UCL Université catholique de Louvain

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres (FIAL)

Un éventail de formations, une multitude d'horizons

"At a complete loss for words"

Silence and animal language as means of expression in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005)

Mémoire réalisé par
Lena Crucitti

Promoteur(s)
Prof. Ingrid Bertrand

Année académique 2016-2017
Master en langues et lettres modernes, orientation générale, à finalité approfondie

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Introduction

"There is no such thing as absolute silence"[1].

In 1952, the musician John Cage wrote a groundbreaking three-movement composition entitled *4'33"* in which "nothing" happens. From a practical point of view, a pianist is supposed to go on stage, sit down and wait silently during four minutes and thirty-three seconds. The first time it was "performed", the audience interpreted it as nothing more than a bad joke and got enraged. Since then, harsh words have been used to characterise this piece of music. Mark Robin Campbell for example writes that Cage "presents us with an 'empty' art form and asks us to experience its emptiness"[2]. After having considered the following questions "Is 4'33" music? Has Cage intended for us to listen to a piece of music is composed of four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence? Is that a listening experience?"[3], Campbell comes to the conclusion that "*4'33"* may be a musical notion, but it is not music, nor does it offer a musical experience"[4]. However, does this work of art really represent "nothing"? In the words of Kyle Gann, Cage's *4'33"* is undoubtedly "one of the most misunderstood pieces of music ever written"[5]. Mark Swed also points out that most critics might have missed the point:

> Cage may well be the single most influential figure in art, poetry and aesthetics of the second half of the 20th century, but he has also been, and continues to be, a subversive one. During the past 50 years he has challenged the foundations of musical art, sometimes so radically, as with the silent piece *4'33"*, that many still refuse to accord it and subsequent Cage works the status of music[6].

John Cage does not simply childishly play with the audience's expectations. The composer arguably questions the power of silence and its ability to trigger a strong emotional response such as anger or irritation. How could a mere "nothing" provoke such violent reactions from the audience? Does silence only correspond to an absence of sound? It is worth going back to the story of the genesis of this work to better understand Cage's initial intention. *4'33"* originates from an experiment that Cage underwent in an anechoic chamber at Harvard University. In this perfectly insulated room, Cage expected to experience silence in its purest form. However, he ended up quite disappointed as silence turned out to be the background allowing to highlight two other unavoidable sounds:

1 Zwerin, Mickael. "A Lethal Measurement". *John Cage.* New York: Praeger, 1970, p.166.
2 Campbell, Mark Robin. "John Cage's *4'33"*: Using Aesthetic Theory to Understand a Musical Notion". *The Journal of Aesthetic Education.* 26.1 (Spring, 1992), p.89.
3 Id., p.83.
4 Id., p.90.
5 Gann, Kyle. *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33".* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, p.10.
6 Swed, Mark. "John Cage: A Celebration". *The Musical Times.* 129.1748 (Oct., 1988), p.516.

> It was after I got to Boston that I went into the anechoic chamber at Harvard University. Anybody who knows me knows this story. I am constantly telling it. Anyway, in that silent room, I heard two sounds, one high and one low. Afterward I asked the engineer in charge why, if the room was so silent, I had heard two sounds. He said, 'Describe them.' I did. He said, 'The high one was your nervous system in operation. The low one was your blood in circulation.'[7]

Silence "absorbed sounds and isolated two of Cage's usually inaudible internal bodily sounds"[8]. After this experiment, Cage came to the conclusion that silence does not exist since human beings cannot escape from two specific sounds coming from their own bodies: the high vibration of their nervous systems and the low pulsation of their heartbeats. Silence cannot constitute "nothing" as Cage discovered that it was a means to reconnect with the hidden language of his own body. Human beings are no longer used to listening to their internal voices as they are constantly stimulated by the noisy modern world surrounding them. As a consequence, the absence of external sounds completely disorientates them. Cage's *4'33"* generates an opportunity to engage in an "ethics of listening"[9]" and to discover the meaning and effects of silence, a notion that should not only be negatively defined. Silence has the power to reconnect people with their sense of humanity by reminding them that they are made up of flesh and blood. What if these heartbeats could not be supplanted by words? What if silence was a necessity to reconnect with our humanity? What if silence and the human body could articulate some abstract notions in a more accurate way than our rational voice? In the words of Branden Joseph, "Cage's so-called silent piece is as resonant with philosophical, historical, and acoustical complexities as many a noisier composition"[10].

