes that children have not yet learned to estrange themselves from the rest of the animal kingdom" (Rohman 2009, 6). In other words, Freud believed that children cannot distinguish themselves from animals. Rohman's use of "the rest of the animal kingdom" (6) further suggests that the human being

is simply part of this animal kingdom. Rohman, of course, is not wrong since, essentially and biologically speaking, humans are, in fact, animals. As Harari (2011) puts it, although “Homo sapiens long preferred to view itself as set apart from animals, an orphan who has no family, no cousins, and – most importantly – no parents” (5), it is, in fact, “just not the case” (5) and humans are part of what he calls a “large and particularly noisy family called the great apes” (5). Humans, in other words, are just another type of animal.

Interesting points have thus been raised throughout the decades, but it is only recently that the field of human-animal studies blossomed, with scholars from around the world getting involved and devoting entire books and articles to the topic. Donna Haraway, for instance, wrote *When Species Meet* (2007) and *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016), pieces of work in which she explores the tight relations between human and nonhuman species on a large scale but also by looking more closely at certain connections, such as those between humans and companion species like dogs. Other names include the previously mentioned Margo DeMello (with *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* [2012], which is exactly what its title promises, albeit a very comprehensive introduction), as well as David Herman and Philip Armstrong (whose work includes *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* [2008]), who both focus on human-animal relations in works of fiction. Some of the scholars who have turned their attention to that field of study share Aristotle’s ideas by stating, for instance, that animals “lack the capacity for self-awareness” (Herman 2018, 27) or that they “lack the metacognitive abilities” (27). For others, the inability for animals to have these capacities is difficult to prove: there is, for instance, “research suggesting that some nonhuman animals share with humans the ability to recognize mirror images as correlates of their own bodies – an ability that would seem to be bound up with the capacity for self-awareness and hence a concept of self” (Gallup 1998 and Andrews 2015, 71 in Herman 2018, 28). The debate as to what distinguishes humans from other animals is therefore still ongoing.

Within the field of human-animal studies, the first and main issue lies in defining both the human and the animal. If we consider humans and animals in their physicality, the differences between the two are rather obvious and simple to point out. Amongst the characteristics specific to the human species, Harari (2011) notes the “extraordinarily large brains compared to other animals” (9) and the fact that “we walk upright on two legs” (10).

On a deeper level, however, things become trickier. As stated by DeMello (2012), “‘human’ is generally defined as what is not animal – even though, biologically speaking, humans are animals” (15). This definition shows that, even in its description, the term ‘human’ proves inseparable from the term ‘animal’. To understand what it means to be human is therefore partly to understand what it means to not be human. If listing the characteristics of a human is a rather difficult undertaking, comparing human attributes to animal characteristics seems somewhat easier.

To Aristotle, not being human meant lacking rationality and speech. If this is still true for many scholars, attempts have nevertheless more recently been made to engage with what it means to be human (and thus to not be human) by taking different approaches. In *Why Is Sex Fun?* (1997), for instance, Jared Diamond tries to understand what makes humans and animals different by comparing their respective sexual practices. He introduces the topic by imagining how a dog would react to seeing a couple of human beings having sex. Some of its thoughts would include questions on the purpose of sex to human beings is if it is not reproduction, or on the specificities in terms of how humans have sex (e.g. why do they hide from other people to have sex? [1]). This means that the main difference between human beings and other animals is that sex has a different purpose and therefore also different ways of being practiced. Whereas animals have sex primarily to procreate, humans sometimes have sex to procreate, but most often for pleasure. As stated by Diamond, when it comes to animals, “sex is emphatically not just for fun and is rarely divorced from its function of fertilization” (3), whereas “human sex is mostly for fun, not for insemination” (5). He further explains that nonhuman animals usually have a physical way of showing that they are in their ovulation period and therefore ready to procreate. This ensures that their sex will be purposeful since it is more likely to lead to pregnancy. Animals therefore have different signals (visual or behavioural amongst others), which humans do not have, and which consequently underline physiological differences between humans and animals. Diamond adds that the varieties of sexual practices of animals, even though they may seem strange, funny, or disturbing to us, are in fact perfectly normal in the realm of animal life. The sexual practices which are the most bizarre would hence be those of humans. As he puts it, “we are the ones who are bizarre (...) the weirdest of them all” (8). The point Diamond makes is all the more so important since his theory is that our sexual practices are as significant as other practices,

including “our development of fire, language, art and writing” (10), when it comes to the way human beings developed to distinguish themselves from other animals.

Other scholars have tackled human-animal studies by focusing precisely on the relation (or types of relations) between humans and nonhuman animals. As previously mentioned, that relation is, in most Western cultures, of a hierarchical nature, with humans being at the top of the pyramid. This vision was already established in the Bible, for instance, in which humans are closest to God, followed by animals, amongst which hierarchies are also established, with some animals being more prestigious than others: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26 qtd. in DeMello 2012, 37). According to DeMello the human-animal relationship is thus very hierarchical, but also paradoxical. On the one hand, human beings have pets “whom often we treat as members of the family” (DeMello 2012, 4). On the other hand, however, they also eat meat, making the statement that human lives are more important than animal lives, although some animals seem to be more valuable than others in this regard. As she explains, “[n]ot all animals are regarded as appropriate sources of food. For example, some are regarded as too close to humans to be acceptable as food, and others are regarded too disgusting to be eaten.” (11). Whereas it is, in Western cultures, perfectly acceptable to eat beef or chicken, for instance, eating a dog or a cat would be frowned upon. Animals that are often owned as pets therefore appear to be more valuable than others since they are considered part of the family and who, indeed, would eat a member of their own family?

This all points back to the principle according to which certain types of animals acquire a higher status and are therefore considered superior, reflecting the place they occupy within a society. Herman, too, raises a similar point when he says that “[w]hereas the animals sometimes function as subjects in their own right, as members of an expanded community or ecology of selves, in other contexts they remain instrumentalized as objects, defined not through their interconnectedness with but their usefulness for the human selves who rely on them” (2018, 98). Along similar lines, Herman (2018) cites Fudge (2002), who states that “We live with animals, we recognize them, we even name some of them, but at the same time we use them as if they were inanimate, as if they were objects. (8)” (195).

In *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (2008), Philip Armstrong also focuses, amongst other aspects, on human-animal relations and interactions in fiction. He analyses various novels, from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), to Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), and looks at how animals are portrayed, what they represent, and how they interact with humans. He thus raises important questions regarding pet-keeping, companion species and the domestication of species. He also addresses the thin boundary between being considered pet or pest. He says, for instance, that

[a]s long as the animal belongs in the former category [that of pet] its apparent self-sufficiency can be accepted, and anthropomorphically enjoyed, as a limited and trivialized form of agency. But once the animal becomes a pest – once it joins the category of those species competing with humans for resources, or threatening damage to human agricultural or domestic spatial arrangements – agency is reconfigured as ferity. (35)

In other words, the way animals are considered and treated depends on their given status in society, which stems from whether or not they pose a threat to the human species. Although he focuses on older texts, Armstrong's ideas can most definitely be applied, as will be demonstrated later, to more recent literature, including Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, the novels at the heart of this dissertation.

It is also important to note that the divide between humans and animals is not as strictly defined in all cultures. Indeed, in various non-Western societies, animals, for instance, are worshipped as gods, and therefore considered superior to human beings (such as is the case with the Ainu, a Japanese indigenous people which venerates bears [DeMello 2012, 35]). Other cultures do not make a distinction between nature (to which animals belong) and culture (to which humans belong). DeMello gives the example of ancient "hunter-gatherer societies" in which "[h]umans do not live outside of, or as superior to, nature, as we do in the West" and animals, although they "are hunted by humans are seen as equals" (67), showing that the hierarchical relation between humans and animals is not only bound to Western, but also to modern cultures.

1.3. From dichotomy to continuum

The debate as to where the line between humans and animals lies in most Western cultures as well as the debate on the nature of the relationship between the two, give matter for further discussion and research. Amongst most of the works tackling these topics, however, the question is often raised whether this human-animal relation should perhaps be seen as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy. Whereas Aristotle made a clear-cut distinction between the different categories of living species, “[t]oday, ethologists who study the minds and behaviors of nonhuman animals show that, such as Darwin theorized, there is no radical break between the emotional and mental capacities of humans and other animals; instead, there is a continuity of capacities” (DeMello 2012, 42).

This potential change of perception, however, is not as simple as it may seem. The first step to consider human-animal relations as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy lies in the agreement that human beings are themselves animals. The main difficulty that arises then is to try and understand what is supposedly so special about the human species, which makes it deserve this higher status compared to that of other animals. Furthermore, the idea of redefining the separation between humans and animals as a continuum does not come without its challenges and concerns. DeMello, for instance, argues that

[t]he artificial boundary between “us” [humans] and “them” [nonhuman animals] is certainly part of what allows humans to use other animals for human benefit. If we were to grant a continuity among the various species, then the use of some animals for meat and others for labor (and still others as family members) would be, perhaps, harder to justify. (16)

In other words, the way in which humans make a clear-cut distinction between them and nonhuman animals helps them exert their superiority without having to question their own animal-related practices and without feeling too guilty about them. Redefining the distinction as a continuum would therefore come with its share of consequences. It would, for instance, confront humans with their own inhumanity, which lies in the way they have been treating or using animals to fulfil their own needs and desires. Additionally, the idea of continuity does not really question the human beings’ superiority, since, even in the decision of deconstructing the categories of species, humans essentially remain in power. All the decisions regarding animals, whether they concern the way they are considered or the way

they are treated, remain in the hands of human beings, making it difficult to imagine a future in which nonhuman animals would be humans' equals.

In "The Posthuman Future of Man: Anthropocentrism and the Other of Technology in Anglo-American Science Fiction" (2012), Pordzik, who takes an interest in dystopian and utopian fiction, also raises a notable point when he asks: "How much similarity is needed in order to state with a certain degree of assurance that a given individual resembles a human?" (146). According to this, the continuum between different species would be based on a classification of features which are more or less typically ascribed to humans. The more features a species shares with human beings, the more human they would seem to be and the more they would consequently distance themselves from animals. This then raises a new question: what are those features that make one seem either human or non-human, and are they categorized in a hierarchical manner? One could wonder, for instance, if it is the physical aspects more than the emotional or behavioural aspects that make a certain type of species look more or less like a human being. Let us take an example from the world of fiction. H.G. Well's famous *The Time Machine* (1895) depicts a world in which animals do not exist anymore, and the human species has been divided into two categories: the Eloi, who are angel-like people, and the Morlocks, who seem to be closer to apes. In this novel, Pordzik argues, "the reader quickly notices that there is no intrinsic standard to define the characteristics of humans at all" (146), showing the difficulty of trying to single out the features of the human subject.

Despite this difficulty, the human-animal continuum is still visible in today's Western societies. With a long tradition of pet keeping and companionship between humans and animals (the most prototypical example being the relation between a dog and its owner) comes a habit of anthropomorphism, according to which human features are attributed to animal species. This happens in literature too. In children's books, for instance, it is not rare to come across animals that talk, feel emotions and express those emotions. A. A. Milne's *Winnie-The-Pooh* (1926) and E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952) are famous examples thereof, as they portray bears, donkeys, pigs, and spiders with the physical features of those types of animals but with abilities and emotions typically ascribed to humans. As Christopher Robin tells Winnie that he is "the Best Bear in All the World", for instance, Pooh's reaction could very well be that of a human being: "'Am I?' said Pooh hopefully. And then he brightened

up suddenly” (2016, 38). Winnie is thus capable of understanding human language, using it, but his understanding of it also provokes emotional reactions (hope and happiness in this case).

While attributing human characteristics and behaviours to animals is typical of children’s books, it also happens in adult fiction. A few years ago, for instance, Garth Stein’s *The Art of Racing in the Rain* (2008) was published. In the first chapter, the narrator describes himself as follows: “I’ve always felt almost human. I’ve always known that there’s something about me that’s different than other dogs. Sure, I’m stuffed into a dog’s body, but that’s just the shell. It’s what’s inside that’s important. The soul. And my soul is very human” (2-3). This passage makes it rather clear that the narrator and focalizer is a dog who, it is worth noting, believes he will be reincarnated in human form after he dies. He is thus not human in appearance, yet this animal feels human on various levels: he has the ability to tell his story, he expresses thoughts and emotions, but also admits to feeling human. In 1972, similarly, Richard Bach published a book called *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, which, as its title suggests, is the story of a seagull, but told from the animal’s point of view. As Jonathan Seagull talks about his dream of being able to fly for the sake of flying rather than solely to get food, his story resonates with the reader as if it was that of any ordinary human being.

However, this idea of humanizing animals, be it in fiction or in real life, often depends on the type of animal. As previously mentioned, some characteristics, more than others, help strengthen the likelihood of a human identifying with or feeling empathy towards an animal. It has been suggested, for instance, that the faces, and especially the eyes, of some animals make identification easier (see Derrida’s *The Animal That Therefore I Am* [2006]¹). A tiger, for instance, shares several facial characteristics with humans and would therefore inspire more empathy than a fly or a worm, the faces of which are drastically different from what humans are used to. Furthermore, it is important to note that the opposite of anthropomorphism is possible too. Indeed, in *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and the Posthumanist Theory* (2003), Cary Wolfe suggests that one can distinguish between various categories of beings. Whereas anthropomorphism would correspond to the category he calls “humanized animals” (101), its opposite would be that of “animalized humans” (101). The

¹ In this long essay, Derrida dives into the field of animal studies by exploring different ethical aspects of the boundary between human and non-human.

latter consists in the brutal treatment of human beings as animals, which implies much cruelty since, as Wolfe puts it, “all manner of brutalizations carried out by cultural prescription can serve to animalize humans” (101). Political prisoners, for example, are often considered and treated as worthless animals.

Additionally, the human-animal continuum can be observed on a linguistic level too. Indeed, why is it that different pronouns are used to refer to different types of animals or to different animals depending on their status? While human person pronouns such as ‘she’ or ‘he’ are frequently used for pets, it would seem stranger to refer to a nuisance species such as rats as anything other than ‘it’. This only goes to show the broad spectrum to which human-animal studies can be applied.

1.4. The future of the human

When considering what it means to be human in Western societies in the era of the Anthropocene, it is not only interesting to consider human-animal relations, but also to look at relatively new concepts that have been trying to tackle the issue by redefining the place of humans and by imagining potential physical changes that could help them adapt to their current habitat. Two concepts which have emerged in this context are posthumanism and transhumanism.

To begin with, posthumanism is a term that implies the redefinition of the human and of its current position in the world. This term, however, appears to have multiple meanings. The difficulty of defining the concept of posthumanism perhaps lies in the already intricate concept of the human subject, which was previously addressed. Who, indeed, could assert with confidence what it means to be human, especially in a society like that of the twenty-first century, in which who one is, is very much influenced by scientific and technological progress? Braidotti, whose area of research centres around philosophy and feminism, has dedicated an entire book to posthumanism (*The Posthuman* [2013]). In this book, she considers the different meanings of posthumanism, as well as the history of the concept. She states that “[h]umanism’s restricted notions of what counts as the human is one of the keys to understand how we got to a post-human turn at all” (16). This implies not only that the

concepts of posthumanism and the human are hardly separable, but also that posthumanism is an attempt at moving away from humanism, by which is understood that the human holds a central place in the grand scheme of things. In *What is Posthumanism?* (2010) Cary Wolfe adds that posthumanism does not simply correspond to “a thematics of the decentering of the human in relation to either evolutionary, ecological, or technological coordinates”, but that it creates a necessity to develop new ways of thinking and to see “what thought has to become in the face of those challenges” (xvi). Posthumanism, in other words, entails more than moving away from naive humanism in the way we consider humans since it implies a need for a whole new approach to how we think the human.

In one of his articles (“Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future”), Seaman (2007), who works in cultural studies, further points out that “[p]osthumanism observes that there has never been one unified, cohesive ‘human’” (246-247). This means that it would be difficult to reach an agreement on a single comprehensive explanation of what being human actually entails. Disregarding the difficulty of defining the word, many scholars are still attempting to delineate posthumanism and the posthuman subject. Anderson (“Pre- and Posthuman Animals: The Limits and Possibilities of Animal-Human Relations”, 2017), for instance, says that “generally the posthuman is described as either a being that functions representationally to reconceive and/or challenge current humanistic ideologies about what it means to be human or as a future being” (18). This latter possibility, then, is comparable to Seaman’s (2007) definition of the posthuman subject. He indeed defines it as “a physical counterpart (and successor) to the universal human” (247), by which he means that the posthuman version of the human would be the result of scientific progress, such as “genetic manipulation” (247). The question that arises then is whether the human can already be considered the product of such genetic manipulation, given the important role science and technology play in one’s daily life.

In *The Posthuman* (2013), Braidotti further argues that the definition of posthumanism depends on the field of research. The word posthuman can thus sometimes refer to some kind of “[h]uman enhancement” (Braidotti, 2), as Seaman describes it, or it can mean that the *Homo sapiens* no longer holds a central position in the universe, such as is the case with the anthropocentric and anthropomorphic views. This latter explanation suggests that one should move away from anthropocentrism to start considering nonhuman species, such as plants and

animals, as equally valuable, although they have, for centuries in Western societies, been considered inferior.

A second concept has attempted to encapsulate the current position of the human subject: that of transhumanism, which echoes one of posthumanism's definitions, namely that of human enhancement. According to transhumanism, the human species can be or has already been modified because of scientific progress. In today's society, the notion of the human subject is indeed linked to and influenced by scientific progress in a sort of coevolution, a word used "to describe the mutual relationship of biological evolution and the evolution of human sociocultural structures" (Pordzik 2012, 150). Advances in the fields of biology, technology or engineering thus imply changes in the way other aspects of life evolve. In other words, species have to adapt and reassess their place within the ecosystem as a consequence of progress in technology. The transhuman subject is thus a vague concept, sometimes interchangeable with the posthuman subject (as in Seaman's aforementioned definition of the concept), since the possibilities science offers seem to be endless.

When talking about transhumanism, however, one generally thinks of concrete examples of genetically modified beings, or beings created from scratch, such as robots and clones. One can then wonder if we, as a species, can already be considered transhuman. There does not seem to be a right answer to this question, as the concept remains very subjective and the boundary between where 'human' ends and 'transhuman' starts is blurry. Is, for instance, a man who has undergone heart transplant or a person who lives with a prosthetic arm transhuman? More simply put: have we, because of the presence and role of science and technology in our daily lives, become transhuman?

The position of the human subject in most Western societies, be that in relation to other species or in relation to scientific progress, is thus far from being a simple matter. The questions and issues it raises, however, have not only been raised in scientific fields, but also in literature. In his article on "Generation Anthropocene" (2016), Robert Macfarlane explains that, with the era of the Anthropocene, "a need has grown for fresh vocabularies and narratives that might account for the kinds of relation and responsibility in which we find ourselves entangled" and further adds that "[t]he novel is the cultural form to which the Anthropocene arguably presents most difficulties, and most opportunities". Many authors thus feel the need to try, through their fictional works, to comment on the human condition

as well as on the possible future(s) of our species. This is even more so the case in certain genres, such as science-fiction, which allows a “process of cognitive estrangement” (Suvin 1972, 1979 in Herman 2018, 73), that is “re-envision[s] the potentialities of the present as future actualities” and, by doing so, “gives to texts that use the conventions of science-fiction to explore the dynamics of species changes the capacity to pose substantive challenges to existing cultural ontologies” (Suvin 1972, 1979 paraphrased by Herman 2018, 73). Not only science-fiction, but speculative and dystopian fiction, too, can help re-evaluate the position of the human species, the latter genre being, as Pordzik (2012) puts it, “best suited” (143) to investigate questions of post- or transhumanism. These genres are indeed often future-oriented and try to explore new ideas for changes that could be made to improve the current state of the world, be that on an ecological, political, or social level. Some authors, for instance, suggest getting rid of the human species and replacing it with robots, while others contemplate the possibility of genetically modifying humans to help them adapt to a frequently changing environment. The next section offers a few examples of such works of fiction.

1.5. Alternative species in fiction

The idea of creating new species in fiction is not recent at all. Countless alternative species can be found in various ancient myths already. These species include human-animal hybrids, but also hybrids of different non-human species. Greek mythology, for instance, offers examples such as the Minotaur (part human and part bull) or the well-known Pegasus (a winged horse). Hindu divinities, too, are often represented as hybrid species, such as Ganesha, God of Success, which has the head of an elephant. The notion of alternative species is therefore centuries old. It has, however, evolved through the ages, alongside technological and scientific advances. With new possibilities come new concepts, such as that of transhumanism, and new literary genres to explore them. Transhuman species can be found in multiple works of science-fiction, for instance, but also in dystopian and speculative fiction. In 1818, for example, Mary Shelley portrayed a new sort of being in the form of Frankenstein’s creature, made from human remains in a laboratory. Decades later, Philip K. Dick, in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), presented a species of androids – that is, human-

looking robots – who are deprived of empathy and are therefore seen as less human, although their appearance contradicts that impression. In 2004, Isaac Asimov published a collection of short stories called *I, Robot*, in which he portrays different robots with what he calls a “positronic brain”, that is, a brain which allows them to have a human consciousness. More recently, Ian McEwan discussed the creation of synthetic humans in his latest book, *Machines Like Me* (2019), which involves a love triangle between two humans and a synthetic human. The title of this book also echoes one of the questions at the heart of this dissertation: can alternative human species be considered as anything other than machines?

These few examples from the world of fiction show how the topic of alternative species is not new to the 21st century but has been dealt with for quite some time. Yet today’s Western societies seem to have known a revival of interest in the topic, with the genre of dystopian fiction becoming increasingly popular, amongst older as well as younger generations, with releases such as Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* series (2008-2010) or the recent television adaptation of Margaret Atwood’s 1985 feminist dystopia: *The Handmaid’s Tale*, in which she imagines – but does she really imagine it all? – a world in which women are reduced to nothing. Within this genre are many films and novels which like to portray various types of beings, be they modified humans, robots or morphed animals. These include recent films such as Robert Rodriguez’s *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019), about a cyborg, or Yórgos Lánthimos’s *The Lobster* (2015), in which humans are threatened to be turned into animals. Recent novels, too, have explored the possibilities new species offer. This is the case with Ian McEwan’s aforementioned *Machines Like Me* (2019), but also, for instance, of Patrick Ness’ *The Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008), in which humans have the ability to hear other people’s thoughts. Dystopian novels of this type, Pordzik (2012) argues, “share a creative preoccupation with the idea of otherness as determining the self-image of humanity” (144). By portraying new species and alternative worlds, this type of fiction indeed often tries not only to show what is or what could go wrong with today’s world, but also to understand what it means to be human, if a term such as ‘human’ still has meaning. The freedom that those genres allow thus makes literature an interesting area of research when it comes to issues such as those previously mentioned above (namely transhumanism or the continuum between animal and human species).

So far, however, alternative species in fiction have often been portrayed as dangerous and threatening. Let us take the example of Mary Shelley's book. In *Frankenstein* (1818), Victor Frankenstein creates an alternative species by assembling different parts from cadavers, which becomes known as Frankenstein's creature, also commonly called Frankenstein's monster. The name says it all: this new creature is considered monstrous. This monster aspect is not only present in the name, but also in the creature's physical characteristics. The proportions of his (or should it be 'its'?) body, for instance, are enormous compared to an average human being, and this only adds to the fact that he is a collage of dead body parts. Because of Frankenstein's failed attempt at creating a beautiful being, it is difficult for people to see the creature as a sensitive being, although he does show an emotional side. Consequently, the way he is seen and treated by others lead him to act accordingly by killing someone by accident, which turns him into a monster. Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), on the other hand, depicts a different kind of alternative species. The new species of androids look physically human. Their personalities, however, are anything but human-like. Which of the two species, then, would be the most human one? Frankenstein's creature because it acts human, or Dick's androids because they look human? When considering alternative species, both the physical and the psychological/emotional aspects are thus worth being considered. But which aspects play a more significant role in determining whether a new species is more or less similar to humans as we know them? In other words, do alternative species seem more human when they share physical characteristics with humans or when they share similarities on a deeper level, such as on an emotional one?

Furthermore, the link between the physical and psychological aspects of an alternative species is worth being more closely analysed. There indeed seems to be a long tradition of representing less human, and humane, characters as looking different from the established norms and, for instance, as having deformities or disabilities. Throughout the centuries, there has been a somewhat troubling constancy in the portrayal of the monsters and so-called "bad guys" of stories, in which the outside appearance mirrors an inside monstrosity. Examples include the beast in Walt Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), whose personality, to some extent, matches his beastly looks. J.M. Barrie's Captain Hook, too, has a hook for a hand; a deformity which is used to intensify his villainous side. Those characters' differences are supposed to make them scary in the eyes of others. The further they distance themselves from

the ideal human, the more threatening they become. Their physique is thus purposely made (supposedly) ugly – an ugliness defined by how much it differs from the ideal human – to match their ugly personality. Or reversibly: those characters are given an ugly personality to match their unusual appearance. This raises the question of the influence that both the physical and psychological aspects have on one another when looking at alternative species and considering the various processes which can help humanize, dehumanize, or even demonize a species.

Finally, when considering alternative species in fiction, an observation can be made as to their origin. These alternative species, or the attempts at creating them, are most often the result of human intervention and experiments. This means that they always (or in most cases) live alongside human beings. It therefore seems quite unfathomable that a new species, that is neither the continuity nor the enhancement of humans, could exist without or after the existence of humans. When observed, new creatures are therefore always compared to the species alongside which they exist. The superior position of human beings in Western societies thus interferes with how alternative species are considered. As a result, this poses a difficulty in trying to redefine the human species since all the new creations cannot be considered as completely separate from human beings, but, on the contrary, originate from them.

1.6. Margaret Atwood and Kazuo Ishiguro's alternative species

In the early 2000s in the Anglo-Saxon world, two well-known authors, amongst others, broached the topic of alternative species. On the one hand, Japanese-British author Kazuo Ishiguro explored the idea of having clones in *Never Let Me Go* (2005). Canadian author Margaret Atwood, on the other hand, imagined a whole new species in her *MaddAddam* trilogy, which consists of *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013). By being innovative in their own way, both authors managed to make their readers think about their condition of human beings.

Although Ishiguro's initial aim was not to feed into the debate on alternative species, but rather to explore "the natural lifespan of human beings" (FaberandFaber, 00:00:13) by looking at what the consequences of knowing that your time on earth is limited can be, the

clones that he portrays are still an alternative species. In *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro depicts an alternative world, which is not exactly apocalyptic, but is still dystopian in various aspects. The story takes place in a seemingly unaltered version of England in the late 1990s, except that one aspect of the society is different: a species of clones lives alongside normal human beings. The book focuses mainly on three of these clones: Kathy, Ruth and Tommy, who grew up together at the Hailsham boarding school in a secluded part of the country. The school is exclusively reserved for clones, and the children do not leave this place until they become young adults. They then get to enter the real world, but still solely live with their own kind. As they become older, the clones are meant to start donating their vital organs in order to save the lives of 'real' human beings. Most of them, like the narrator Kathy, get to be so-called carers and accompany other clones throughout their donations, until they themselves have to start donating. Some clones then make it through four organ donations, while others 'complete' (i.e. die) after one or two donations only.

In her *MaddAddam* trilogy, Margaret Atwood depicts a much more obviously chaotic world. She tells the story of Snowman, who used to be named Jimmy and has been left alone on earth, or so he believes, with a whole new species called the Crakers. This species was scientifically designed by Crake, Jimmy's friend, who believed the human species as it was was doomed, and therefore wanted to replace it with a new and drastically different one. To achieve this plan, Crake created a pill that he managed to spread across the whole world: a pill that was advertised as a contraceptive, but the purpose of which was actually to erase the whole population. Between flashbacks and flashforwards, the reader thus comes to understand what led to this new apocalyptic world and to the creation of this new species. The Crakers only eat plants, do not need to wear any clothes, and are free of taboo concepts such as racism and jealousy. These aspects were all originally thought of by Crake in the aim of creating a completely sustainable species, free of the negative aspects of humanity. Despite his efforts, however, Crake's ideal futuristic vision does not exactly go as planned. Indeed, throughout the books, the Crakers start evolving further than intended, particularly because of their curiosity, their growing interest in storytelling, and the influence human beings have on them.

The way in which these two authors depict alternative species makes for interesting research in terms of posthumanism, transhumanism and human-animal relations. The

features of both the clones and the Crakers being so different, but also very similar in various respects, can lead one to believe that, despite the attempts that can be or have been made to move away from humans, some traits are difficult to run from. Comparing both species thus leads to questions which perhaps, in the end, reveal more about the human essence in general than about those alternative species.

The reason why Margaret Atwood and Kazuo Ishiguro's portrayal of alternative species is particularly interesting is that, as opposed to the typical fictional accounts of new species, such as those mentioned earlier, these more recent books offer a new and rather nuanced approach to reimagining species, away from robots and monsters. Rather than a clear-cut dichotomy between the supposedly perfect human beings and the supposedly monstrous others, these two authors indeed favour a more nuanced stance, at times even paradoxical, in which humans are perhaps less perfect than one may think and alternative species more suited to this planet. They also prove that it is possible to imagine alternative species which are not intrinsically bad or ugly and do not suggest a dark future, as did Donna Haraway in a book chapter titled "The Camille Stories" (2016). In this chapter, she explains how she took part in a workshop during which she was asked to imagine a baby and its evolution through several generations. The point of this exercise was to "participate in a kind of genre fiction committed to strengthening ways to propose near futures, possible futures, and implausible but real nows" (136). She envisions a baby which is intrinsically linked to monarch butterflies and shows how, through evolution, both the person and the insect start becoming one. Thereby, Haraway suggests that the future does not have to be as dark as it is often depicted in many works of speculative fiction, which Ishiguro and Atwood's alternative species, in various degrees, also do.

Finally, Atwood and Ishiguro deconstruct and blur the lines between various categories of living creatures (plants, animals, humans) by imagining beings in which different types of species blend together (although not always taking the best from each species) in order to present a potential alternative species which would belong to neither of these categories, but would be a combination of all of them. While Michel Foucault concludes *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966) by suggesting that "man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end" (Foucault qtd. in Wolfe 2012, xii), contemporary

writers try to consider the implications of the end of the human species as we know it and the creation of an alternative one with everything that it entails.

Chapter 2: “Poor creatures” – Clones, animals and humans in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*

In the first few lines of Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* (NLMG), the reader can already sense that the narrator, Kathy H., is quite unconventional in various respects. Kathy starts by talking about her job as a so-called carer, but the way she talks about it does not sound ordinary. In addition, she talks about a certain ‘they’ without telling the reader who ‘they’ are, but making it clear that they have power over her and her work: “That [11 years] sounds long enough, I know, but actually they want me to go on for another eight months, until the end of this year” (3). In this sentence, she also suggests that eleven years is a long time to work and expects the reader to share this opinion. Indeed, by using “I know”, Kathy makes it feel as though she is anticipating the reader’s reaction to her working what she considers to be a very long time. This implies, as does the fact that she does not introduce the ‘they’ she is talking about, that her readership is not what she expects and consequently knows less than she does about the situation. Kathy seems to believe that her readers are part of her world, or, at least, that this is a possibility. This is made clearer when she uses phrases such as “[i]f you’re one of them [carers]” (3) and “I don’t know how it was where you were” (13). From the beginning onwards, the reader is therefore put in a delicate position which reflects that of Kathy and her friends. As argued by Black in an article called “Ishiguro’s Inhuman Aesthetics” (2009), “[o]ur condition as readers exactly mirrors the education of the students themselves” (792). Indeed, the reader is “told and not told” (NLMG, 81), as are the clones during their time at Hailsham, as will be demonstrated later. On *Never Let Me Go*’s first page, the reader is given various pieces of information which they cannot properly process yet, and hence can only speculate on who Kathy really is. They learn that she works as a so-called carer under someone’s authority and that she cares for donors who sometimes go through no less than four organ donations – which is, in our current world, very unlikely.

These elements – Kathy’s apparent submission to a higher authority, her thinking that eleven years is a long time to work and her donors enduring a high number of donations – could be explained in several ways. Perhaps that Kathy, for some reason, was not supposed to work that long at her current position; perhaps that she lives in a society which has different conventions – although the book does say that the story takes place in England in the 1990s;

or perhaps that Kathy H. and her donors are not quite ordinary humans. Throughout the book, the reader comes to understand the meaning of Kathy's narration and discovers that she is a clone living in an alternative version of England. The questions that can be raised, then, are what exactly does being a clone entail in Ishiguro's novel and what can it teach us on the human species. In *Narratology Beyond the Human* (2018), Herman discusses Ceridwen Dovey's *Only the Animals* (2015), a short story collection which suggests that "only the animals can tell us what it is to be human" (Penguin Books Australia). Amongst others, he mentions a short story about a dolphin who raises questions in the same vein as those I aim to address: "Why do you sometimes treat other people as humans and sometimes as animals? And why do you sometimes treat creatures as animals and sometimes as humans?" (locs. 2437-44 cited in Herman, 194). In these next few pages, I will try to answer these questions by looking at different aspects of the clones' lives in order to understand if, and where, as a species, they can be situated on the human-animal continuum.

2.1. Clones as animals

When reading *Never Let Me Go*, it appears that the clones Ishiguro depicts are, in various ways, comparable to animals. The first aspect which reveals some kind of animality in the clones is Kazuo Ishiguro's choice of words. On the first page of the story already, Kathy mentions her donors and how "hardly any of them have been classified as 'agitated'" (3). This last word resonates as one that could be used when talking about animal behaviours. Indeed, the term 'agitated' could very well be applied, for instance, to an animal in a cage which has been captured against its will and wants to be released. Furthermore, the fact that the word is quoted by Kathy puts the emphasis on its use as a specific term in the clones' universe. Kathy herself would indeed perhaps not use that word to refer to her donors, but it is apparently part of the jargon of her job; a jargon in which words seem to cross the boundary between the animal world and the human world. She then opposes the term "calm" (3) to that of agitated. This word, of course, does not necessarily belong to the realm of animals, but it does, in this context, echo this idea of an animal sitting in a cage and, this time, reacting calmly to its inevitable fate. Kathy also argues that she has "developed a kind of instinct around donors"

(3). The word 'instinct' can itself be associated with animals which, if one considers their lack of rationality – as in Aristotle's vision – must act solely according to their instincts.

In *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (2008), Armstrong discusses the representation of the whale in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851). He examines various aspects, amongst which the divide between culture and nature and the power of agency of humans and animals. He mentions Robert Zoellner's *The Salt-Sea Mastodon* (1973), which is itself an analysis of *Moby-Dick*, and says that

[e]ven while critiquing the severance between human and nature imposed by modernity, [Zoellner] reinstates the dichotomy by insisting upon the animal's blind enslavement to instinct, and so conversely defining a notion of conscious intelligence that preserves agency for humans alone. (103)

Whereas Zoellner ascribes qualities of intelligence and the ability to think about one's actions to humans, the animal – in this case the whale – can only act instinctively. Along the same lines, Herman (2018) discusses the humanizing of animals through "mind-ascribing practices in nonfictional as well as fictional narratives" (230) and mentions Eric Knight's *Lassie Come-Home* (1940), an adventure story about Lassie, a dog trying to reunite with her family. Herman argues that "Knight follows Burroughs in dichotomizing instinct and reason along species lines. Hence Knight repeatedly indicates that Lassie only has instinct, and lacks the ability to reason about the situations and events in which she is involved" (230). In *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy thus seems to have this instinctive side to her, making her comparable to Herman Melville's whale or Eric Knight's dog. However, she also has this capacity to rationalize which Zoellner attributes to human beings, as demonstrated in the way she is able to reflect on her life throughout her narration. This therefore shows that Kathy, to some extent, situates herself in between the animal world and the human world.

Later on, Kathy admits that she has a privileged situation, although it might not seem so to the reader. She says that other carers may get irritated or frustrated because of the fact that she gets "to pick and choose who [she] look[s] after" (3) and that she consequently "always chooses her own kind: people from Hailsham, or one of the other privileged estates" (3-4). The mention of "her own kind" accentuates the idea that she belongs to a certain group or species: perhaps to a species of humans, of nonhuman animals, of human animals (if there

can be such a concept), or perhaps to a category of machines. She further specifies that “choosing your own kind” is “natural” (4), once against echoing that idea of instinct and the more natural end of the continuum.

Besides the language use, animality is also present in the portrayal of the clones, which the character of Tommy epitomizes. This is first demonstrated in the opening chapter of the book, in which Kathy shares her first memory related to Hailsham. The incident she relates takes place during a football game which involves a few of the boys from Hailsham, amongst whom Tommy. Another group of students, including Kathy and Ruth, are watching from a window as the events unfold. Tommy is known for throwing tantrums and the group know that it is about to happen again. They had indeed “heard about this latest plot and were vaguely curious to watch it unfold” (7), although “vaguely curious” seems to be an understatement. The plot is the following: when the time comes for picking teams for the football game, the boys have agreed to not pick Tommy at all. This naturally infuriates the latter who, as expected, throws a tantrum and provides a show for everyone watching. This scene could very well be compared to one taking place at a zoo or during a circus performance. Tommy would then be the animal providing entertainment while spectators are eagerly watching. One of them even starts “mimicking one after the other the expressions that appeared on Tommy’s face” (8), as a child would mimic the actions and expressions of an animal. Another girl watching also directly compares him to an animal, by saying that he is “like a dog doing a pee” (10). Tommy is put in a very vulnerable position, in which he is victimized and made fun of not only by the students directly responsible for the plot, but also by everyone who is watching and passively participating. In this regard, he is as helpless as an animal in a cage.

When Tommy realizes the aim of his fellow students’ plot, he takes “a few strides after them” (9), as an angry animal may try to pursue its oppressors. Kathy further adds that “it was hard to say whether his instinct was to give angry chase or if he was panicked at being left behind” (9), mentioning once again this idea of instinct that drives one to act, but also introducing the fear of being left alone, which a baby or child might feel when seeing their parents stray too far. Of course, however, his public loves the fact that Tommy is getting angry and running after the other boys, as this provides them with the action they came for. Again, they are comparable to visitors at a zoo: they have paid for their entrance with their time and

want their visit to be worth the expense. While it may be pleasant to see a wild animal sleep, it is, to them, much more exciting to see it in action. The children at Hailsham are thus drawn to the events unfolding before their eyes, just as spectators would be watching, for instance, animals fight in their enclosure.

Although this plot may be funny to Hailsham students, the reader can feel Tommy's vulnerability. The latter's defenceless position also ensues from his ignorance of what is about to happen and his being unaware that something is even about to happen. As Ruth puts it, "[h]e doesn't suspect a thing. Look at him. He really doesn't suspect a thing" (7). The reader thus knows that something is about to happen to Tommy, which he himself ignores. In this respect, the reader may, to a certain degree, be said to participate in the cruelty of the events without having the power to stop them. Finally, the last words of the chapter which conclude the football incident consist in Ruth calling Tommy a "[m]ad animal" (12). This means that Tommy is not only portrayed as acting like an animal, but also that other clones see him as one.

In the second chapter, Kathy recalls being told about other incidents involving Tommy throwing tantrums, "like the time Tommy was supposed to have heaved over two desks in Room 14, spilling all the contents on the floor, while the rest of the class, having escaped on to the landing, barricaded the door to stop him coming out" (14). This passage once more echoes the idea of a wild animal in a cage. The students and spectators, being so scared of the uncontrollability of Tommy, feel obliged to escape and lock him in. The use of words such as "escape" and "barricade" further reinforces the intensity of the incident as well as its scary side. It is worth noting, too, that such behaviours could also serve as examples for Freud's theory that children up to a certain age, as a species, are unable to differentiate themselves from other animal species.

Additionally, due to his reputation of being bullied and throwing tantrums, Tommy is like a pest other students want to avoid. On the topic of animals, DeMello (2012) argues that "the more charismatic the animal, the more the public will tolerate "destructive" behavior; the less charismatic, the more likely that an animal will be defined by all parties as a pest" (75). This can certainly be applied to Tommy, who is, in the eyes of other students, not charismatic at all and subsequently has the bad reputation of being a so-called loser. Therefore, none of the students at Hailsham want to be seen with Tommy throughout his

years of persecution. This goes on for a little while even after the tantrums stop. Tommy, for instance, once asks Kathy to come join him outside after lunch. Kathy, although she does want to go meet Tommy, feels somewhat reluctant because she does not want to be seen sympathizing with him alone. She thus prepares an excuse just in case she needs to justify herself: "I decided I could just about make out I'd gone strolling aimlessly down there and happened to come across Tommy" (25). While Kathy thinks that Tommy is worth her time and attention, she is still aware of his reputation and fears that she might taint her own by being seen with him in public. Tommy is therefore considered as a pest that one would prefer to avoid if they do not want to catch his disease: the bad reputation.