One of the aims of this dissertation is to show that Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) is a novel whose reception has triggered the same form of misunderstanding as John Cage's *4'33"*. This dystopian novel depicts a society in which clones are generated to donate their vital organs to "normal people", a subject that inevitably generates haunting questions such as *What is a human being?* or *What allows some organisms to deserve this privileged status?* Within the academic community, the novel seems to have triggered the same form of irritation and frustration than Cage's *4'33"*. Most critics were outraged by the silence and passivity of the characters who "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"[11]. *How can they accept the unacceptable?* was the question on everyone's lips when the novel was published. In a lecture

7 Cage, John. *A Year from Monday*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1967, p.134.
8 Kahn, Douglas. "John Cage: Silence and Silencing". *The Musical Quarterly.* 81.4 (Winter, 1997), p.581.
9 Labelle, Brandon. *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*. New York: Continuum, 2006, p.20.
10 Joseph, Branden. "Review: No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's *4'33"* by Kyle Gann". *American Music*. 28.4 (Winter 2010), p.504.
11 Black, Shameem. "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics". *MFS Modern Fiction Studies.* 55.4 (2009), p.788.

dedicated to dystopian literature, Véronique Bragard argued that Ishiguro's novel represents an exception as it violates one of the main conventions of the genre: the individual's resistance against the authority. Canonical works such as Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Orwell's *1984* (1948) or Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) characteristically depict an individual rising against a totalitarian regime. Bragard suggests that there is no form of rebellion in *Never Let Me Go*[12]. On this point, Anne Whitehead argues that one of the problematic consequences of the clones' resignation is that it jeopardises the sympathetic bond created between clone and reader as it strengthens the idea that clones are not subject to the laws of survival instinct in the same way that human beings are[13]. The present study intends to suggest that these scholars might have missed the point. In the same way that critics could not apprehend the fact that the absence of sounds in Cage's *4'33"* might represent music, the absence of a direct form of disobedience in *Never Let Me Go* (the voicing of a refusal) was necessarily interpreted as the non-existence of any form of rebellion at all in the novel.

This study aims to focus on the narration of *Never Let Me Go* (a first-person narrative offering the perspective of a clone) in order to demonstrate that Kathy, as an active narrator, manages to dismantle the system that exploits clones on the basis that they are "less than human" by implicitly establishing her humanity throughout the story. The analysis will therefore consist in the disentanglement of the strategies used by the narrator to allow the reader to empathise with "a form of life that eludes traditional sympathy"[14]. We will see that the narrator's rehumanising project involves the use of means of expression underrated by our Western society. Kathy manages to gain power and to convince her addressee through her clever use of silence and animal language. The questions indirectly addressed by Cage in his silent piece are therefore closely linked to my analysis of Ishiguro's novel. This study will show that, contrary to what most critics argued, the protagonists of *Never Let Me Go* are far from being passive but that they express their refusal to die in a non-verbal but powerful way.

The starting point of this project corresponds to two specific questions concerning the possibility and the relevance of a direct form of disobedience in the novel. In the first chapter, the main question I will try to answer is: are the characters really passive? It is worth wondering whether clones could have possibly rebelled under the circumstances in which they were raised at

12 Prof. Véronique Bragard's lecture, *Dystopias and 20th-Century Fiction*, Utopian/Dystopian Literature in English, 22/03/2017.

13 Whitehead, Anne. “Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*”. *Contemporary literature*. 52.1 (2011), p.73.

14 Black, Shameem. op.cit., p.790.

Hailsham. What if the guardians ruling the institution managed to condition the protagonists to accept their fates? It is essential to explore the manipulative language used by the authoritative voice in order to understand the apparent passivity of the protagonists. Then, scholars seem to have overlooked another crucial question: would a straightforward rebellion against the guardians have been useful? In other words, are the guardians the real enemies in *Never Let Me Go*'s society? Nothing is less certain after Miss Emily's last speech, which represents a watershed in the story.

Then, beyond the fact that the guardians might not represent the accurate target, dismantling the exploitation system of *Never Let Me Go*'s society by simply talking to "normal" people in order to convince them of the clones' humanity might not be possible. The second chapter will be dedicated to the limitations of human language as a means of communication in the novel. I will first investigate the narrator's use of human language and argue Kathy is unable to face her painful story with this so-called superior means of expression. My first challenge will be to explore the linguistic symptoms of Kathy's reluctance in order to show that she does not quietly accept her fate but that she cannot address this crucial issue with words. Then, I will try to answer another challenging question: what if human language was fundamentally helpless to discuss thorny concepts such as humanity or inhumanity? This part of the analysis will heavily rely on the work of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein who highlighted the fact that some areas of reality cannot be expressed with human language because of their transcendental status[15]. Kathy, as an active narrator, might have realised that words would be helpless in her quest to show her humanity.