Although Tommy manages to keep his temper under control from his last years at Hailsham until he becomes a donor, his animal instincts, on one occasion, do reappear. This happens towards the very end of the book. Kathy and Tommy learn that the rumour about the existence of deferrals, which allow clones to postpone their donations of a few years when they are in love, is no more than that: a rumour. On their way back from Madame's house (i.e. one of the co-founders of Hailsham), Tommy asks Kathy to stop the car because he needs to get some fresh air. Kathy complies and stays in the vehicle until she "hear[s] the first scream" (268). What is interesting to note in this scene is where Tommy's 'tantrum' takes place. Indeed, Tommy leaves the car and stops in a cow field. Before reaching him, Kathy "[comes] up to a fence" (268) over which she needs to climb, emphasizing this idea of the animal being contained behind bars. As they are ready to get back to the car, Tommy adds: "Good job there weren't cows in the field" (269). This scene shows that Tommy's behaviour, in that particular moment, is close to the animal world. Tommy can therefore be considered as the character who most conspicuously embodies the border zone between human and non-human.

2.2. The human-clone relation

The animality of the clones goes further than Ishiguro's use of language and Tommy's behaviour. Not only him, but all the clones can, to some extent, be compared with animals. The most passive but nonetheless very present way in which the clones can be associated with animals is found in the way they are treated by their society. Indeed, their situation could be compared to two types of animals: meat animals and domesticated animals.

According to DeMello (2012), “[a]nimals are considered to be domesticated when they are kept for a distinct purpose, humans control their breeding, their survival depends on humans, and they develop genetic traits that are not found in the wild” (84). Although not all of these aspects apply to Ishiguro’s clones (such as the last one), most of them are common to both domesticated animals and clones. The latter “are kept for a distinct purpose” – that of saving human lives; their breeding is, as will be discussed later, heavily controlled; and their survival does “depend[] on humans” – as they do not get a say in whether or not they become donors, and therefore do not get to choose between living and dying. In addition, DeMello argues that “domesticated animals can be bred, controlled, abused, or killed as the owner desires” (68). Kazuo Ishiguro’s clones, although they, at times, seem to be rather free (such as during their time at the Cottages), bear similarities with such domesticated animals. They cannot be bred as such because they are born infertile, but they are created by humans, it seems, without limit. They are therefore heavily controlled by their owners/creators who, as was just mentioned, determine what their future will be. The clones are abused in the way they are treated and through the forced donations of their vital organs. Finally, they eventually ‘complete’ as a consequence of this abuse.

The relation between clones and humans is thus comparable to the relation between domesticated animals and humans: it is “one of dominance and control as humans [take] on the role of master” and animals are “classified as property” (68). There is hence not much difference between a dog the masters of which have decided to get rid of, either because it did not serve a purpose to them anymore, or because it hindered the realisation of more important ones (such as having a baby without taking the risk of the dog attacking it) and a clone in Ishiguro’s novel. Just like dogs or other domesticated animals, the clones are well treated on the surface and (almost) cared for when they have not yet fulfilled their purpose and are therefore still useful. At Hailsham, for instance, they undergo weekly check-ups to make sure they are healthy, and the carers do sometimes display signs of affection towards them. On the contrary, when humans have taken from them everything they could, both clones and domesticated animals are dismissed. As suggested by DeMello, there is the idea “that animals are only good if they are used for (...) some personal or commercial purpose” (79). When animals do not serve such a purpose, they are then viewed as pests, that is, as worthless and undesirable. However, there does seem to be at least one difference between

Ishiguro's clones and domesticated animals. Whereas the domestication and domination of animals such as cats, puppies or bunnies, can also be attributed to the affection humans can feel towards these species, the clones are only created and controlled to serve a purpose of greed.

According to what Darwin called 'artificial selection' in *On the Origin of Species* (1859), humans have impacted the breeding of animals by favouring certain breeds or by forcing the creation of new ones. Dog breeds, for instance, "were created to fulfil human desires" (DeMello, 91). Similarly, the clone species was indeed conceived to fulfil such desires (namely the desire to live longer). When it comes to breeding, the clone's inability to reproduce can also, as was previously mentioned, be compared to how humans control the breeding of animals. Unlike clones, animals are naturally born with the ability to procreate. Humans, however, have been tempering with this aspect through various means, such as surgeries. For instance, "castration has been used for thousands of years to ensure that undesirable animals cannot breed" (DeMello, 92). By scientifically creating a species that is unable to procreate, humans have asserted their power and authority over them, and made sure that the population of clones does not get out of control. Additionally, the fact that the clones are infertile, of course, influences their approach to sex, as will be discussed below.²

Besides domesticated animals, Ishiguro's clones are also, to some extent, treated as meat animals by the system, to the exception of a few people, such as the guardians at Hailsham. Like cows and pigs blindly waiting in a slaughterhouse, clones are all grouped together in a place surrounded by fences, bound by their common status and fate. Comparing Hailsham to a slaughterhouse would perhaps be slightly exaggerated for two reasons. Firstly, Hailsham is not the place where the clones die. Secondly, the treatment of animals in many slaughterhouses is evidently worse than the treatment of clones in their boarding school. Students at Hailsham, for instance, have space to move around, giving them an impression of freedom. The underlying, more passive cruelty is nonetheless still present. The way they are regarded by society is very similar to the way people generally look at slaughterhouses. In both cases, people try to pretend they simply do not exist. Indeed, acknowledging the clones'

² It is worth noting, too, that the concept of cloning itself has so far, in our non-fictional world, only been applied to animals, Dolly the sheep being the first experiment in 1995. Indeed, cloning is mostly found in the "livestock industry", but it is also "found in the vivisection and pet industries" (DeMello, 92), usually for the purpose of medical research.

existence would entail the recognition of their own inhuman methods. Although many citizens actively or passively support and participate in the animal or clone business (by eating meat in great quantities or by getting organ transplants respectively), they prefer to pretend that those practices and the atrocities they come with do not exist, or that, if they do, they are excused by the fact that it is supposedly for a good cause. Miss Emily, one of the guardians, accurately puts this vision into words towards the end of the book:

However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neuron disease, heart disease. So for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn't matter. (NLMG, 258)

Herman (2018) echoes this idea in his discussion on bioluminescence in Philip Pullman's *I Was a Rat!* (1999) when he says that the main character, Roger, a boy who used to be a rat, is characterized "as not-human in order to neutralize the threat he poses to the established order" (73). By categorizing a being as either human or non-human (or, in this case, as "less than human"), societies thus assert their power over those beings, but also manage to make themselves free of any guilt. This, then, could explain why clones live in secluded places of the country, be it Hailsham or the Cottages, the latter being in a seemingly inhabited village where even "[t]he buses had stopped coming ages ago" (NLMG, 196). Hiding them therefore serves as a strategy to help humans cope with their own inhuman practices. Living in secluded places is not, however, the only hiding technique that is used. Indeed, the fact that they are clones rather than a whole new and drastically different species means that they are not distinguishable from ordinary humans, and, as a result, makes it possible for them to hide in plain sight, as when Kathy and her friends manage to go on a trip to Norfolk and interact with regular humans unrecognized.

Hailsham, too, bears similarities with different types of buildings or institutions which are relatively closely related to animals. As was previously addressed, it could first be said to represent a slaughterhouse, although the suffering of the clones is more passive than that of meat animals. Additionally, the school also compares to a zoo. In *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (2008), Armstrong mentions Timothy Findley's novel *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984), which "portrays an apocalyptic flood, in a narrative that explicitly revises the

biblical story of Noah" (173) and his ark. Findley's ark could certainly be compared to Hailsham in some respects. The ark is described as having a "dual nature as refuge and prison" (174) and as a "place of salvation and place of deprivation" (174), hence embodying "the paradox of the zoo" (174). The zoo, Armstrong adds, is "another of those forms of contracted space commonly found in contemporary human-animal narratives" (174). Although Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* is not exactly a human-animal narrative since it does not portray beings in animal form, it does echo some of the elements mentioned above. Indeed, it is, as the ark in Findley's novel, both a "refuge and prison". The more obvious aspect is probably that of the prison, since the clones are quite literally stuck at Hailsham, with no possibility to escape. They are, like prisoners – albeit innocent ones – captive of a system much stronger than they are. At some point, Hailsham is even compared to a prison camp during World War Two, the difference being that the fences surrounding the place are not electrified, as will be shown in a following section. Furthermore, the beauty of the location, which is often mentioned and described by Kathy in her narration, although it does make the place seem less harsh and gives an impression of freedom, does not change the fact that Hailsham is a place from which clones cannot escape. It is, nevertheless, also a place of refuge, protecting them from the outside world in at least two ways. Firstly, Hailsham protects the clones from what could be done to them in the outside world, although they do eventually go into this outside world to serve their purpose. Secondly, it protects them from having to face a reality they know they will never be part of, which would consequently make their fate more difficult to accept. Furthermore, Hailsham's aspect of refuge is, in a way, made possible by the people who run it. Kathy, for instance, admits that Miss Emily, one of the guardians, "made [them] all feel so safe at Hailsham" (39) with her presence only.

It is also worth noting that, first and foremost, keeping clones locked up in institutions such as Hailsham protects the outside world from them, and more specifically from being confronted with the cruelty of a system citizens have accepted. By not having to see the clones as children, the guilt of the outside population is alleviated. On another level, it also protects higher authorities from possibly having to deal with rebellion since Hailsham limits the clones' potential desire to rebel in the way they bring them up. In a chapter on Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), Herman (2018) discusses the importance of geographical space when it comes to how certain species are considered. He states that "animals become a problem –

as the presence of Gregor [i.e. a man morphed into an insect] in the Samsas' apartment suggests – when they infiltrate spaces that are understood to be reserved for and controlled by humans" (128). According to this, clones would thus become a problem should they escape from the geographical spaces that were created for them, such as Hailsham. Herman goes on to add that "vermin can be defined as species entering spaces where they are not supposed to be" (129). This implies that the shift between a space within which a certain species is supposed to be contained and a space in which it is unwelcome, more than the nature of the species itself, determines how the species in question will be regarded by the outside world. Within the walls of Hailsham clones are therefore perfectly acceptable, but not so much in more public spaces. In this regard, keeping the clones locked up in certain spaces allows their society to protect itself from the clones' unwanted presence outside these boundaries.

In his discussion on Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, Armstrong cites Martin on the topic of zoos. The latter argues that "[z]oos operated as arks, holding animals for the future (...) a future that would never really come" (Martin 1994: 287 qtd in Armstrong, 174). This perfectly represents what Hailsham stands for. Indeed, the school holds clones "for the future" and prepares them for that future in the outside world by teaching them to read and write, for instance. Rather than being let into the real world, clones are also taught how to interact in various social situations in what they call "Culture Briefing[s]" (108), i.e. "classes where [they] had to role play various people [they]'d find out there – waiters in cafés, policemen and so on" (108). The skills that they are taught, however, will not be of much use to them, or at least not for long. This therefore raises a new question: why are clones prepared for an outside world they will barely be a part of? This question is especially relevant since it is the source of one of Hailsham's biggest paradox: to feel less guilty, the school offers human living conditions to the clones. By doing so, however, their system becomes even crueller and this consequently increases their feeling of guilt. Simply put, their attempt to relieve their guilt by treating clones as humans is a failure. Why, then, do they keep this system in place?

Attempting to answer this question implies turning back to the animal-human continuum. It seems that a system which involves cloning people and donating their organs to human beings can only be stopped if the clones were to be considered as humans themselves. Hailsham, although it resembles institutions such as slaughterhouses and zoos in some respects, has acquired a rather prestigious status in the cloning world. Their students are

therefore thought to receive better treatment compared to the standards of how clones are usually treated. This, of course, raises the question of how the situation is for non-Hailsham students. The high status of Hailsham is pointed out on many occasions, either by Hailsham students themselves, or by clones from other institutions. Kathy, for instance, says that there was “the idea that, (...) in some mysterious way, a separate set of rules applied to us Hailsham students” (148). The reason why Hailsham is such a unique institution is because they have a particular goal in mind: that of proving that clones, too, are human. This is all explained at the very end of the book when Kathy and Tommy visit Madame and Miss Emily, which will be discussed later.

This desire to prove that alternative species – clones in this case – can be considered human too, is not unique to Ishiguro’s novel. Indeed, a parallel can be drawn with Michael Bay’s *The Island*, a film which came out the same year as *Never Let Me Go* and deals with a rather similar story. The film, too, depicts a system in which clones are created to harvest organs for rich ordinary human beings who can afford this service. While it all seems to work fine, the system collapses when one of the clones understands the situation and decides to take action. The main difference between Bay and Ishiguro’s clones is that the latter do not so explicitly rebel.

Despite the fact that Hailsham tries to prove that clones are humans, the personnel of the school still adopt behaviours that favour a dichotomy between them – humans – and clones – a supposedly sub-species of humans. Ruth, for instance, has a theory that Madame, who visits Hailsham a few times per year but never acknowledges the clones, might be scared of them. One day, Ruth and her group of friends decide to test that theory. The next time Madame comes, the six of them get very close to her all at once, as bees to a honeypot, and Madame’s reaction does not disappoint them: she “came to a halt” (35) and Kathy, looking at her face, observes “the shudder she seemed to be suppressing, the real dread that one of us would accidentally brush against her” (35). Her response thus confirms the clones’ impression that Madame is scared of them. Kathy then adds that “she was afraid of us in the same way someone might be afraid of spiders. (...) It had never occurred to us to wonder how we would feel, being seen like that, being the spiders” (35). Whether it is true or not is, at this point in the story, still unclear, but the clones do get the impression that Madame considers them as unpleasant little things crawling all around her. This reaction comes as a shock to the group,

even though they expected it. Hannah, one of the girls, “looked ready to burst into tears” (35). What was initially meant as a game to prove Ruth’s theory thus turns into the realisation of a much harsher reality. The outcome indeed confronts the clones with the thought of who (or what) they are in the eyes of others. Kathy expresses the emotions it provokes as follows:

So you’re waiting, even if you don’t quite know it, waiting for the moment when you realise 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 into 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’s 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. (36)

This extract highlights the feelings engendered by the clones being seen as unpleasant animals. Humans therefore try to put them as far from them as possible on the human-animal continuum. The closer they get to being considered human, the harder it gets for real humans, as they are confronted with the inhuman system they support.

This may certainly be the case with today’s Western societies and the treatment of animals too. Should humans acknowledge the living conditions of animals in certain places (be that in slaughterhouses or laboratories) and consider them as almost equal to them, they would find those treatments much more difficult to tolerate. Consequently, they would be faced with a dilemma: that of choosing between the possibility to fulfil their own needs by keeping such unfair systems in place, and putting an end to everything but sacrificing their high-standard living conditions. Ruth’s theory is, later in the book, also confirmed quite directly by Miss Emily. Indeed, as Kathy tells her that Madame has “always been afraid of [them]. In the way people are afraid of spiders and things” (263), Miss Emily confirms and even goes further by saying that they are “*all* afraid of [them]” (264). “I myself”, she tells Kathy and Tommy, “had to fight back my dread of you all almost every day I was at Hailsham. There were times I’d look down at you all (...) and I’d feel such revulsion” (264).

Additionally, although clones meet humans (who are neither guardians nor people who work at Hailsham) on rare occasions only, those encounters still reveal how clones are perceived in the outside world. At the Cottages, for instance, they rather often cross path with Keffers, whom Kathy describes as a “grumpy old guy who turned up two or three times a week

(...) to look the place over" (114). It is difficult to say whether Keffers is simply not a very sociable person in general, or if his coldness stems from a certain wariness towards the clones, but Kathy explains that "he didn't like to talk to us much" (114) and that when "[y]ou went up to greet him when he arrived in his van (...) he'd stare at you like you were mad" (115). Then, during the Norfolk trip (the purpose of which was to find Ruth's so-called 'possible', that is, the person she was perhaps modelled on), the group of friends enter an art gallery and the owner of the place starts a normal conversation with them. Ruth, however, believes that the woman would have acted differently, had she known she was actually talking to clones. As she puts it: "Do you think she'd have talked to us like that if she'd known what we really were? What do you think she'd have said if we'd asked her? "Excuse me, but do you think your friend was ever a clone model?" She'd have thrown us out" (164). Although there is no confirmation of whether Ruth is right or not, this shows, as does the fact that the other clones do not try to contradict her, that the clones are aware that they are not like everybody else and that they consequently could never be treated as equals. The difference between Keffers and the woman in the art gallery that would explain the behaviour they respectively adopt is that Keffers knows what the clones are, whereas the lady in the art gallery has no idea.

It is also interesting to look at how people from the outside refer to clones. The fact that Hailsham's aim is to go against the idea that clones are not human suggests that they are probably referred to as clones rather than as human beings, and therefore not accepted as humans. At Hailsham, however, the word 'clone' is never used. The guardians only refer to them as 'students' or call them by their name. Only during Kathy and Tommy's meeting with Miss Emily and Madame does the latter use a different word: that of 'creature'. Indeed, Madame first uses the word when she asks: "Poor creatures. What did we do to you? With all our schemes and plans?" (249). Then, when saying her goodbyes, Madame strokes Kathy's face and utters "poor creature" (267) again. The word 'creature' echoes the idea of being nonhuman. The tone she uses, however, shows a certain reluctance to consider them as such. The word 'creature' could also imply that neither Miss Emily nor Madame, because their project failed, is able to categorize the clones as either humans or animals, but that they prefer to use a word which is both and neither at the same time. This suggests that, although they wanted clones to be closer to humans on the human-animal continuum, the reality is that

their society is not ready to accept this and that, consequently, the clones cannot get too close to humans on the continuum.

Furthermore, a clear dichotomy can be observed throughout Kathy's narration between the clones' perception of themselves and the society's perception of them. They know they are different, yet they cannot quite grasp what makes them so different, apart from the role they play in their society, and hence do not feel different. At times, however, their society's view on them seems to have tainted their own opinion of themselves. This is the case, for instance, during Ruth's heartbreaking monologue after she realizes that her possible is, in fact, probably not the woman they followed in Norfolk:

We're modelled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos. That's what we come from. (...) If you want to look for possibles, if you want to do it properly, then you look in the gutter. You look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that's where you'll find where we all came from. (164)

This shows that she realizes that they are actually a different kind of people and that they could never be like everyone else, or at least not like well-regarded people. Given the status they have in society, Ruth believes that it is most unlikely that a person as seemingly perfect as the woman she thought was her possible could be the person on which her creation was based. This reflects a certain negative image that Ruth has of her own species when she realizes how different they actually are.

Finally, it is also worth noting that the Cottages, where Kathy and her closest friends go after Hailsham, consist in a place related to animals too. Indeed, Kathy explains that "[t]he Cottages were the remains of a farm that had gone out of business years before. There was an old farmhouse, and around it, barns, outhouses, stables all converted for us to live in" (114). It therefore seems that it is impossible for the clones to escape the animality that defines them in various aspects, from the way that they are portrayed and considered, to the way that they are treated by others.

2.2.1. Art as an escape from animality

Yet, one way in which clones could potentially escape that animality is found in the importance that is allotted to creativity in their lives. Let us go back to the persecution Tommy has to endure from his classmates. Right after the aforementioned football incident, Kathy addresses Hailsham's creativity classes in which Tommy seems incapable of properly participating. By doing so, Kathy makes a rather direct link between Tommy's animal-like reactions and his lack of creativity, which do indeed appear to be closely related.

In these instances of bullying, Kathy seems to be the only one who has remorse and who thinks that they should stop playing tricks on Tommy. She once tries to bring this topic up to her group of friends, but does not get a reaction from anyone apart from Ruth. Although Ruth admits that it may have gone too far, she still tries to justify their behaviour towards Tommy. She holds against him the fact that he does not have any art to show for their quarterly art exhibitions at Hailsham (the so-called 'Exchanges') and uses that to account for their actions. Whereas that should be a matter for the guardians of the school, Ruth and the other children, convinced by the importance of those art exhibitions, take it to themselves to punish him for his lack of participation and his incapacity to create appropriate art. In her own words: "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" (15). Later, Kathy adds that this reaction was not unusual at Hailsham: "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'" (16). This, she explains, is because the way the Exchanges worked was that clones were to buy each other's art which then made up most of their own collections. Having as many students creating good art thus meant having more chance of owning nice belongings.

As previously demonstrated, the clones' animality is most conspicuous in the character of Tommy. Tommy being the one who lacks creativity thus could suggest that, to a certain degree, animality is opposed to creativity. Consequently, creativity would be seen as an element that highlights a difference between humans and animals. According to this theory, the other clones' capacity to create would show that they are, to a certain extent, human.

2.3. Clones as humans

The first clear sign of the clones being somewhat human is found in the way they look. Physically speaking, they are indeed not different from humans at all. This explains, for instance, why the owner of the art gallery in Norfolk is not able to tell that she is talking to clones. The differences between clones and humans must hence lie on a deeper level.

“My name is Kathy H. I’m thirty-one years old, and I’ve been a carer now for over eleven years” (3): from the very first sentences of the novel onwards, Kazuo Ishiguro places the reader into Kathy’s mind. This, already, reveals something about the clones: they have the ability to think and reflect. Kathy’s narration indeed consists in her looking back on her life, remembering her youth, and trying to make sense of everything that led her to where she is now. On the one hand, this ability to self-reflect and to rationalize her past goes against Aristotle’s idea that animals, contrary to humans, are not capable of rationalizing. Consequently, it would suggest that Kathy’s alternative species is not quite that of an animal species. On the other hand, the revelation that Kathy H. is, in fact, a clone, suggests that she is not quite human either, or at least not in the traditional sense of the word. This therefore raises questions as to what her species is exactly and where it can be situated on the animal-human continuum. While the previous sections focused on the animality of the clones, this next one will deal with how clones also relate to ordinary human beings.

2.3.1. Normal children

An aspect of the book that goes in favour of the clones being considered human is that much of what happens during their time at Hailsham is comparable to what would happen to regular children at school. They fight and make up; some are treated badly, others are respected and powerful; they gossip, tell each other lies, try to make a good impression; they fall in love, talk about sex, have sex, break up and get back together. In all of these aspects, the clones appear to be regular children and teenagers. As Carroll puts it in *Rereading Heterosexuality: Feminism, Queer Theory and Contemporary Fiction* (2012), Kathy “evok[es] narrative tropes of childhood experience which are recognisable and familiar” (135). In other words, although their lives are

very different from those of ordinary children, the way clones act is rather similar to how any child would act, and is also easy for the reader to relate with.

The fact that some of the children bully Tommy, too, accounts for their human – albeit inhumane – side. The football incident, for instance, was plotted beforehand. This thus strengthens the hypothesis that clones have the ability to think rationally and to plan future actions. It not only confirms the premise that they have human capacities, but it also, to some extent, increases their cruel side and, consequently, their inhumanity. Cruelty is indeed often associated with humans, since it is rooted in the consciousness that humans have of their own actions and of the cruelty thereof. In the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (8th edition), cruelty is defined as “behaviour that causes pain or suffering to others, especially deliberately”. This deliberate aspect is thus of importance, since it implies a capacity to think about one's actions. In that passage, the clones (apart from Tommy) therefore demonstrate human abilities but, in doing so, paradoxically also demonstrate their inhumanity, in the sense of cruelty. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that, whether they act as humans or not, the clones are, in this case, also just children, which is bound to play a role in how they act towards one another. Their actions – albeit cruel – are first and foremost the actions of children. As Kathy herself explains, children do not necessarily have long and intricate reasoning behind their actions: “you don't have any clear reason, you just do it. You do it because you think it might get a laugh, or because you want to see if it'll cause a stir” (19). The clones also have some slightly redeeming qualities, as Kathy admits the role they have played as spectators and the guilt that followed: “And although we hadn't had any part in this latest plan to rile Tommy, we *had* taken out ringside seats, and we were starting to feel guilty” (10).

Not only are the clones able to feel guilt, but they seem to experience a vast array of emotions, just like ordinary individuals. Throughout the book, Kathy indeed expresses a variety of feelings and renders those felt by her friends. The reader is then able to empathize with her, not only because she looks human, but also, and mainly, because she feels human. Apart from the specifics of her condition of clone, nothing indicates that she is any different from human beings. Although the living circumstances are very unique, the reader can still relate to what happens to her at Hailsham as well as to her adult life because of the way she expresses herself and structures her narration.

2.3.2. *The role of creativity*

Most of the clones manage to pour the emotions they feel into their work, and more specifically into their art. Art and creativity are two elements which play a key role in *Never Let Me Go*. It was previously suggested that animality could be opposed to creativity in the novel, as Tommy's lack of creativity indirectly leads him to adopt behaviours which sometimes seem to be closer to the animal end of the spectrum. Even though children at Hailsham understand the importance of art, they nevertheless ignore the reason behind it.

Throughout the book the reader comes to learn the real purposes of art making at Hailsham. The first one relates to what students refer to as Madame's gallery. Although they are not quite sure whether there is an actual gallery or whether it is just a rumour, what they know for a fact is that Madame takes some of their art with her when she pays a visit. Given Madame's high status, the students believe that her taking their art cannot be insignificant. This partly explains why Tommy is being persecuted because of his supposedly bad art. However, he stops being bullied when he manages to contain his rage and starts reacting differently to being made fun of. This major change in Tommy is not without cause. Indeed, he explains to Kathy that he had a talk with Miss Lucy which made him realize that it was not as critical as he thought if he could not make proper art. She explained that "[i]t was wrong for anyone, whether they were students or guardians, to punish him for it, or put pressure on him in any way. It simply wasn't his fault" (27-8). She then added that "'[t]here's a least one person here at Hailsham (...) who believes [he's] a very good student, as good as any she's ever come across, never mind how creative [he is]'" (28). Tommy further explains that, when giving her short speech, Miss Lucy was actually "[s]haking. With rage" (28), which brings a mysterious aspect to this revelation. A few years later, however, Miss Lucy asks Tommy to have another talk. This time, she seems full of regrets for having said what she did years back. Once more addressing the topic of art, she explains that "[i]t does matter" (106) but Tommy does not quite understand this change of mind. Miss Lucy insists and adds something rather puzzling: "Listen, Tommy, your art, it *is* important. And not just because it's evidence" (106). With Miss Lucy, students often feel like she wants to say more than she is allowed to. This is once more the case here. She talks about the clones' art as being "evidence" but does not expand on the matter. The day after Tommy tells Kathy about his talk with Miss Lucy, however,

they get the news that the latter has left Hailsham for good. Two questions therefore arise. Firstly, why did she claim their art was evidence? And secondly, why has she left Hailsham?

The answers to both questions are, of course, related, but are only revealed towards the end of the book. As Black accurately points out in “Ishiguro’s Inhuman Aesthetics” (2009): “Threaded throughout the novel, these elusive references to the importance of art become explicit only at the end of the story” (794). This means that the reader is, again, put in a position similar to that of the clones who, throughout their years at Hailsham, have “been told, but none of [whom] really understand” (79), and therefore think they grasp the situation, but what they believe to be true is only the tip of the iceberg. The truth about art only comes out during Kathy and Tommy’s trip to Madame’s house, a key event which I will now delve into.

During their trip to Norfolk to find Ruth’s possible, Rodney and Chrissie, two older clones, mention something new about Hailsham students: the so-called deferrals (150), which Chrissie explains as follows:

if you were a boy and a girl, and you were in love with each other, really, properly in love, and if you could show it, then the people who run Hailsham, they sorted it out for you. They sorted it out so you could have a few years together before you began your donations. (151)

The rumour was that if a couple could prove, in some way or another, that they were in love, they could get up to three or four years together before having to start donating their vital organs, but that this special treatment was exclusively reserved to Hailsham students. This therefore explains why there were so many talks in which non-Hailsham students mentioned how lucky people like Ruth, Tommy and Kathy really were and how special this school was. Although Ruth and Tommy – a couple at the time – do not even consider applying for a deferral, the idea stays in Ruth’s mind for years. When the three friends go their separate ways after the Cottages and meet again years later, Ruth mentions the deferrals again. She tells Kathy and Tommy that they, together, could have a real chance at this and that them applying is her last wish before she passes. It takes them months to build up the courage to try, but Tommy and Kathy eventually decide to go to Madame’s house. Tommy, who remembers his conversations about art with Miss Lucy, decides to take of few drawings he recently made, as he believes that the reason why Madame took their art was to be able to

tell if two people were in love. The rumour about the deferrals is thus what leads Tommy and Kathy to go see Madame and consequently to finally understand what the meaning of their art truly is.

Kathy, Tommy, Madame and Miss Emily discuss various Hailsham-related topics together, but the most prevalent one is not surprisingly that of Madame's gallery and the creations she took from students. Whereas Tommy explains that he believes it was because "it would help show (...) what we were like" (248), Miss Emily goes further in the explanation: "We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to *prove you had souls at all!*" (255). The message is thus rather clear: clones are not considered human by their society, but Hailsham participated in a project the aim of which was to "move to a more humane and better way of doing things" (253). As Black (2009) observes, "[a]s advocates for compassionate treatment of clones (...), Madame and Miss Emily use art shows to convince others of their students' right to humane consideration" (794). In other words, they aimed to prove that clones were not different from regular children and believed that the best way to do so was to have them make art.

This, of course, reveals something about human nature in general. To Madame and the guardians – and perhaps to Kazuo Ishiguro himself – art is considered a defining characteristic of human beings. During this conversation, Kathy and Tommy thus learn that the deferral is a myth and that Madame did not take their art to be able to tell whether or not two people were in love. In *Rereading Heterosexuality: Feminism, Queer Theory and Contemporary Fiction* (2012), Carroll adds that, in this revelation, "*Never Let Me Go* generates an apprehension of what it is to discover that one's humanity has been called into question: what it is to find that one's memories, desires and aspirations are perceived to be suspect, inauthentic or illegitimate" (136). Indeed, by explaining the experiment they conducted on the clones, Madame and Miss Emily confront them with the fact that they were not considered legitimate human beings in the first place.

To Black (2009), art also plays another role in the book. He suggests that the quarterly Exchanges of art between students echo the donations of their vital organs. In his own words: "Held four times a year, the rhythm of the Exchanges mirrors the four organ donations that each student expects, or hopes, to make" (795). This comparison, however, has rather cruel consequences. Firstly, as Black explains, "[if] artistic capability reveals humanity, then lack of

artistic capability provides a license for exploitation. The Exchanges encourage students to think instrumentally about the worth of their peers, thus preparing them for an acceptance of their own instrumental lives” (795). Secondly, the idea itself of an exchange functions as a false hope. Indeed, it “encourage[s] students to believe that they actually partake in a real exchange” (795). If the Exchanges at Hailsham do work as real exchanges, where each party gets something out of participating, clones do not get anything in return for donating their vital organs. Although Hailsham’s various schemes are perhaps well-intended, they therefore actually make the situation worse for clones, who are raised to believe that they are human but are then confronted with the reality of their condition and the inevitable fate of their species. There is, in other words, an underlying cruelty in the way Hailsham chooses to address the clone condition. The shutting down of Hailsham a few years later also accounts for the fact that their plan was doomed to fail, given the society’s unwillingness to perceive clones as human beings.

Hailsham’s project of proving that clones have human souls does not solely revolve around the creative side of the children. The school also seems to ascribe great value to education. Hailsham students thus take a variety of classes, but, it seems, with a particular focus on the arts and humanities. They read a lot, for instance, especially Victorian fiction. In “Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*” (2011), however, Whitehead argues that “their contact with the Victorian novel (...) offers the clones an inappropriate imaginative template of social advancement that raises false hopes in a society that denies them any future” (57). She then adds that “the humanities education at Hailsham is at best a deception or lie” (57). Indeed, the status of education seems somewhat paradoxical since it aims at proving that the clones are human, but is also “complicit with the system of political oppression to which the clones are subject” (Whitehead, 57) by giving them a taste of what they are missing and will never know. Whereas art appears to be a good way to show the presence of one’s human side, it may perhaps not be the most appropriate one when taking the clone’s humanity into account. Still, the children are given one last assignment after they leave Hailsham. They have to write a long essay on a particular topic, and Kathy chooses to write on Victorian novels. These essays, however, have a paradoxical facet too. They are a goal that the clones, at the beginning, feel like they need to achieve, although these essays will probably never be read. They are not given much thought at Hailsham, but they “[take] on a

new importance" (113) during the clone's first few months at the Cottages because they connect them to something they are familiar with, but the essays themselves have essentially no purpose. Whether they write those essays or not has little significance. This, again, shows that Hailsham tries to give the clones' lives a purpose, whereas the sole true meaning behind their existence is to donate their vital organs.

2.3.3. Hailsham's paradox

There are therefore both positive and negative aspects to the way that Hailsham handles the clone's condition, as well as a few paradoxes. Firstly, it claims to want to change the system but also supports it, to some extent, by participating in it and bringing up clones who will improve or save other people's lives. Nonetheless, Kathy often refers to how special a place Hailsham is, suggesting that it may be much worse in other clones' institutions in terms of how their species is treated. Secondly, Kathy, on many occasions, mentions the beauty of the place itself. While she may be right, the reader is aware of a truth that is far less pretty: the school is surrounded with fences, which establishes a connection between Hailsham and a prison camp. Students, however, also make this connection. At one point, Kathy indeed mentions a discussion on prison camps that took place during one of Miss Lucy's lessons. She recalls it as follows:

One of the boys asked if the fences around the camps had been electrified, and then someone else said how strange it must have been, living in a place like that, where you could commit suicide any time you liked just by touching a fence. This might have been intended as a serious point, but the rest of us thought it pretty funny. (...) I went on watching Miss Lucy through all this and I could see, just for a second, a ghostly expression come over her face as she watched the class in front of her. Then – I kept watching carefully – she pulled herself together, smiled and said: 'It's just as well the fences at Hailsham aren't electrified. You get terrible accidents sometimes.' (77)

The children seem to take this comparison rather lightly, as their fences are not electrified and they do not feel like they are in prison. To some extent, however, they are imprisoned, not only in the building and its surroundings, but more generally in a cruel system which sacrifices them for the sake of others.

This passage also highlights the difference between the children's knowledge of who they are and what their future will be, and Miss Lucy's deeper understanding of everything. Seeing the children innocently laugh and joke around on such a dark topic indeed seems to fill her with sadness at the thought of them eventually dying prisoners of the system. Kathy, although she does not know everything there is to know on the topic, senses Miss Lucy's discomfort which hides a terrible and untold truth. And indeed, Miss Lucy does give a speech a while later, in which she tries to explain the situation. After hearing the wishful thinking of two boys naively discussing their futures and the possibility of becoming actors in America, Miss Lucy feels the need to address the situation with a monologue that comes as a shock to everyone but which finally casts light on who the clones are. She says that "[i]f no one else will talk to you (...) then I will" (79) and goes on to explain:

The problem, as I see it, is that you've been told and not told. You've been told, but none of you really understand (...). 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. (...) 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. (79-80)

She goes on for a little longer, and ends her speech by clarifying why she thinks they should know everything she has just told them: "If you're to have decent lives, you have to know who you are and what lies ahead of you" (80). By giving such a controversial speech, Miss Lucy probably realizes that she has put her position as a guardian at risk, but she believes that it is a risk worth taking if it allows her students to have better lives by anticipating what is to come. Although she knows that an early death is inevitable for the clones, she believes that, by making them realize what their true purpose is, she can help them pursue more realistic goals. By doing so, she prevents the disappointment that having their dreams crushed later on in their lives would cause, but also possibly prevents a revolution from the clones. Although Miss Lucy, as other guardians, participates in the system, she thus seems to realize its cruelty and wants to make the truth more bearable in order to ease the pain the clones might suffer through in their future.

Consequently, this would suggest that she does ascribe some humanity to the clones and wants to treat them as beings deserving of the truth. In a way, Miss Lucy feels some pity towards the children, as one might feel pity towards animals getting ready to be slaughtered. The difference lies in her ability to exchange with the clones and perhaps, by doing so, to relieve her sense of guilt. The clones' reaction to her outburst, however, gives the impression that they still do not register all that the truth entails. Their shock is mostly provoked by the sudden seriousness of Miss Lucy rather than by the content of her speech, to which most students claim that they "already knew all of that" (81). Whereas it is true that some of the information had already been given to them on multiple occasions, what Miss Lucy really intends is to make them realize what this information truly entails for them. Still, she manages to have an impact on the clones to a certain degree. Kathy explains that "after that day, jokes about donations faded away, and we started to think properly about things" (87), but that the topic of donations "wasn't awkward or embarrassing anymore; just sombre and serious" (87). Miss Lucy's speech and its impact thus raise the question of what it means to know that your time is limited, which is exactly the topic Ishiguro wanted to tackle in this novel.

On the one hand, not knowing what is to come allows one to dream and make plans which might never come to life. On the other hand, although knowing the truth may confront one to the harsh reality of the future and hence bring a sense of helplessness, it also allows one to put things into a new perspective and to redefine what is important. This is visible in Kathy's narration, in which she seems to have taken a step back to observe her past with the benefit of hindsight. Knowing that her time is limited thus allows her to reconsider the meaning of her life and to ascribe the right value to what she believes is important.

2.4. Clones as machines

Besides comparisons between clones and both humans and animals, Ishiguro's novel also establishes comparisons between the alternative species and machines. Similar to Frankenstein's creature, the clones in *Never Let Me Go* are not exactly enhanced humans but are still the result of scientific progress. Although the novel does not give much information as to the origin of the clones, they indeed most certainly are the product of scientific and technological progress. They are a man-made species and hence could hardly be seen as

natural humans in this regard. Their ability to think and act by themselves, but also to feel emotions further implies that they are not simply machines either. Kathy even says it herself when talking about the impact that her job has on her life: “Carers aren’t machines. You try to do your best for every donor, but in the end, it wears you down. You don’t have unlimited patience and energy” (4). This shows that clones are not only based on humans physically, but also mentally, and are therefore, to various degrees, similar to real humans, as was illustrated earlier. What essentially makes clones so different from their human counterparts is the purpose for which they were created, as well as the way they were created and brought up.

These various aspects mean that it would be wrong to consider clones a transhuman species since they are not enhanced as such but rather permit the enhancement of humans. Additionally, they could not be considered posthuman – in the sense of redefining the place of the human – either. On the contrary, the existence of clones to save regular people’s lives confirms that the human remains at the centre of everything. The worldview in *Never Let Me Go*’s alternative world is thus, like in many Western societies, undeniably anthropocentric. Humans seem ready to do whatever they can to save themselves and to perfect their species, sometimes at the cost of their own humanity. Nonetheless, Ishiguro, by depicting such a society, seems to critique the idea that the desire to progress can justify humans’ worst actions, thereby perhaps suggesting moving towards a more posthuman worldview.

Despite being not quite transhuman, there are undeniable machine-like aspects to the clones. To begin with, clones emerge as machines in the word Kazuo Ishiguro uses to refer to death. In lieu of ‘to die’, which is never worded as such, the expression that is used throughout the book is ‘to complete’. The donors, after a certain number of donations, complete the mission for which they were created. It is first mentioned in the opening chapter, when Kathy, talking about one of her donors, says that “[h]e knew he was close to completing” (5). This word does not seem to belong neither to the natural nor animal world, but rather echoes the idea of a cycle to which completion is the last step. Clones are created for a specific purpose which, once fulfilled, brings their utility to an end.

Then, the clones’ neither human nor animal side is rendered through the way their lives “seem fundamentally automatic and mechanized” (Black 2009, 788). Indeed, “they move through the stages of their lives with the regularity of students promoted from grade to grade, seemingly blind to the horrors that shadow their march toward suffering and death” (788). In

other words, Black (2009) argues that the clones are comparable to machines in the way that they lead their lives; that is, by undergoing everything passively rather than by acting and taking their future into their own hands. They essentially do everything they are told to do, like machines that are programmed. In the scientific world, although the possibility of machines – such as robots – taking control over humans is increasingly becoming a reality, the clones never seem to even contemplate rebellion against the system, which means that they were perfectly programmed, and brought up, to prevent this. If they do not explicitly rebel, however, they do show some resistance against the system. Although Black notes that “they maintain their status as machines without the capacity to resist their own exploitation” (789), the next few paragraphs will show that this is perhaps not the case.