The third chapter will be dedicated to the rehabilitation of silence as a means of expression. *Never Let Me Go* abounds in gaps and silences. However, does that simply mean that Kathy is a reluctant narrator? Is it possible that she consciously hides key information from the reader? While silence used to be seen as the language of the dominated and the powerless, the new critical perspective considers that silence can represent “a wilful way for the victim, the marginal, to defy language’s claims to power and resist participation in the discourses of patriarchy and domination”[16]. This part of the analysis intends to demonstrate that, paradoxically, it is through a clever use of silence that Kathy manages to make her voice heard. What if the only way to create a non-official version of the story that would be taken into account by Kathy's society and to fight against the hegemony of the authoritative voice would be to tell it using silences?

15 Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* London/New York: Routledge, 2001, p.86.
16 Guignery, Vanessa. *Voices and silence in the contemporary novel in English.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009, p.5.

Then, the fourth chapter intends to show that the body language of the characters also plays a significant role in Kathy's rehumanising project. While clones seem to passively assent to their fates, their organic bodies do not seem to agree with their machine-like behaviour. In this chapter, I will explore the way Kathy conveys the self-preservation instinct of clones. Do clones have knee-jerk reactions against death or do they mechanically head towards their own destruction? Interestingly, Kathy's story abounds in references to animals. The issue of man's animality in the posthuman era is at the heart of the novel. This part of the dissertation will partially be based on a theory developed by the French philosophers Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986). This chapter dedicated to animal language will inevitably lead us towards more ontological questions in the last chapter of the dissertation.

The philosopher Giorgio Agamben writes that our Western civilisation has always considered human language as "man's identifying characteristic par excellence"[17]. The way human beings express themselves is intrinsically linked to their definition of who they are. Engaging in a reflection on the limitations of human language and the rehabilitation of underrated means of expression such as silence and animal language inevitably raises questions about the uniqueness of the human identity. The last chapter of the dissertation will demonstrate that *Never Let Me Go* is not only a novel rehabilitating means of expression undervalued by our Western society but that it also represents a novel questioning the supremacy of the status of human beings. Kathy's story arguably questions the sacredness of the well-established human category and celebrates the blurring of the lines between animals, humans, and machines. What if these three realms were part of the same continuum?

Abbreviations:

NL: *Never Let Me Go*

17 Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open : Man and Animal.* California : Stanford University Press, 2004, p.37.

Chapter 1: Are the characters really passive?

1.1. Are the characters really passive?

The reading of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* interestingly triggered a general emotional response among the critics: they were all to some extent outraged by the passivity of the characters who "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"[18]. The first element that usually shocks the reader once s/he has discovered the whole story is undoubtedly the way Kathy talks about her job as a carer. She is very proud to say that hardly any of her donors "have been classified as agitated, even before fourth donation"[19]. She even adds, "Okay, maybe I *am* boasting now" (*NL*, p.3). Being able to lead her donors towards death without experiencing any form of resistance is presented as an accomplishment. In other words, Kathy's behaviour seems to be complicit with this society in which "mass production of human clones in the service of therapeutic medical technology has become normalised"[20]. In "Writing with Care: Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go"*, Anne Whitehead expresses a profound feeling of bewilderment when it comes to Kathy's minor preoccupations and the status of care in the novel:

> Her preoccupations with professional success and with minor inconsistencies in the system mean that she is not addressing either her own imminent death or the larger inequities and injustices at work. Is "caring," viewed in this light, a form of labor that is socially valuable because Kathy is making a positive difference to others (preventing "agitation"), or—given the political resonances of Ishiguro's choice of word here—is it a means of preventing resistance and unrest, securing passive compliance through end-less, exhausting activity and minor compensation?[21]

Whitehead argues that Kathy's frustrating passivity puts the sympathetic bond created between clone and reader in jeopardy[22]. At the end of the story, when Kathy is told that the deferral theory was pure invention and that Tommy's death is therefore imminent, she "quietly accepts the news and does not seek any form of reprisal against the system"[23]. Her resignation defies the laws of survival instinct, which alienates her from the reader. How can she accept the unacceptable? Is

18 Black, Shameem. "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics". *MFS Modern Fiction Studies.* 55.4 (2009), p.788.
19 Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go.* New York: Vintage International, 2006, p.3.
20 Carroll, Rachel. "Imitations of Life: Cloning, Heterosexuality and the Human in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*". *Journal of Gender Studies*. 19.1 (2010), p.61.
21 Whitehead, Anne. "Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*". *Contemporary literature*. 52.1 (2011), p.60.
22 Id., p.73.
23 Ibid.