As far as the clones’ compliance with the system is concerned, a distinction should be made between rebellion and resistance. If the clones do not openly rebel against higher authorities for their bodies only serving to harvest organs for humans, they still, at various moments, participate in small acts of passive resistance. They therefore do not completely lack the capacity to resist, although this mainly happens when trying to settle minor indignations. The next paragraphs focus both on the presence of resistance and the absence of rebellion, starting with the latter. Rebellion against Hailsham or the cloning system as a whole seems almost unfathomable to the clones for multiple reasons. To begin with, Hailsham feels like a safe haven rather than like a prison to them, which is partly due to the guardians’ reassuring presence. Then, although the outside world is very appealing to them, it is first and foremost a scary place. The scariest part consists in the woods directly outside of Hailsham, which make the prospect of trying to run away almost inconceivable, even more so since rumours circulate about students who tried to escape from Hailsham. One of those is the story of a boy who had “run off beyond the Hailsham boundaries” and whose “body had been found two days later, up in those woods, tied to a tree with the hands and feet chopped off” (50). Whether this story is true or not is of little importance, but the thought of it is enough to make the clones not want to attempt a great escape. Yet this passage could also suggest that acts of resistance have happened in the past. Indeed, if the rumour is true, it would mean that a clone has tried to resist their fate by escaping.

Another element which can explain the absence of rebellion consists in the more general way Hailsham works and in its educational system. Similar to a school on the outside,

Hailsham is an institution where education and discipline play an important role. There are places the clones are not supposed to be seen wandering, there are things they know they cannot say or do – although the rules are sometimes “unwritten” (*NLMG*, 40), such as that of not mentioning Madame’s gallery in front of a guardian – but there is also space for freedom and imagination, which lessens the prison-like side of Hailsham and therefore gives students the false impression that they are free. The difference with a regular school, then, lies in what the clones are not told and not taught by the guardians. At a rather young age they learn about their origin and purpose but on a surface level rather than in depth. Consequently, because they do not fully grasp the magnitude of the situation in which they are, the prospect of rebelling does not come to their minds. It is also worth mentioning that the fact that the clones appreciate most of the guardians at Hailsham increases their desire not to disappoint by breaking rules. This is demonstrated, for instance, when Kathy relates how Miss Emily would give a speech after Sales during which “things would get out of hand, with students grabbing and tugging, sometimes fighting” (42). She explains that, during Miss Emily’s assemblies, “[t]here was a real sense of feeling bad that we had, in some collective way, let down Miss Emily” (42). Acting up or rebelling would hence mean disappointing the guardians, which the clones want to avoid. Finally, of course, is the aforementioned machine-like aspect of the clones: they are simply not built to rebel. They were created as victims of a system the extent of which they do not and cannot grasp.

Yet, as mentioned earlier, the clones do participate in small acts of resistance. This is shown, for instance, in an extract in which some students are rather unhappy with the way things work when Madame comes and picks one of their art pieces for her so-called gallery. A student would usually get tokens in exchange for their art being sold to another student during one of the seasonal Exchanges. However, Madame taking one of their creations – albeit a great honour – prevents them from earning tokens which they could use to buy someone else’s art or to acquire possessions during the Sales. Kathy thus explains that “[i]t began with a number of students, mainly boys, muttering that we should get tokens to compensate when Madame took something away” and that “one day Roy J. (...) decided to go and see Miss Emily about it” (39). This shows that, although “it took some nerve” (39), clones are perfectly capable of standing up for themselves, albeit only on a reasonable scale.

When Kathy and Tommy ask Madame to postpone their organ donations, they also, to some extent, try to resist their fate. Even if they are aware that the deferrals could be just a rumour, they are willing to test it if it means they can spare a few years together. Confronting Madame thus consists in a small act of resistance, in which they believe they can convince her that they deserve more than what they are given and that their lives consist in more than the purpose they serve. Although it can appear as an act of despair, it is first and foremost their last chance to show that they exist beyond their condition of clones and that they, like humans, should have more rights.

The final way in which clones seem to resist is found in Kathy's use of language and silence in her narration, as suggested by Lena Crucitti (2017) in "*At a Complete Loss for Words: Silence and animal language as means of expression in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005)*". She claims that "contrary to common belief, silence cannot only be interpreted as a sign of reluctance or submissiveness but that it can also be voluntarily used as a weapon of resistance" (31). Whereas Kathy often gives the impression that she has made peace with her fate, Crucitti argues that it may not actually be the case. She, for instance, mentions the stories the clones repeatedly tell each other (on deferrals, on their so-called possibles or on their dream futures, a concept which will be explained later). These stories, she explains, serve as a way to "escape reality" (22) and deny their condition of clones. The way Kathy chooses to structure her narration is also quite significant. Indeed, being the narrator gives her power, as she is the one to decide what she says and how she formulates it. She thus frequently has recourse to flashbacks and flashforwards, regularly interrupting herself when what she is telling reminds her of other events. Again, however, this fragmented structure reveals an underlying inability to accept her condition. In Crucitti's own words, Kathy's "decision to reorientate the story is often triggered by a difficulty to face events" (29).

Although these few arguments hint at a hidden difficulty to accept her situation, Kathy's real acts of resistance occur in her silences. Crucitti most notably argues that Kathy manages to manipulate her reader by "[h]iding her identity as a clone [which] precisely gives her the opportunity to enter into a dialogue with a normal [i.e. not a clone] and to tacitly introduce herself as a genuine human being" (38).³ By explicitly avoiding to give away who she

³ See Crucitti (2017) for more arguments on Kathy's acts of resistance through her use of language and silence.

really is from the very beginning of the book, Kathy thus attempts to be considered as just another ordinary human being, although, as I have argued at the beginning of this chapter, her first few sentences already suggest a somewhat unusual existence. If Hailsham and the system as whole prevent clones from explicitly rebelling, small, yet significant, acts of resistance are still perceptible throughout the story, be that in some of the clones' behaviours or in Kathy's narration, showing that the clones are perhaps more than subjugated machines.

2.5. Clones as individuals

A final aspect of the clones which is worth taking into consideration is their individuality. Indeed, while some characteristics point to the clones being human beings, one can wonder whether they can each be considered as separate individuals. If the differences between clones and regular humans were previously tackled, those among clones themselves still deserve their own analysis.

To begin with, Ishiguro uses an interesting technique in his depiction of the clones: he does not give them last names. Be it Kathy H., Harry C. or Peter J., their names all consist of a first name and an initial. In addition, the origin of the initial is never mentioned, and neither is the origin of the first name. This raises a few questions which remain unanswered, such as the following: Is their name given at random or is it based on their so-called original? Nevertheless, the fact that they are given a name at all – albeit only a first name – accounts for some kind of individuality. Contrary to concentration camp prisoners whose names were replaced with numbers and who were therefore, to some extent, ripped of their individuality, clones seem to get a better treatment. When it comes to last names, however, it is not clear whether the clones only have an initial as last name, or whether they do have names, which Kathy prefers not to mention, perhaps to preserve their anonymity.

If one considers the concept of name giving in most Western cultures, the last name often accounts for the origin of the person and their family heritage. By knowing someone's last name, you can therefore more easily know who they are related to. The first name, then, is what differentiates the individual from the rest of their family and makes them their own separate person. The clones do have a first name which helps conceive them as individuals.

The potential absence of a last name, however, could highlight the aspect of being born from nothing – having no parents, no family, no heritage. If clones do have last names but these are simply not mentioned, then, this would facilitate a certain empathy from the reader since not knowing who they really are suggests that they could be anyone. Although the reader knows that the story is set in England, Kazuo Ishiguro manages to universalise the clone condition by not mentioning their last names. He also does so by only giving general physical descriptions, not mentioning, for instance, the ethnicity of the clones.

The idea that clones do not belong to a family is also expressed through the existence of the so-called possibles. According to the possible theory, as the clones were “copied (...) from a normal person”, “there must be (...) somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life” (*NLMG*, 137). This first of all means that there is hope that they, perhaps, have some kind of family somewhere, and even parents. Some clones, for instance, believe that “you should be looking for a person twenty to thirty years older than yourself – the sort of age a normal parent would be” (137). The thought of having a possible also means the possibility of imagining a future: “One big idea behind finding your model was that when you did, you’d glimpse into your future” (137). Yet this is not all finding your possible entails. As Kathy puts it, they “believed that when you saw the person you were copied from, you’d get *some* insight into who you were deep down, and maybe too, you’d see something of what your life held in store” (137-8). This means that they are not only looking for some kind of relative or parent figure, but that they more broadly long for their real identity. Indeed, by finding who they were modelled from, they believe that they will be able to reconnect with their own individuality and understand who they are as individuals. This, of course, is rather bittersweet since the clones know that no matter who their possible is, they will have a completely different future. Although they know the truth at that point, they still like to dream about what their futures could look like in what they call “dream futures” (140). As Kathy explains, discussions around those dream futures were moments during which “it was possible to forget for whole stretches of time who we really were” (140). These conversations therefore give them a sense of freedom.

Leaving their names aside, it is worth adding that the clones appear as separate individuals through their rich and unique personalities. Although they were scientifically created, the clones are all different from one another. As the reader becomes acquainted with

Kathy, Ruth and Tommy, for instance, it becomes increasingly easy to anticipate their respective reactions to various events. One could wonder, however, whether they acquire their personality traits by themselves or whether they simply are the exact copy of their model.

2.6. Concluding thoughts

Labelling *Never Let Me Go*'s clones as either animals, humans, or machines is, as was shown throughout this chapter, impossible since they display characteristics from all of these categories. Talking of a continuum therefore seems more appropriate. Depending on the viewpoints, then, clones can be situated as closer to humans, as Hailsham's ambitious plan aimed to do, or closer to animals, as illustrated by the way they are considered by the outside world. There are also differences amongst clones. Kathy, on the one hand, seems to be closer to humans as a result of the reader getting direct access to her thoughts and emotions and thereby being able to relate and empathize with her. She therefore does not appear as that different from any other human narrator. Tommy, on the other hand, embodies the border zone between humans and animals in the way he acts, especially as a child. Yet the reader can still empathize with him, presumably because he emerges as a very vulnerable character. The clones' ability to create art, too, epitomizes the fact that they have abilities that go beyond the realm of animals, but also reveals the key role art plays in human lives. Margaret Atwood's *Crakers*, by contrast, exhibit various similarities with Ishiguro's clones, but also show qualities which are drastically different, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: “Frankenpeople” – Defying the boundaries of nature

In the epigram of the first book in the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Margaret Atwood already gives a taste of what is to come by quoting Jonathan Swift’s famous *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), in which, as the title suggests, Lemuel Gulliver recounts various voyages that he made throughout his life and the people – sometimes not quite human – he met on the way. What Swift and Atwood have in common, is that they comment on the human nature by imagining new, innovative species.

If Ishiguro already tackles the inter-relations between species, directly or indirectly, Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy really epitomizes these closely intertwined relations by dealing with the three main sorts of species: humans, animals and plants. The features associated with each of these categories appear to be somewhat challenged and put into new perspectives throughout the three books. In the beginning of the first book, for instance, Snowman, the main human character in that first novel, climbs to the top of a tree out of which he has made his bed. Whereas monkeys or squirrels climbing trees would not seem strange to the human eye, it is much different when a human claws his way to the top of one. The technique he uses to get down, then, echoes the steps of a quadruped: “Left hand, right foot, right hand, left foot” (4). Snowman thus seems to have adopted some sort of animal behaviour. In the second book, then, one of the protagonists, named Toby, because she has been digging so hard, feels her hands “getting thicker – stiff and brown, like roots” (19). In other words, her body is changing and acquiring plant-like characteristics. Likewise, Zeb is described as having “tree-stump hands” (127).

Not only humans, but animals, too, are changed by the new environment depicted in the books. Pigs, for instance, have acquired human-like brains; they are cunning creatures and are able to come up with schemes and develop ideas of their own. In Toby’s own words: “Pigs are smart, they’ll keep her in mind, they won’t forgive her” (*The Year of the Flood*, 22). Those pigs also seem to be capable of almost human emotions, such as when they organize a funeral to honour one of their own, which Toby describes as follows: “Curious funeral rites (...) You strew the beloved with flowers, you mourn, and then you eat the corpse” (*MaddAddam*, 329). A new type of sheep has also been created, called the Mo’Hairs, “an animal with human hair”

(*MaddAddam*, 251). The question of the divide between human, animal and plant is additionally raised in a discussion on ChickieNobs. ChickieNobs are headless chickens that can grow breasts and drumsticks in record time, which Jimmy describes as “a large bulblike object that seemed to be covered with stippled whitish-yellow skin. Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb was growing” (*Oryx and Crake*, 237). Ren, in the second book, mentions a conversation which she had with Mordis, for whom she worked. She explains that she “couldn’t deal with meat very well ever since the Gardeners” and therefore was not too fond of ChickieNobs, but Mordis tells her that “ChickieNobs were really vegetables because they grew on stems and didn’t have faces” (*The Year of the Flood*, 154). These few examples show how Atwood challenges our well-defined boundaries between species, not only on a physical level, but also on a deeper level, and raises questions as to what leads certain beings to belong to a certain category of species.

In the trilogy, however, if the boundaries between species are explored through various means, they are most accurately represented by the human-like species Atwood introduces, the Crakers. This new and innovative species is supposed to be sustainable and to be able to survive in the chaotic new environment that big corporations and human greediness have led to. Additionally, this species is believed to have the potential, perhaps not to reverse the course of events, but at least to stop environmental degradation from getting any worse. The world that Atwood describes in *Oryx and Crake* (OC), *The Year of the Flood* (YOF) and *MaddAddam* (MA) thus seems to illustrate the Anthropocene. Humans have impacted the planet in an irreversible way and going back, or at least trying to stop the situation from declining, is only possible if the human species is cleared away and replaced by a whole new one.

The reason why this trilogy is so interesting is that it exposes multiple worldviews and, by doing so, shows their respective positive and negative sides. The society is indeed divided into multiple layers, which themselves contain sometimes radically different perspectives. Firstly, the Compounds are where the so-called brainiacs live and scientific progress prospers. These Compounds, however, could remind one of George Orwell’s Big Brother in *1984* (1949), since everyone is under surveillance of the so-called CorpSeCorps, who do not hesitate to punish any deviant behaviour or opinion. Secondly, the pleeblands are the cities, where the supposedly less fortunate live and which are often considered as dangerous. These pleeblands

nonetheless allow a certain freedom of thought, which is demonstrated by the various groups that exist there. There are, for instance, several religious groups amongst which the Known Fruits and the God's Gardeners, the latter being the green cult on which *The Year of the Flood* focuses, but also numerous gangs, such as the Asian Fusions and the Blackened Redfish.

If Kazuo Ishiguro's clones are mostly indirectly comparable to animals in the way they are treated and represented, the Crakers have very obvious animal and vegetal characteristics (ranging from their bodily features to the behaviours), as intended by Crake. His desire was indeed to create a species that would be a blend of the best features of a variety of creatures, which would then make them a sustainable species and a consequently much better one than humans as we know them. The questions that can be raised, then, are whether or not Crake's ideas really worked as planned and what the outcome of the situation can reveal about the human species.

In order to answer these questions, the following sections will look at various particularities of the Crakers, focusing on facets which make them so unique, but also revealing that, even in such an extreme case, some elements of what makes one human are still deeply imbedded. Rather than looking at their human, animal, plant, or machine side individually, I will tackle different topics and connect each of them to the nature of the Crakers and how they relate to other species. This section will also include comparisons with Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, from which new elements will be raised. Amongst the topics I will broach are the importance of art and creativity in defining who – or what – the Crakers are, their relation to death, or their approach to sex. Before tackling these various topics, however, it is necessary to start with the reasons behind the creation of this alternative species.

3.1. The Fall of Man

Whereas the Crakers are very present in both the first and last instalments of the trilogy, they hardly appear in the second one, *The Year of the Flood*. Yet the latter gives considerable insight into some of the thoughts that went behind their creations and answers many of the questions that the reader might have after having been introduced to this peculiar species. The book focuses on the God's Gardeners, a green religious group, and the lives of some of its members,

such as Toby and Ren. The group, it turns out, is closely linked to Crake and the creation of his new species, as various members thereof were recruited (against their will) by Crake to work on the Paradise Project, i.e. the creation of the Crakers. Although they did not all agree with all of Crake's actions and opinions, some of them, at various times, express similar thoughts – albeit less radical – to those that Crake implemented in his species. This is especially the case with Adam One, the leader of the God's Gardeners, whose views also reflect what has gone wrong with the human species. He most notably talks about the "Fall of Man" (224) and states that:

The ancestral primates fell out of the trees; then they fell from vegetarianism into meat-eating. Then they fell from instinct into reason, and thus into technology; from simple signals into complex grammar, and thus into humanity; from firelessness into fire, and thence into weaponry; and from seasonal mating into incessant sexual twitching. (YOF, 224)

This extract echoes the thoughts that are at the basis of the Crakers' creations. Adam One mentions what he believes to be negative characteristics of the human species and why he thinks it degraded. Crake, when creating his supposedly ideal species, thus thought about these various elements and tried to come up with ways to avoid the degeneration of his yet unborn species.

Amongst what he considers to be the cause of the "Fall of Man", Adam One first mentions the diet of human beings. According to him, eating meat is wrong. This explains why the God's Gardeners are vegetarian, as are the Crakers, whose diet is even more plant-based than that of the Gardeners. Adam One then states that humans went from trusting their instinct to favouring reason, which reflects Aristotle's divide between instinctive animal species and the rational human, as addressed in the first chapter. Worse still than reason is its combination with technology, which, as is shown in the world of the Compounds, has been used at the expense of freedom and humanity. Then comes language, which was complicated by the use of grammatical rules. Although it is difficult for God's Gardeners to go back in terms of their language use, the Crakers are designed to only have basic vocabulary and grammar, as well as some different ways of communicating, such as singing, thanks to which they can converse with certain animals. Additionally, when Adam One says "and thus into humanity", he clearly asserts that humanity equals degeneracy. His penultimate point is that of weaponry. While the God's Gardeners only rarely give in to violence, the Crakers are inherently incapable

of it. Finally, Adam One mentions the practice of sex, which will be discussed in a subsequent section. These numerous elements are part of what Adam calls the “Fall of Man” which, he says, “was ongoing, but its trajectory led ever downward” (254), suggesting that humans can only become worse.

The major difference between the God’s Gardeners and Crake lies in their respective approach. Both claim that the human species and the planet have been ruined by the humans’ influence. However, whereas most Gardeners believe that they should lead the best life possible to ensure that things do not get any worse, Crake has a much darker view. Not only is he disappointed in the human species, but he also feels a deep hatred towards how humans have ruined humanity with their wars, jealousy and greed. For him, the human species as a whole is doomed and hopeless, and should therefore be eliminated completely. Still, when what the Gardeners call the Waterless Flood (that is, the pandemic created by Crake’s BlyssPluss Pill) hits, Adam One admits that “we must now witness the end of our Species” (508). In his last speech in *The Year of the Flood*, he additionally explains that “It is not this Earth that is to be demolished: it is the Human Species. Perhaps God will create another, more compassionate race to take our place” (508-509). Despite not being God’s creation, a new species is indeed created. In the sections that follow, I will dive into the analysis of the Crakers, starting with the impact of the narration style on one’s perception of the alternative species.

3.2. Narrative style and focalisation

The main difference between *Never Let Me Go* and the *MaddAddam* trilogy in terms of narration is the style that is used. The former indeed takes the form of a fictional autobiography with a first-person narrator, whereas the latter has various third-person limited narrators (e.g. Snowman in the first book, Ren and Toby in the second one, and Toby and Zeb in the third one). Another significant distinction, however, is that they take entirely separate points of view. While *Never Let Me Go* exposes the viewpoint of the nonhuman voice (namely the clones), Atwood’s books display the voice of human beings throughout, with the exception of a few chapters towards the end of the trilogy, in which Blackbeard, a young Craker, takes on the role of narrator. It could be argued, too, that Snowman’s voice is not quite that of a human anymore. Although he was born human, the experiences he went through have

undoubtedly changed him. The fact that he was left alone with the Crakers provoked a change in behaviour, as did the fact that he had to adapt to a whole new environment for which he was not prepared. Snowman thus epitomizes the border zone between old and new and between human and non-human.

In his book on *Narratology Beyond the Human* (2018), Herman discusses William Kotzwinkle's *Doctor Rat* (1976), a book about a rat which has, through lab experimentation, acquired the intellectual capacities of a human, much like Atwood's smart pigs. Herman states that the "text aligns itself with other norm-challenging animal autobiographies that use the resources of fiction – and the affordances of different storytelling media – to explore possibilities for anti-anthropocentrism in acts of speaking-for that extend beyond the human" (190), which is comparable to what Ishiguro does. By this act of "speaking-for", Ishiguro gives a voice to his possibly nonhuman species, and consequently challenges the anthropocentric view that is deeply rooted in most of today's Western societies. In other words, "autobiographies of this sort not only reflect but also support a repositioning of the human self within a wider ecology of selves, which cuts across species lines" (Herman, 191). For her part, Atwood erases the voice of the Crakers, their utterances and actions only being rendered through humans, such as Snowman or Toby. Yet one of the Crakers' voice manages to get through to the reader unfiltered in the form of Blackbeard's writing, a topic which will be elaborated later on. Ishiguro and Atwood thus use two different strategies when it comes to letting the voice of their alternative species heard. The former allows the reader to gain direct access to the thoughts and emotions of the alternative species – or, at least, to one individual of that species – and the latter filters the new beings' thoughts through a human intermediary.

3.3. Naming

What the narration style of Atwood's trilogy offers that Ishiguro's novel does not, is more insight into how the Crakers are referred to by other characters, all of which are human. As was explained in the previous chapter, the thoughts of the outside world on the clones in *Never Let Me Go* are always filtered through Kathy's narration. The reader only gets to know what others believe through the conversations she renders. The Crakers, on the other hand,

are always described and seen through the eyes of beings that do not belong to their species, which therefore gives additional information on how they are regarded.

The most neutral ways in which the Crakers seem to be referred to are as the “Children of Crake”, as “children” or as “Crakers” – although they themselves do not use this last expression. Surprisingly enough, they are also often labelled as “people” and the male and female Crakers are frequently called “men” and “women” respectively. Nevertheless, other words and expressions are used which, in most cases, appear to carry negative connotations in the eye of the speaker.

The references to the Crakers are indeed sometimes less neutral and less direct, with sentences such as “He [Snowman] feels the need to hear a human voice – a fully human voice” (*OC*, 11), by which can be understood that Snowman does not consider the Crakers as “fully human”. Once again talking about voices, he, at some point, wonders “If you can call them human” (*OC*, 105). He further adds that their singing is “beyond the human level, or below it” (122). Another example, this time taken from the third instalment, is when it is said that “Everyone’s talking; or all the human people are” (*MA*, 61), once again suggesting that the Crakers are non-human people. In a different passage, they are also called “the strange gene-spliced quasi-human” (*MA*, 20), which echoes a similar idea. Then, in a conversation with Rebecca, although Toby seems to have accepted the Crakers as people, the former seems to doubt this and replies that “They’re definitely not like us, (...) No way close” (*MA*, 47). Toby, too, at some point, talks about a time when “there were human children” (*MA*, 247), again implying that the children now, all of whom are Crakers, are perhaps not human anymore.

If all these appellations are still rather vague in ascribing the Crakers to a certain category of beings, others clearly classify them. Swift Fox, for instance, calls them “Crake’s Frankenpeople” (*MA*, 28), downgrading their status to that of artificial creature, with perhaps an element of fear similar to how people feel towards Frankenstein’s creature in Mary Shelley’s book. Later on, she also refers to them as “walking potatoes” (29) and as “vegetables” (29), giving them the status of plants and suggesting that they are devoid of anything interesting, but rather have dull personalities. Crozier, too, shows a certain feeling of superiority when he calls them “creepo naked people” (28). Although he still calls them people, he also certainly thinks about them as strange and unsettling.

Humans, however, also sometimes compare themselves to the Crakers and realize what they must look like from their point of view. In *MaddAddam*, for instance, Toby mentions that they, humans, “must seem subhuman to them” (48), if Craker features are taken as the norm. Unfortunately, the opinion of the Crakers on humans is rarely rendered. Still, it would be safe to presume that they do not have a negative image of them, since they often look up to them with respect and admiration, believing everything they say, being willing to learn from them and following their example.

3.4. Superhuman bodies?

The Crakers may thus be referred to as undefined creatures, as quasi-humans or yet as vegetables, but what are they really? To answer this question, I will first look at their incarnation and bodily features and functions, which, as will be shown, also influence their behaviours as well as the way they think. While Kazuo Ishiguro’s clones are not different from human beings when it comes to their appearance, the bodies of Atwood’s Crakers are relatively more complex. They have most of what one considers basic human features, which makes that the species they look like the most is the *Homo sapiens*, yet they exhibit a few differences, often, but not solely, based on animals. Whereas Frankenstein’s creature is a patchwork made from the remains of dead bodies, the Crakers are indeed a patchwork of characteristics taken from various species, some human, some animal, and some vegetal. As Sally Chivers puts it in “Margaret Atwood and the Critical Limits of Embodiment” (2006), “Atwood’s depictions of physical difference insist on an engagement with the physically “anomalous” body that refuses simple categorization” (386-387). Even though Chivers, in this case, addresses the representation of disability, it is exactly what Atwood does in terms of species-blending too. In other words, the Crakers have hybrid bodies, spanning different categories of beings rather than belonging to one only.

Amongst their non-human features is their blueness, for instance. The Crakers, specifically the males, have one major bodily difference with human beings: their giant blue penises. As the Crakers are constantly naked, given that their bodies were made perfectly adaptable to their environment, this is the aspect that many of the humans focus on. The females, too, demonstrate a similar feature at times, as their abdomen and bottom turn blue

when they are on heat. This feature is rather obviously based on an animal species, that is, that of the baboons, but also inspired by the octopus (*OC*, 194).

Not only the bodies of the Crakers belong to several categories, but the humans, too, sometimes feel out of place in their bodies. Indeed, in the post-BlyssPluss Pill world – the pill that destroyed almost all of humanity – the bodies of humans are less adapted than those of the Crakers, therefore making them feel somewhat abnormal, especially Snowman. Whereas Crakers have built-in insect repellent and are capable of withstanding extreme weather, for instance, humans have to find other ways to protect themselves. Additionally, the Crakers have a natural pleasant citrus smell, while humans often feel dirty and smell bad. As Chivers (2006) states: “Jimmy’s human traits, such as a hairy chest, brown eyes, and a tendency to wear clothes, mark him as different from the Crakers, and different in a way that signifies disability” (393). Compared to the Crakers, Snowman’s body is therefore less perfect and less adapted to the environment, making him feel subhuman.

This impression of not being the most perfect species anymore also comes from the fact that the Crakers are impressively beautiful, at least according to human standards. Indeed, despite being considered peculiar as a species, the Crakers have what one would consider perfect appearances. On many occasions, they are described as Venuses and Apollos, often leaving humans somewhat insecure about their own bodies. It is also worth noting that, despite having this supposedly perfect appearance, there is still diversity amongst the Crakers. The women, for instance, are

every known colour from deepest black to whitest white, they’re various heights, but each of them is admirably proportioned. Each is sound of tooth, smooth of skin. No ripples of fat around their waists, no bulges, no dimpled orange-skin cellulite on their thighs. No body hair, no bushiness. They look like retouched fashion photos, or ads for a high-priced workout program. (*OC*, 115)

As this extract shows, there are differences amongst the Crakers, yet those are not seen as either more or less perfect, but all answer to some sort of beauty standard, be that in terms of height or complexion. Crake has, however, got rid of most of recurrent human complexes (such as fat or cellulite), showing that this diversity does not include all body types. In another passage, Jimmy gives his initial reaction to seeing the Crakers for the first time: “They were naked, but (...) there was no self-consciousness, none at all. At first he couldn’t believe them,

they were so beautiful. Black, yellow, white, brown, all available skin colours. Each individual was exquisite" (OC, 355). Again, this shows that there is diversity when it comes to skin colours and that the one thing that the Crakers have in common is that they are all beautiful in their own way. Nonetheless, even if the Crakers answer to the beauty standards of many Western cultures, their perfection is, at least to Snowman, not attractive at all. Although his first impression is rather positive, it degrades with time. As he puts it, "these new women are neither lopsided nor sad: they're placid, like animated statues. They leave him chilled" (OC, 115). Their lack of humanity, it seems, makes them less desirable.

Worth noting, however, is that despite the vast array of possibilities offered by scientific and technological advances, the human body is still taken as the norm. As was mentioned earlier, their bodies mirror human bodies in most aspects. As Sally Chivers (2006) explains,

[t]he novel depicts these "advancements" in a progression, from the hybridization of pigs with humans, through the development of "vitamins" that promise to improve human embodiment, and finally to genetically spliced human-like creatures. This progression proposes, perhaps satirically, that no amount of technology or biomedical understanding can eliminate the centrality of the human body to social and individual welfare. (389)

In other words, in spite of the almost unlimited possibilities offered by science or bioengineering, humans are not willing to stray too far from what they see as the best species: the Homo sapiens. This raises a question that will be tackled in a following section (see page 85): despite getting rid of most of human beings as we know them, does Crake, with his sustainable and future-oriented species, really get rid of anthropocentrism?

3.4.1. A transhuman species?

In the first chapter, I wondered where the boundary between human and transhuman lies, which is sometimes difficult to tell. Can a prosthetic leg, for instance, be considered a sign of transhumanity? When it comes to the Crakers, the boundary is not much clearer. From a distance, the Crakers do not, in any way, look like robots, cyborgs or other famous transhuman types of species. On the contrary, they are perfectly in line with the natural world, as opposed to the technological one. They are, however, a whole new species that was created from scratch because of bioengineering. In that sense, they are much more transhuman than

human. This more transhuman, machine-like aspect is also apparent in the hybridization of the Crakers' bodies. As they are the outcome of scientific manipulation and bioengineering, their bodies are essentially the result of multiple technical processes. This mechanical origin is sometimes echoed in some of the descriptions of the Crakers. In *Oryx and Crake*, on the topic of the Craker's ability to purr, for instance, it is said that Crake had "turned himself inside out in the attempt to *install* that feature" (185, emphasis added), after which the Crakers are described as the motor of a vehicle when Snowman explains that they were "purring away like car engines" (185). Later still, concerning the temperature of their body, Snowman explains that "[t]heir body thermostats are set for tropical conditions" (186), as if Crakers had a built-in electronic device, which one could turn up or down with a button. In the third book, too, their purring is mentioned, but this time the Crakers are said to be "making a noise like a kitchen mixer" (*MA*, 21). These few examples show how their unnatural origin is sometimes mentioned, reminding the reader that they are the product of biotechnology. Their bodies are therefore not only a summation of vegetal, animal, and human features, but also of technological elements.

Comparatively, the clones were also created with scientific means, but were also based on real humans. They have similar bodies to humans, the main difference being their inherent inability to procreate. The fact that their minds work almost exactly like those of humans further testifies for their more human than transhuman side. Additionally, as argued in the second chapter, they do not have any enhanced or superhuman abilities, contrary to the Crakers.

3.4.2. *The human Pig-Ones*

It is worth noting that, if there are similarities between clones and Crakers in terms of bodies, there are also similarities between clones and another hybrid species from Margaret Atwood's trilogy: the pigoons. The word pigoon itself is an association of two other words: pig, the animal used as the basis model, and balloon, referring to their big round size. The purpose of those animals is exactly the same as that of the clones in Ishiguro's novel: to grow organs that can save human lives. Indeed, as part of the "Operation Immortality" (*OC*, 25), a species was created to allow humans to live improved lives. A major difference, however, is that clones

die after donating a certain number of organs, whereas pigoons have the ability to grow new organs after they have been taken. As Jimmy explains in the first book:

A rapid-maturity gene was spliced in so the pigoon kidneys and livers and hearts would be ready sooner, and now they were perfecting a pigoon that could grow five or six kidneys at a time. Such a host animal could be reaped of its extra kidneys; then, rather than being destroyed, it could keep on living and grow more organs, much as a lobster could grow another claw to replace a missing one. (25-26)

These biotechnological advances offer not only the prospect of perfecting the lives of humans, but are also supposedly “less wasteful, as it took a lot of food and care to grow a pigoon” (*OC*, 26). This, however, seems somewhat paradoxical. Indeed, by offering the possibility of replacing one’s organs and making humans almost immortal, the society goes against the natural course of the human species and of the ecosystem. By making an animal that is able to grow new organs indefinitely, however, it also claims to try to find solutions to an ecological problem, since the more organs a pig can grow, the fewer pigs are needed and the less space is consequently taken up.

In the extract cited above, it is also interesting to note that pigoons are called ‘host animals’. The body of animals is thus simply used as a storage space. The animal itself does not exist beyond the purpose it is supposed to fulfil, similarly to how clones do not exist as real beings – although Hailsham makes them believe otherwise – but only as a species that hosts organs for transplants.

Furthermore, another paradoxical view is expressed when it comes to how pigoons are considered. Whereas the treatment of Ishiguro’s clones is sometimes comparable to how meat animals are treated nowadays, pigoons are also exploited, but are sometimes considered close to humans too. This is made clear when Jimmy discusses how they are not eaten by human beings. As human tissues are usually used for their creation to make sure that the organs they grow are compatible, “it was claimed that none of the defunct pigoons ended up as bacon and sausages: no one would want to eat an animal whose cells might be identical with at least some of their own” (*OC*, 27). Snowman also adds that he “didn’t want to eat a pigoon, because he thought of the pigoons as creatures much like himself” (27). It thus seems that humans like to attribute certain names to species depending on the purpose they serve. When growing organs, pigoons are considered animals and can consequently be abused

without question. When it comes to eating them, however, their human-side prevails and they therefore cannot be exploited. Although they look like animals, the fact that they are partly made from human cells is what gives them a higher status. Comparatively, Ishiguro's clones look human from top to toe but are treated as animals from their beginning to their end.

3.4.3. Hybrid bodies, hybrid behaviours

To match their hybrid bodies, the Crakers have what one could call hybrid behaviours, most, but not all, of which are based on animals. These behaviours are also what reveals that they are not actually human beings. Indeed, were they wearing clothes, the difference between a Craker and a human being would be hard to tell. Yet humans and Crakers are undeniably dissimilar on many levels. Diving into their behaviours thus implies moving away from what, at first glance, seems an almost human appearance.

Amongst the most unordinary behaviours of the Crakers is their diet. They mostly eat leaves, but also have no problem eating their own excrements – or “recycling” them (*OC*, 305), in Crake's own words – which any human would find revolting. The aim of this diet, of course, is to make the most sustainable species possible, which would not have to rely on agriculture or any other man-made processes. This mirrors the habits of various animal species, such as rabbits, mice or beavers. Their urine, too, is rather special. Very often, the male Crakers gather around in a circle and pee to scent-mark their territory.

In terms of personality, the Crakers could be compared to plants as well as humans. On various occasions, they are described as having soft, passive and dull personalities, therefore comparable to plants. When Jimmy asks Crake whether the Crakers “make jokes”, for instance, he answers that “[n]ot as such” and adds that “[f]or jokes you need a certain edge, a little malice” (*OC*, 359), which they clearly lack. This is also shown in an example already mentioned, when Swift Fox calls them “walking potatoes” and “vegetables” (*YOF*, 29). This dullness perhaps stems from their inability to self-reflect which itself can be a consequence of their very restricted language.

Most conspicuous perhaps is their child-like personalities which are present both in the adults and in the children. Like children of a certain age, curiosity is their prevailing characteristic. Oryx even says it herself when she explains to Jimmy that he needs to take care

of the Crakers if Crake and she were to disappear, because “[t]hey are like children, they need someone. You have to be kind with them” (OC, 378). Like children imitate adults, the Crakers also often imitate and learn from humans. They learn how humans react in specific situations and copy their emotions. Their language, too, mostly develops by asking humans for the meaning of words they do not know. Additionally, their child-like nature has a negative side. Indeed, their naivety means that they can easily be manipulated, which leads humans to see them as inferior to them. Besides behaving like children in various respects, the Crakers are also infantilized by humans. Even if many of them are adults, humans act like parents to them. They often tell them what to do or not to do, or keep them out of what they consider to be adult conversations when making decisions, although they, towards the end, start including them more in their decision-making processes. It is worth noting, however, that humans usually infantilize Crakers in order to protect them, which means that it does not necessarily come from bad intentions, yet it fosters their feeling of superiority.

A final important aspect of the Crakers’ personality, is that, like numerous animal species, they enjoy being constantly together in a group. Due to this collective side, it is rather difficult to differentiate Crakers from one another, as they all have similar personalities, although some of them do stand out, such as little Blackbeard or Abraham Lincoln, who is sometimes said to be somewhat of a leader. They therefore mainly seem to exist as a group rather than as separate individuals, as opposed to Ishiguro’s clones, who are distinguishable from one another because of their unique personalities.

3.4.4. Curious names for curious beings

Vaguely related to the Crakers’ existence as individuals are the names Crake chose to give them. As was mentioned on multiple occasions already, the aim was to move away from humans as we know them and replace them with a whole new species made from the best features of a variety of species. As much as Crake wants to escape from the old world, however, he still does not disregard all of its cultural aspects, as reflected by the names the Crakers carry. Amongst them, for instance, are Abraham Lincoln, Marie Curie, Eleanor Roosevelt, Leonardo da Vinci, or Sojourner Truth. This shows that Crake, although he stopped believing in the world as it was, does not solely see all of it in a negative way. Indeed, by using those names – names that are associated with people who are considered important in the

history of the world – Crake admits that there is some good to be taken from the old world. The Crakers, of course, have no knowledge of who the people after whom they were named are. It therefore seems to only have been a way for Crake to entertain himself. As explained by Snowman, “it had amused Crake to name his Crakers after eminent historical figures. It had all seemed innocent enough at the time” (OC, 116). According to Snowman, giving the Crakers those names was thus simply Crake’s way to entertain himself in the creation process. Yet, to some extent, it may also be a form of memory to speak for the past. A question that arises then concerns new-born children. Indeed, one could wonder what kind of names they would give their children and whether or not humans would influence that decision, as they themselves could not possibly name their children after well-known human beings.

3.4.5. *A species of sexual habits*

Turning back to the bodies of the Crakers, the major behavioural aspect on which the Crakers’ bodies have an influence is their sexual practices. Sex indeed constitutes a major difference between Crakers and regular human beings, but also between Crakers and clones. According to Crake, one of the major problems with humans is their approach to sex. As he puts it himself,

[y]ou can’t couple a minimum access to food with an expanding population indefinitely. *Homo sapiens* doesn’t seem able to cut himself off at the supply end. He’s one of the few species that doesn’t limit reproduction in the face of dwindling resources. In other words – and up to a point, of course – the less we eat, the more we fuck. (OC, 138-139)

What Crake means by that, is that in times when overpopulation leads to a shortage of resources, humans still believe that having children is a good idea, since they deeply care about passing on their genes to future generations. He then compares them to other species, showing that the human way of ‘doing sex’ is not the most preferable one:

Take birds – in a lean season they cut down on the eggs, or they won’t mate at all. They put their energy into staying alive themselves until times get better. But human beings hope they can stick their souls into someone else, some new version of themselves, and live on forever. (139)

He then raises an interesting point when Jimmy tells him that “we’re doomed without hope” and he answers that this is the case “[o]nly as individuals” (139). Crake’s aim is therefore not to save humans as individuals, but he is rather interested in saving a species as a whole and does therefore not care about that species having human attributes, as long as it is fit for survival in a sustainable way.

Consequently, the Crakers’ approach to sex is much closer to that of animals than to that of *Homo sapiens*. As mentioned in the first chapter, Jared Diamond (1997) dedicated a whole book to sex (*Why is Sex Fun?*), in which he explains why the human approach to sex is the strangest one compared to other species. Amongst the aspects of our sexual lives that the book discusses, Diamond discusses the presence and absence of sexual signals. He explains that “females of many primate species advertise their time of ovulation by swollen, brightly colored skin on the buttocks or around the vagina” (130). Similarly, the Crakers’ penis, abdomen and bottom all turn blue when their time to mate comes. Sex thus only has one purpose: that of procreation, since they “go at it until the woman becomes pregnant and her blue colouring fades” (OC, 194). Humans, on the other hand, have no visible clue as to the time of ovulation and therefore also have sex for fun rather than solely to procreate. To the Crakers, sex seems to be a mission, or “an athletic demonstration” (OC, 195), more than anything else. The males often feel it is their duty to mate with a female when she turns blue. Crake also explains that “[t]heir sexuality was not a constant torment to them, not a cloud of turbulent hormones: they came into heat at regular intervals, as did most mammals other than man” (OC, 359), which means that sex is free from taboos and from the affective aspect that so often causes trouble in human lives.

Additionally, the Crakers stay true to their collective nature even when it comes to sex. Indeed, their method takes the form of a group activity: when a female turns blue, she mates with four males rather than one. Contrary to some animal species in which sex is “generally carried out in public, before the gazes of other members of the troop” (Diamond, 3), Crakers resemble humans in that the “female and her quartet find a secluded spot” (OC, 194). Finally, it is worth noting that, if the bodies of the Crakers are unlikely to change, the end of the trilogy suggests that their sexual habits could develop under the influence of human beings. The bodies of the future hybrids (i.e. when Crakers mate with humans), for their part, are likely to be different and therefore perhaps to introduce new forms of sexual practices.

3.4.6. *The end of the nuclear family*

Whereas the reader sees, especially in the third book, Toby worrying about her relationship with Zeb, about them potentially becoming a couple and about him possibly having an affair with Swift Fox, the Crakers have none of these thoughts in their relationships. Due to the absence of property, love, and relationships as we know them, concepts such as monogamy, polygyny, or even more simply of being in a couple with someone else are irrelevant to them. As Crake puts it, “as there would never be anything for these people to inherit, there would be no family trees, no marriages, and no divorces” (*OC*, 359). Along similar lines, Crake managed to get rid of jealousy which he also viewed as part of the problem with humanity. And he was not alone in thinking that. In the second book, Adam One, too, expresses a certain reluctance towards jealousy. On the topic, he says that “[j]ealousy is a very destructive emotion (...) It’s part of the stubborn Australopithecine heritage we’re stuck with. It eats away at you and deadens your Spiritual life, but also it leads you to hatred, and causes you to harm others” (*YOF*, 363), which are all outcomes that Crake absolutely wanted to prevent.

Consequently, the Crakers also defy, to some extent, the roles established in most Western cultures when it comes to parenthood and the nuclear family. As was developed in the previous section, the Crakers have different reproduction practices, which lead to new ways to address parenthood. Because the females mate with four males who are aware of this, for instance, conflicts can be prevented in terms of who the parent of the baby is. The child, rather than becoming the property of two parents, simply becomes a new member of a much bigger community. Yet, some gender-roles are still present, perhaps because Crake’s vision, however futuristic and progressive, was still that of a man. Thus, for instance, women are still the ones who get impregnated and give birth.

Beside parenthood, Atwood questions gender roles in other aspects of the Crakers’ lives. Although the roles are radically different from what humans know, as the new world does not require the same daily chores, some are still established as several activities are reserved for males while others can only be conducted by females. Men, for instance, all have to pee in a circle to delimit their territory, an activity in which the Craker women cannot partake.

3.4.7. *Fear no death*

A final aspect worth elaborating that, to some degree, relates to the Crakers' bodies is death. One of the characteristics that Ishiguro's clones and Atwood's Crakers have in common is that their time on the planet is limited. The former could live longer if it was not for how the system works, but the latter cannot physiologically speaking live any longer than they were meant to. Both species thus share a similar fate: that of dying when they are still very young, that is, at exactly thirty years old for the Crakers and in their early thirties for the clones. The reason behind their short lives stems from their respective purpose. The purpose of the clones, as was mentioned on multiple occasions, is to save human lives. The aim is thus to get as many organs from each clone as possible. After a certain number of donations, their bodies simply cannot endure any more surgeries and are therefore discarded. The Crakers, for their part, are "programmed to drop dead at age thirty" (OC, 356) simply because Crake thought this was a good way to avoid overpopulation, but also, paradoxically, to achieve immortality. While the beneficiary of the short life of the alternative species in *Never Let Me Go* is the human species, Crake, in the *MaddAddam* trilogy, believes he is acting for a purpose greater than humans. Creating a species that will die at age thirty may seem counterproductive when what one wants to achieve is immortality, but it is actually consistent with Crake's own definition of that concept, which he describes as "the absence of such fear" (OC, 356), namely the fear of mortality.

This, of course, implies that the Crakers should not know about death, which is the case, but for how long? Crake indeed explains that they are not aware of the fact that they are mortals since "none of them has died yet" (OC, 356). Yet he knows that this is bound to happen. This then leaves the reader wondering whether his plan of immortality as he sees it is not destined to fail, as the fear of death may arise when the first Craker dies. It is worth noting, however, that they do encounter death when several of their human friends die, such as Toby, Jimmy and Zeb. In these moments, nevertheless, they give no sign of fear. This may be due to how humans explain death to them, that is, as the end of the person in that particular body rather than as an end in itself, thereby echoing a theory of reincarnation in vegetal or animal form.

The death of Crakers raises another question: that of potential burial rites organized by Crakers after one of them dies. Indeed, as they seem to share increasingly more attributes

with humans towards the end of the third book, one could wonder what would happen to a Craker's body after they die. As Atwood hints at the creation of a religion, as will be explained in greater detail in a following section, it would seem probable that they decide to honour their dead in some sort of way, perhaps copying human practices. A similar question can be raised when it comes to the death of the clones. It is rather unlikely that a clone would get a regular burial ceremony. Yet the idea of their bodies being disposed of as those of useless and unloved animals is rather chilling.

In *Never Let Me Go*, clones do have the knowledge of death, but seem to have come to terms with it very early on in their lives. Ruth and Tommy, in their last moments, both seem to have accepted their fate without feeling bitter about it. Kathy, too, despite being confronted to the death of her closest friends, expresses nostalgia rather than anger or frustration. Yet, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, Kathy's narration does sometimes point to the fact that she may not have accepted her situation as well as she lets on. It is also worth noting that, whereas many animal species have an instinct for survival which suggests that they fear death, clones differ from such animals in that they do not exhibit fears which lead them to explicitly try to resist their inevitable end in their last moments.

3.5. Art and creativity

Through the so-called Compounds, Atwood exposes a vision in which science has the upper hand, as opposed to the arts, which are dismissed and barely regarded as significant. The divide between science and arts is visible in the school system already, since it favours scientific minds, which it allows to go to prestigious schools, while the brand of the humanities is poorly funded. Yet, the apparent dismissal of art may turn out to actually be an ode to it. Indeed, the outcome of the trilogy appears to reverse the balance. All the scientific advances and technologies have led to a world where one must go back to the basics, and the arts and humanities start making sense again. As Jimmy, the sole defendant of art, puts it in a conversation with Crake, "[w]hen a civilization is all dust and ashes, (...) art is all that's left over. Images, words, music. Imaginative structures. Meaning – human meaning, that is – is defined by them" (*OC*, 197). The next few paragraphs focus on various branches of the arts, starting with language.

3.5.1. The power(s) of language

In *Prophets of the Posthuman* (2014), Christina Bieber Lake dedicates a chapter to Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (called "What makes a Crake? The Reign of Technique and the Degradation of Language in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*") in which she discusses the status of language in the novel. Amongst the various points she makes, she argues that the first instalment in the trilogy "is a satirical exaggeration of what happens when a society, in submitting to the reign of technique, allows its language to become impoverished and its arts obliterated" (118-119). She comes to this conclusion due to the status of the arts in the book: a very low one as a result of a society in which consumption and performance have become the main sources of concern, and the intricacies of language and the beauty of the arts have thus been declared unnecessary. Bieber Lake also add that, "[i]n short, the degradation of language is an open door for violence against others" (119). When it comes to the Crakers, language has been highly degraded, since there is no space for metaphors, puns, or other language-related tricks but rather a preference for a down-to-earth, very pragmatic use of words. And yet, contrary to what this last quotation suggests, the Crakers are incapable of violence or of causing prejudice to others.

As was mentioned earlier, Crakers have very basic grammar and vocabulary. With time and through their contacts with humans (at first only Snowman, but then also others, like Toby), this naturally changes. Even though it is a slow process, they gain vocabulary on a daily basis. Like curious children, one of their favourite questions seems to be: "what does this word mean?". The stories they are so fond of generally contain many words which they do not understand, as do the conversations they have with humans, which often leads them to interrupt the speaker to ask questions. Although those are not always rendered through direct speech, the narrator makes it clear that they are asking questions, such as in the following excerpt, in which Toby is telling the Crakers "[t]he Story of when Zeb was lost in the Mountains and ate the Bear" (MA, 67): "Mountains? Mountains are very large and high rocks. No those are not mountains, those are buildings" (68). Crake's wish to have only basic vocabulary thus little by little begins to fail, as the Crakers start building up their vocabulary and knowledge of the world around them.

When humans are aware that certain concepts would be too difficult to grasp for the Crakers, they often have recourse to simple language, thereby sometimes slightly changing

the meaning of words, preferring that to having to give intricate explanations. This is the case, for instance, with guns, which become “stick[s] that can make holes in things” (MA, 69). Crakers lead humans to try and use language in a new way, accessible to the down-to-earth mind of the Crakers. The evolution of their language use also accounts for the fact that language actually plays a significant role in the development of one’s mind and culture.

In *Never Let Me Go*, this unwillingness to have the alternative species master a broad range of vocabulary is not present. There does not seem to be any difference between how humans and clones talk. Yet there are words that are solely used in the world of the clones and are particular to situations in which only they can find themselves. Among these are words like ‘to complete’ or a ‘possible’, which were previously explained. In terms of the language Kathy uses in her narration, however, it has been argued that the latter is rather limited and artificial and therefore closer to the language use of a machine than to that of a human.⁴ As Lena Crucitti (2017) puts it, “[a]s the artificiality of Kathy’s language reinforces the idea that she is not fully human, language as a means of communication clearly fails to help her in her heartbreaking quest to prove her humanity” (33). Whereas Kathy does not lack vocabulary like the Crakers do, she still may appear as not quite human due to the absence of diversity in her narration.

3.5.2. *Storytelling and writing*

The evolution in the Crakers’ language goes hand in hand with their inherent passion and need for stories. Each night, the Crakers ask Snowman to tell them a story. When Snowman is wounded and unable to speak, Toby takes on the role of storyteller. Crakers, it seems, crave stories more than food. This already points to the human side of the Crakers, as stories have been shared amongst people since the dawn of time. In a book on the various ways in which stories shape humans like humans shape stories called *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (2012), Jonathan Gottschall states that humans “are, as a species, addicted to story” (xiv), that “[h]umans are creatures of story” (15), or yet that “story is a human universal” (30). These statements can undoubtedly be applied to Crakers too, as, each night,

⁴ See Lena Crucitti’s “At a complete loss for words: Silence and animal language as means of expression in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* (2005)” (2017) for examples of such criticism.

they beg for someone to tell them a story. In that sense, there is not much difference between humans and Crakers. Their passion for tales also shows that they have the ability to imagine realities that are not necessarily theirs. Even though most of the stories concern them or the world that led to their creation, they still contain elements which are not part of what they already know. Words thus allow them to go beyond what they are familiar with, and, consequently, to expand what they can consider as new possibilities.

It is worth adding, too, that storytelling consists in a time when they can all be together as a group, once again bringing up that aspect of the collective that characterizes them. In this regard, Crakers are going back to the basics, given that, as Gottschall (2012) puts it, “until the past few centuries, story was always an intensely communal activity” (136), reminding us of the old oral storytelling traditions rather than the ways in which many human beings now consume stories, that is, individually on their phones and computers. Beside bringing the Crakers together, stories also have the power to bring them and humans together. As proposed by Gottschall (2012), story is perhaps “a form of social glue that brings people together around common values” (28). Although not all of the humans are present during the nightly story time, it does function as a bonding moment for both sides.

Furthermore, when little Blackbeard finds Toby writing in her journal as she so often does, he instantly gets intrigued by her doings, and she decides to teach him to write. He first learns to copy names, then starts writing names on his own, and soon develops the ability to write anything, albeit with his own spelling rules. Blackbeard quickly becomes passionate about writing, so much so that the third book ends with his own written accounts in which he explains that he himself has become a teacher to the hybrid babies that were born. This ending, of course, suggests that language use plays a central role in defining a species as human. As Crakers adopt traditions established long ago by *Homo sapiens*, such as writing, it also leaves the reader wondering if Crakers will simply be another generation of human beings who will end up making the same mistakes as humans.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy also ascribes great value to writing. The whole book consists in her telling her story and that of other Hailsham students. It seems to be a way for her to structure her thoughts and to come to terms with her situation. As mentioned earlier, writing also serves to express some resistance towards her condition of clone as well as to show that she is more human than how the system perceives her.

3.5.3. *Music*

Amongst the characteristics that Crake was unable to get rid of when he created the Crakers is music. He even seemed conscious of the fact that this was going to be a challenge. In the second book, for instance, Ren explains that “music is built in, Glenn [Crake’s real name] said: it’s knitted into us. It would be very hard to amputate it because it’s an essential part of us, like water” (377). The Crakers, therefore, are very fond of music and of singing more specifically. In most of the scenes in which they appear, they are said to be singing. This can be related to one of Zeb’s utterances. In a conversation with Toby in which she asks him to stop singing, he explains that it is “God’s fault” because he “Wove music into the fabric of our being. Hears you better when you sing, so He’s listening to this right now” (*YOF*, 289). Despite wanting to get rid of any religious aspect for the creation of the Crakers, Crake did not manage to erase music which is, according to the God’s Gardeners, a gift from God, or at least a way to connect with him. Essentially, this shows that various characteristics of the Crakers which Crake originally did not want to be part of his species are often related to what Gardeners see as a component of the essence of what makes humans human. Music is so inherent to the Crakers that they even sing when unconscious, such as when Toby explains that “[a] Craker child is singing a little in his sleep” (*MA*, 408).

Ishiguro’s clones, in comparison, do not demonstrate a particular fondness for singing, but a link is once made between music and humanity. Kathy, at some point, relates an event which involves a cassette tape she acquired as a child during one of the Sales and to which she seems particularly attached. One day, Madame witnesses Kathy listening and dancing to the sound of Judy Bridgewater’s “Never Let Me Go”, her favourite song on the tape. Music, in that moment, seems to connect Kathy to her inner self, as well as to the possibilities of what she could have been, had she been a regular person. Indeed, she explains that the lyrics of the song remind her of a woman who would have had a baby after being told she could not and was now asking her baby to never let her go. As she sways to the music, Kathy therefore pretends that she is holding an infant in her arms. This is what makes Madame stop and observe her: to her, Kathy looks like a girl longing to become a mother, but she herself knows that this will never happen. Music is therefore not only significant in Kathy’s life, but it also serves as a reminder of the inhumane treatment that is imposed on the clones. This importance Kathy allots to her tape, even in her adult years when she realizes how happy it

makes her to have the tape back after having lost it so long ago, further reveals the essential role music has played in her life. In *Never Let Me Go* as in Atwood's trilogy, music is thus given an interesting position, revealing that music, to some extent, accounts for some sort of humanity.

3.6. Religion

Beside music, one of the most defining features of humanity is religion. One of the Crakers' first artistic creations is an idol of Snowman, when he leaves for a few days and they try to communicate with him through a statue that represents him. This, of course, looks a lot like a religious symbol, which is actually not very surprising. Indeed, throughout the books the Crakers seem to develop a sort of religious belief, although Crake absolutely wanted to avoid this, as he considered religion to be one of the essential problems with humanity. It seems, however, that Crake's plan to get rid of religion failed. By having religion play a role in the Crakers' life, Margaret Atwood thus appears to be making a statement on religion: religion, in Gottschall's words, "is a human universal" (*The Storytelling Animal* 2012, 119).

The Crakers first start to consider Crake as a god-like figure who is at the source of their existence. Oryx, then, is the goddess of all other species, and Snowman is their messenger, the only person able to come into contact with the higher spirits. They thus admire Snowman for his special abilities – although not as much as they look up to Oryx and Crake – but also believe that Snowman has this ability because he possesses a few sacred objects, such as the baseball hat and the watch, through which he can supposedly hear Crake's voice. This explains why Toby can take on the role of messenger when Snowman is ill. With their child-like naivety, the Crakers trust anyone who tells them the stories of Crake with the powers given to them by those supposedly special objects. This shows how humans are often put on a pedestal by Crakers. They ascribe to humans abilities that they do not actually have, and therefore see them as extra special when, in fact, it is themselves who have superhuman abilities.

Amongst those abilities, for instance, is Blackbeard's capacity to translate, so to speak, what the pigeons say into a language that humans can understand. By doing so, he shows that he is situated somewhere between humans and animals on the species continuum. Zeb, when

planning the mission they need to go on to get rid of the Painballers (the so-called bad guys) that are still lurking, explains that Blackbeard has to come with them because he is their “only liaison with the pigs” (MA, 418). In this regard, it seems that Blackbeard is seen as a sort of instrument that could help them achieve their goal. Toby, on the other hand, feels protective over Blackbeard, as a parent over their child, and therefore does not want him to come. At the end of the day, Blackbeard makes his own decision, but, as he perhaps does not understand the danger that comes with going on the mission, his decision may be influenced by the humans he looks up to. The humans, for their part, trust Blackbeard enough to give him this important role, but are also aware that he is incapable of lying. This shows the sometimes-peculiar relations that exist between Crakers and humans, as will soon be discussed.

Turning back to religion, however, it is worth noting that Toby’s writing and, later, Blackbeard’s, take the form of a new genesis. Toby’s journals indeed recount the end of the old world and the beginning of the new one. When the humans and Crakers who have known the main characters of Toby’s book, like Crake, Jimmy, Zeb or Toby herself, have disappeared, one could wonder whether they will be at the heart of the religion of future generations. In Gottschall’s book on storytelling (2012), multiple parallels are drawn between stories and religions, which bring to mind the role Toby’s writing and storytelling play in the way humans and Crakers define their new society. He, for instance, explains that most religions, if not all, “are built on stories” (118) and that “humans conjure gods, spirits, and sprites to fill explanatory voids” (121), which is exactly what Jimmy and Toby do when telling stories. Indeed, every time the Crakers ask questions the answers to which would be too difficult to explain, they use Crake as a way to justify anything, frequently explaining that something is the way it is because Crake wanted it so. Gottschall also argues that “[h]umans are born curious, and they must have answers to the big, unanswerable questions: Why am I here? Who made me?” (120). Again, the Crakers are, in this regard, very similar to humans, as the many questions they ask and the stories they most often ask for concern their origin.

Finally, as was mentioned, storytelling brings the Crakers together and helps create a community, but so do religion and history. In the *MaddAddam* trilogy, storytelling, religion and history are intrinsically linked. The stories humans tell the Crakers are retellings of the history with fictionalized as well as religious aspects. As Gottschall (2012) explains when

talking about the way we render history, “[t]he purpose of these myths is not to provide an objective account of what happened. It is to tell a story that binds a community together” (124). Although history might sometimes be rearranged, it is therefore mainly in the aim of reaching the common good. Yet there are undeniable negative aspects that come with the rewriting of history, such as the assertion of the superiority of certain groups of individuals when those are portrayed as purely good and right. By assembling their stories as they will, humans are perhaps attempting to protect the Crakers from a harsher reality but, by doing so, they might just be repeating history and making the mistakes humans already made in the past.

3.7. An independent species?

In *Never Let Me Go*, contacts between clones and non-clones are rather rare. Apart from the guardians at Hailsham, clones only rarely see people from the outside. As they grow up, they earn the luxury to go to new places by themselves, which gives them a chance to interact with the outside world. Yet it seems that those contacts are not quite beneficial to them, as they remind them of their real nature and of the gap between them and other people. Furthermore, it confirms that they are not considered human, but are rather seen as a sub-species, like animals, which helps humans prosper.

In the *MaddAddam* trilogy, things are slightly different. Crake’s plan was apparently to leave Jimmy with the Crakers and to get rid of everyone else. By doing so, Jimmy would be able to help them adapt, if needed, and could teach them a few things to make sure that they lead safe lives. As a result thereof, the Crakers would be completely sustainable and able to live by themselves, and Jimmy would disappear in a not so distant future, being the last representative of the human species. What Crake had not expected, however, was the survival of others, and the influence they could have on his creation.

A question worth asking as regards to the relation between humans and the alternative species concerns the extent to which one species relies on the other or, on the contrary, is perfectly able to live independently. As children, the clones have no choice but to rely on the human beings that surround them, as they are stuck in a system which controls them. Once

they become adults, however, they seem to gain in independence. They are free to travel to different places and a few, like Kathy, own a car. Yet this freedom is but an illusion. Rather than relying on humans in their adult lives, clones can only rely on each other, because they do not get support from human beings.

Crakers, on the other hand, have a much more complicated relation with humans. Their first human contact is Oryx, who is their teacher during their time in what they call the Egg, where they were created. They also learn about the existence of Crake whom they have never seen and, because he is their creator, whom they consider as their God. They are then left with no one but Snowman, who, as was already mentioned, is Crake's messenger. The Crakers look up to him, because they believe he is special due to his supposedly close relation with Crake. As Snowman tells them stories about Crake, but also gives them orders which are supposedly dictated by him, they trust that Snowman is actually still in touch with Crake. Although they do not need Snowman to survive, they very much rely on him to get information about Crake, to fulfil their curiosity and to learn about their origin through storytelling. Whereas they are independent when it comes to their survival, and are, in this respect, similar to any animal species that is not kept as pet, they do have this need for something more which only humans can provide.

Later on, when Snowman discovers that he is not the last man, the Crakers and other survivors gather together and some of the Crakers develop affinities with humans in various ways. To begin with, they start relying on Toby rather than on Snowman for their daily story when the latter has become too sick. Blackbeard, then, seems to develop a special bond with Toby and later on almost becomes one of the humans, as will be shown in a following section. Finally, Zeb, too, acquires a special status in the eyes of the Crakers when he becomes part of the stories told by Toby. More generally, Crakers rely on all of the humans to answer their numerous questions and to teach them various things. In this regard, they are very much like children.

Nonetheless, it is not a unilateral relationship. Indeed, humans, too, depend on the Crakers to a certain extent. In the bigger picture, Crake counts on them to be the start of a new generation of beings – although he mostly trusts his own genius to be responsible for that. Snowman, too, starts relying on them to bring him food, such as the weekly fish he asks for in exchange for stories. Crakers are also responsible for keeping him sane, as he has people

to talk to and is therefore not completely cut off from reality. Later on, the Crakers also help protect humans, for instance by peeing in a circle to hold certain animals at bay, or by purring to heal their wounds. Towards the end of the trilogy, humans put all their trust in Blackbeard, who is supposed to serve as the connection between them and pigoons during their mission to get rid of the Painballers. Indirectly, they depend on him for their own survival, and the survival of all species involved. Similarly, in *Never Let Me Go*, humans highly count on clones to save their lives, although clones could hardly break that trust.

The relation between humans and the alternative species thus seems to be more reciprocal in the case of the Crakers than in that of the clones, who gain nothing positive from their contacts with humans. The Crakers, for their part, are highly influenced by their contacts with humans and manage to evolve because of that, perhaps at Crake's great regret, and humans, too, evolve due to their relationship with Crakers. The next section focuses on the ways in which Crake's master plan took unexpected turns when humans started to have an increasingly significant influence on the Crakers, which then altered the essence of the Crakers as Crake had imagined them.

3.8. Evolution: towards posthumanism?

What is indeed particularly interesting with Atwood's Crakers is that they undergo a very obvious evolution. The Crakers at the beginning of the first book are different from those at the end of it, and even more so from those at the end of the third one. Whereas Ishiguro's clones evolve on a much longer period (from childhood to adulthood) – and these changes are all looked back on by Kathy who is now at the end of her life – the Crakers' evolution only span a few months (a few years at most). Their evolution, however, is quite drastic.

The most conspicuous evolution occurs in the character of Blackbeard. Blackbeard, as was explained before, is the Craker who develops a special bond with Toby, mainly because she teaches him to read and write. He is also asked to work with humans on their mission to "clear[] away the bad men" (*MA*, 436). His close contacts with humans have a clear influence on him, as can be seen in the last few chapters of *MaddAddam*. To go on this mission, for instance, Blackbeard is given a pair of shoes to protect his feet. As clothes is one of the major aspects that distinguish humans from Crakers, Blackbeard, in a way, crosses the boundary

between species to temporarily act as a human being. After coming back from the mission, Blackbeard takes on a human role when he momentarily replaces Toby and becomes the Crakers' storyteller. He puts on the red hat, of which all the Crakers have been scared, and acts as Snowman and Toby have before him. In this regard, he becomes somewhat more human and distances himself from the Crakers. He goes as far as to tell his fellow Crakers that they "do not have to sing" (MA, 435), something that was repeatedly said by Snowman and Toby. Yet he still identifies as a Craker when he uses the pronoun "us" to refer to their species (436). Just like Snowman and Toby before him, Blackbeard also answers the Crakers' many questions. He, for instance, explains the meaning of the word *battle* (MA, 439) or, when they wonder about stairs, says that he "will tell [them] what stairs are later" (440), realizing that it is impossible to get to the end of the story if he needs to explain every word. At the very end of his storytelling, Blackbeard says: "Now we can sing", showing that he does still belong to the group of the Crakers.

On a continuum from the most prototypical Craker to the most prototypical human, Blackbeard could therefore be situated slightly closer to humans than other Crakers, who may follow his lead in the future. In addition to oral storytelling, Blackbeard also goes from writing his name to walking on Toby's steps by writing whole stories. In *The Storytelling Animal* (2012), Gottschall mentions that "[a]ccording to evolutionary thinkers such as Brian Boyd, Steven Pinker, and Michelle Scalise Sugiyama, story is where people go to practice the key skills of human social life" (57). He therefore once again establishes a clear connection between humans and stories. While this suggests that, through stories, humans can improve the social skills they probably already possess, it could undoubtedly be applied to Crakers who, rather than practice, learn, through stories, new ways to act and interact that are not part of their natural skills.

Alongside writing, Crakers also become capable of imagining and creating. At some point, they invent "a game in which one of them played the heroic Pigoon flying like the wind (...) and a smaller one played Snowman-the-Jimmy" (MA, 427). When Snowman dies, they also create a sort of statue with objects they find, to represent and honour him, similarly to how they, at the end of *Oryx and Crake*, had created an effigy of him to try to come into contact with him from faraway.

The end of the trilogy also leaves the reader with quite a few questions as regards the future of the species. Humans in the book, too, seem to wonder about the Crakers' future. At some point, for instance, the following question is raised: "What will the Crakers decide about that when they get around to astrology, in a hundred years, or ten, or one? As they will, or will not" (MA, 382), showing that it is possible that Crakers will simply repeat history. The future babies also give food for thought. Indeed, three women get pregnant, some of whom perhaps with hybrid babies, which leaves us wondering what these future generations of beings will look like, but also how they will behave. Even though it is revealed at the end that they have the Crakers' signature green eyes, the reader is left to imagine the future of the human race. Calling it that might also not be accurate anymore. In *MaddAddam*, Zeb suggests that the human race has ended already when he says: "Funny old thing, the human race (...) Wasn't it?" (278) and, by doing so, shows that he himself perhaps does not identify as human anymore.

Alongside these questions is also the possibility of going back to how humans have been for decades: self-centred and feeling superior. Whereas Ishiguro does not directly tackle the issue of posthumanism (in the sense of redefining the place of the human being on the grand scheme of the universe), Atwood broaches this topic through Crake and his creation. If the vision of the world in the society in which Jimmy lives is still anthropocentric – although some efforts are made by certain classes of people to lessen the human impact on the ecosystem (albeit much too late) – Crake allows a different view to surface in the books. He sees rather clearly through the role of humans in the destruction of the planet and of other species, and aims to prevent more damage from being done. He therefore makes sure that his new species has a drastically different view on the world and behaviours that align with that stance. What one could call the new world, then, still reflects the idea that we are in the Anthropocene phase, since nothing can be done to erase the mark that humans have left on the planet. Yet the Crakers offer a whole new, future-oriented and posthuman vision.

The ideal posthuman species Crake imagined, however, ends up developing on its own further than anticipated. As argued by Ursula K. Heise in "The Android and the Animal" (2009), "even the Crakers turn into humans rather than posthumans by the end of the novel [*Oryx and Crake*], as their newly discovered ability for artistic representation – they have made an effigy of Jimmy during his absence – signals the emergence of just the kind of culture that

Crake aimed to preclude in his genetic programming” (507). In other words, Heise suggests that the Crakers are humans because they have the ability to make art which is “the true indicator of human achievement” (507). This is even more so the case at the end of the trilogy, as those cultural capabilities increasingly develop and as Blackbeard, for instance, starts writing and reading. Whereas it may be true, as previously argued, that the Crakers become more human because of the influence that humans have on them, stating that they are not posthuman anymore seems slightly extreme. Whereas it may be true for future generations of hybrids born from the blend of a Craker and a regular human, Crakers as they are represented at the end of the third novel are, I believe, still posthuman and give the impression that culture and posthumanism are not as incompatible as one might think. On the contrary, this combination could represent the best of both worlds.

3.9. Dehumanizing and humanizing species

A final point worth raising concerns the humanizing or dehumanizing of the alternative species in Ishiguro and Atwood’s books. When wondering whether the authors humanize or dehumanize their alternative species, the most important question to ask is what these two terms actually mean. On the one hand, humanizing a species seems to have a rather clear meaning. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (8th edition), to humanize means “to make something more humane”, that is, “showing kindness towards people and animals by making sure that they do not suffer more than is necessary”. According to these definitions, it seems that the meaning is mostly concerned with the inner qualities rather than with the outside (namely the appearance). On the other hand, the meaning of dehumanizing appears to be somewhat more complex. If one follows the logic used to define *humanize*, to dehumanize would mean to make more inhumane, that is “not caring about the suffering of other people; very cruel” (*OALD*, 8th edition). Paradoxically, however, human beings seem to be the only animals capable of cruelty. In many narratives, the cruellest characters are indeed often human beings. In Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, for instance, the creature is more human than some of the humans. To dehumanize a species, then, would also mean to make more human, albeit not humane. Yet, in the case of the two pieces of creative fiction analysed in this dissertation, one could consider both verbs in a different light. In Atwood’s case, Crake’s

wish is clear: he wants to dehumanize humans to create the Crakers, by which he means to remove all the aspects he considers to have ruined the human species, such as jealousy or racism. Dehumanizing, in this case, would thus equal making more humane. Yet the Crakers do appear as somewhat human towards the end of the trilogy, such as when Blackbeard starts reading and writing, two activities which characterize humans.

Another aspect that seems to make the Crakers more human is their approach to the collective, an aspect which, it seems, *Homo sapiens* have long lost. Crakers, contrary to humans, ascribe great value to the collective. They do everything as a group and rarely wander off alone (except perhaps for Blackbeard, who sometimes leaves the other Crakers to be with Toby). If someone needs them to purr, for instance, they do so in small groups. When the males need to pee in a circle to mark their territory, it also consists in a group activity. Since they function as a group, they ascribe much importance to the way they treat others: with care, a certain selflessness and a strong desire to make people around them feel good.

When it comes to *Never Let Me Go*, it is safe to say that the clones – a non-human species – are humanized, since they exhibit all the characteristics typically found in a human being. The society in which they were created, however, prefers to dehumanize them, in the sense of considering them like animals rather than humans, to lessen their own, inhumane cruelty. At Hailsham, nonetheless, people take a more paradoxical approach. They try to treat clones as more human to feel less guilty, which results in them feeling even more guilty because they struggle to cope with the fate they impose on individuals whom they cannot easily differentiate from themselves. Additionally, the clones, like Atwood's Crakers, can be characterized by the way they care for one another and ascribe importance to the collective. This is accompanied by a strong ability to empathize, not only with their own kind, but also with the fully human species. Kathy, especially, exhibits empathy towards various people such as Ruth, but also Madame during their encounter at Hailsham when she stops to watch Kathy dance to her music tape.

In a discussion on Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), Ursula K. Heise (2009) argues that the author "makes empathy and care for (real or artificial) animals a crucial criterion for distinguishing humans" (506). If we apply this to the Crakers, as well as to the clones, both species could therefore be considered human, as both do display such emotions, especially the Crakers who believe in the equality of all species and therefore do no

discard any of them. Whereas the “every man for himself” motto seems to prevail in many Western societies, the qualities Crakers and clones display, such as care, empathy and attentiveness, serve as a reminder of what humans could improve.

When reading the *MaddAddam* trilogy, it also quickly becomes clear that the Crakers have nothing inhumane about them, but that they may actually be the most kind-hearted characters of the books. The Painballers (i.e. repeat murderers who have gone to the Painball prison and managed to get out of it alive), on the contrary, appear to be the least human beings of all, despite their very human existence. Zeb, when he teaches how to identify a Painballer, explains that it is discernible in their “blank expressions: some of their human mirror neurons had gone missing, along with big chunks of the empathy module: show a normal person a child in pain and they’d wince, whereas these guys would smirk” (MA, 361). Towards the end of the last book, a trial takes place amongst the humans to decide the fate of the two Painballers that were captured. During that discussion, Rhino says that it does not matter how they “call them (...) So long as it’s not *people*” (448). The narrator then explains that “Triple Painball survivors have long been known to be not quite human” (448), which says it all. Along similar lines, Ren, talking about Amanda’s child possibly being one of theirs, states that the baby “would be a monster” (449). It even seems that the pregnant humans are more worried about their children being half Painballer than half Craker, as the Crakers turn out to be more human than the Painballers. In *Never Let Me Go*, too, the worst beings turn out to be the humans who condone a system in which another species, much like themselves, is exploited for the sole purpose of improving their own lives. This only goes to show that humans might be the least human species of all.

Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to examine the anthropocentrism that is so deeply rooted in most Western societies by looking at two alternative species in dystopian fiction: the clones in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and the Crakers in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy. It therefore set out to understand how these two alternative species, rather than belonging to one category of species (human, animal, or vegetal), defy the boundaries between such categories and explore the border zone in between. By presenting species which do not exist but nonetheless seem perfectly plausible, Kazuo Ishiguro and Margaret Atwood, in their own way, have managed to challenge the deep-rooted vision of the human as superior. While the *MaddAddam* trilogy seems to go somewhat deeper into the possibilities of science when it comes to redefining the position of the human, Kazuo Ishiguro, with the clones he depicts in *Never Let Me Go*, still manages to critique the well-established anthropocentrism. Both authors thus seem to convey a similar message by using rather different techniques. One explores a very radically new and posthuman species, whereas the other uses more subtle yet efficient ways to get his point across.

This study was divided into three chapters. The purpose of the first one was to establish a state of the art by considering different aspects relating to alternative species. Starting from the proposal for a new name for the current era (namely the Anthropocene) and the logic behind it, it was suggested that such a change also calls for a redefinition of the human and of its position in the world. This chapter therefore explored the human species in its often-complicated relations with other animals, such as those one calls pets or pest. It also delved into the possibilities which fiction offers, especially certain genres, including dystopia and science-fiction. Indeed, those literary genres allow one to go beyond what one knows and, by doing so, challenge the *Homo sapiens*' ingrained views of various species and of the roles that they impose on them. This is exactly what Ishiguro and Atwood do, as was shown in the second and third chapters of this dissertation, which consisted in thorough analyses of the species they portray.

Both chapters have thus brought answers in terms of these alternative species' hybridity and changing position on the human-nonhuman continuum. When it comes to the clones, it was shown that they are hardly distinguishable from ordinary human beings. The

main difference between human and clones lies in the way the clones are treated and considered by the system established in this alternative version of England. Indeed, the outside world prefers to think of the clones as non-human animals, and more specifically as meat animals, as this helps them tolerate a cruel system which works in their favour. The exception to the rule is Hailsham, the institution where the main characters were brought up. This school aimed to prove that the clones were human, in the hope of getting them to be treated more fairly and to be respected and valued as individuals. Paradoxically, however, by attempting to show that the clones were just like regular humans, Hailsham has only increased the cruelty of the system in place. As a consequence, it seems as though humans are taking other humans' organs to save their own lives.

The analysis of the clones also ascribed importance to the role of art in the book. Interestingly, the clones' ability to make art is Hailsham's way of proving that they are human. As a consequence, art can be seen as a defining feature of humanity, one that sets humans apart from other species. The role art plays in defining humans also prevails in the character of Tommy. This dissertation established that Tommy is the clone who epitomises hybridity. As a child, he is first portrayed as a boy with a certain animality to him which is apparent in the way he acts and reacts to certain events, but also in his inability to make so-called proper art. As he learns to control his emotions and instincts and puts them into his art, he starts appearing as more human. Tommy's behaviour thus perfectly symbolizes the border zone between human and non-human animals.

Although they may seem worlds apart from the clones, Atwood's Crakers, as was explored in the third chapter, are fairly similar on many levels. They, too, illustrate the border zone between species, including vegetal ones. Their hybrid bodies lead them to adopt hybrid behaviours. If the dullness of their personalities and their attitude towards death are closer to vegetal species, their approach to sex seems more animal than human. Their ability to make art, be that sculpture, singing or writing, then, illustrates their more human side, as does their passion for stories. In this regard, Atwood ascribes a similar meaning to art as Ishiguro: both suggest that art accounts for humanity. With the Crakers, however, Atwood also explores elements which Ishiguro does not address, amongst which religion, which also appears as inherent to the human nature.

As the Crakers evolve throughout the books, they therefore emerge as increasingly more human, although they are still perceived as strange and somewhat inferior by human beings (as illustrated by the way they are treated as children). The end of the trilogy thus raises many questions as to the future of their species and, more generally, of the human race. Will the Crakers simply repeat the many mistakes made by humanity, or will they help redefine the ideal species of the future, which is neither human nor animal but both at the same time?

All in all, this dissertation argued that both the clones and the Crakers, rather than belonging to a specific and well-defined category of species, are a blend of aspects from numerous ones, therefore showing that the dichotomies between species should preferably be seen as a continuum on which species and individuals can move. Additionally, this continuum would preferably take the form of a horizontal axis, ascribing the same value to each species, rather than a vertical one which situates human beings at the top and less human or non-human species at the bottom.

By analysing the previously mentioned elements, this thesis also aimed to understand how alternative species can help one understand what distinguishes humans from other animal species, or, in other words, what makes the *Homo sapiens* stand out and consequently consider themselves as superior beings. The answer to this, it seems, is their ability to imagine and to create, be that by painting or drawing, as in *Never Let Me Go*, or by writing and telling stories in the *MaddAddam* trilogy. In both pieces of creative fiction, an emphasis was indeed laid on art as a special ability and as a way for individuals to connect with one another. Furthermore, it appears that humans in many modern Western societies have lost their capacity to care for others in a collective way; a quality which seems to be highly significant when it comes to considering a species as more human, as is the case with both the clones and the Crakers.

In addition to revealing something about the human essence, this analysis aimed to see how alternative species allow one to imagine a world in which *Homo sapiens* would be given a different position. By portraying posthuman species, or at least species that challenge anthropocentric visions, Atwood and Ishiguro's works of fiction drive one to explore a potential decentralisation of the human. Whereas anthropocentrism often leads to extinction, these stories propose new ways of inhabiting the world in the aim of achieving the common good.

Finally, I aimed, throughout this study, not only to show that the alternative species at the heart of this dissertation are situated in a border zone between species, but also that humans, too, are sometimes difficult to situate and that they should perhaps be defined differently. Indeed, no living creature, it seems, is completely homogeneous, but each is rather a succession of characteristics that can be ascribed to a variety of species. By portraying not quite human individuals with a sensitivity for art as well as with a sense of the collective, both *Never Let Me Go* and the *MaddAddam* trilogy perhaps suggest that the ideal species is not the *Homo sapiens*, but one that is a blend of human characteristics as well as animal and vegetal ones. Consequently, they show what *Homo sapiens* can learn from other species and help one imagine new possibilities as regards the future human race: one, let us hope, more sensitive to current issues and more mindful of the world around it.

When it comes to the books at the heart of this dissertation a few questions remain unanswered. One could first wonder whether these stories, as well as others of the same genre, could actually have an impact on their readers' vision of the human. Then, other aspects of the books, which were not tackled in this analysis or were simply mentioned, are worth their own study. Amongst these are the humans portrayed in Atwood's trilogy. One could examine, for instance, the impact of the new world on characters like Jimmy and Toby. Are they still human or have they, too, shifted to a more hybrid nature? Finally, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* leaves one wondering whether, from a sociological viewpoint, one could accept a society that condones rather than condemns clones, or whether one does not already participate in a similarly cruel system in which power relations work at the expense of humanity. In other words, have humans not already lost their humanity?

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