she really like us? On this point, the critic Harper Barnes tries to put himself in a clone's place and says:

> If you were scheduled to have your organs plucked out any day now, but in the meantime were permitted to wander around the British countryside pretty much as you chose, wouldn't you decide at some point, 'This is a really bad deal, and I'm moving to France' ?[24]

How could we not agree with him ? The protagonists of the story miss countless opportunities to run away, especially during the Cottage period, when they are only monitored by Keffers, a "grumpy old guy who turned up two or three times a week in his muddy van to look the place over" (*NL*, p.116). At some point, Kathy precisely says : "We all knew no one would stop us if we wandered off, provided we were back by the day and the time we entered into Keffers's ledgerbook" (*NL*, p.118). How can we therefore explain that they always come back ? Quite interestingly, Kathy feels the need to justify their submissiveness, which means that, somehow, she knows their behaviour is not normal : "You have to remember that until that point we'd never been beyond the grounds of Hailsham, and we were just bewildered" (*NL*, p.118). Our point in this chapter is that special attention should be given to this sentence. The revolting behaviour of the clones is far from being incomprehensible if we focus on the circumstances in which they were brought up. The guardians, who represent the authoritative voice in the novel, used many manipulative techniques to condition them to accept the unacceptable. We will first explore these techniques and argue that a straightforward rebellion was not possible, which does not mean that there is no form of rebellion at all in the novel. As G. Griffin points out, the readers might be very frustrated by the fact that the characters do not openly rage against their fate : "to the dismay of many readers, (the clones) do not rage against the dying of the light but, after attempting a reasoned request for stay of execution, submit to their fate"[25]. However, in the second part of this chapter, we will discuss the pointlessness of a direct form of disobedience and argue that, contrary to what most critics think, the characters in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* are far from being passive.

1.2. The impossibility of a straightforward rebellion

The recollection of Kathy's life at Hailsham, the boarding school where she and her friends were brought up, has a significant place in *Never Let Me Go.* As Keith McDonald points out, "schooling is often a significant and sometimes dominating factor in autobiography, and the

24 Black, Shameem. op. cit., p. 791.
25 Griffin, Gabriele. "Science and the Cultural Imaginary: the Case of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*". *Textual Practice*. 23.4 (2009), p. 657.

educational environment it provides protagonists with a microcosm of the wider world they are later to experience"[26]. The way the clones understand the world has inevitably been influenced (not to say created) by the guardians who ruled the institution. The latter control every single aspect of their lives. Their world literally corresponds to Hailsham as they never go beyond the fences surrounding the school. They can only glimpse the woods from the premises but terrible stories circulating among the students deter them from venturing to the outside world :

> There were all kinds of horrible stories about the woods. Once, not so long before we all got to Hailsham, a boy had had a big row with his friends and run off beyond the Hailsham boundaries. His body had been found two days later, up in those woods, tied to a tree with the hands and feet chopped off. Another rumour had it that a girl's ghost wandered through those trees. She'd been a Hailsham student until one day she'd climbed over a fence just to see what it was like outside. This was a long time before us, when the guardians were much stricter, cruel even, and when she tried to get back in, she wasn't allowed. She kept hanging around outside the fences, pleading to be let back in, but no one let her. Eventually, she'd gone off somewhere out there, something had happened and she'd died. But her ghost was always wandering about the woods, gazing over Hailsham, pining to be let back in. (*NL*, p.50).

Hence, their limited knowledge of the outside world is the guardians' product. For example, the children are introduced to the different parts of England thanks to calendars with pictures. Moreover, workshops called "culture briefings" are organised to familiarise them with the real world: "classes where we had to role play various people we'd find out there – waiters in cafés, policemen and so on" (*NL*, p.110). Kathy notices that the guardians exercise a rigid censorship over their access to television and literature: "when you came across a page torn out of an illustrated book or magazine, this was because there'd been a picture on it of someone smoking" (*NL*, p.68). Smoking, an activity that could deteriorate the clones' organs, is strongly disapproved of at Hailsham and this is the reason why Kathy is so secretive about her most precious possession, an album of Judy Bridgewater called *Songs After Dark.* At some point, the tape disappears and Kathy assumes that it is probably because there was a cigarette on its cover.

It is worth pointing out that many subjects are taboo at Hailsham. In *Forbidden Words*, a major work on taboo and the censoring of language, K. Allan and K. Burridge argue that "Taboos arise out of social constraints on the individual's behaviour where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury" and that "infractions of taboos can lead to illness or death, as well as to the lesser penalties of corporal punishment, incarceration, social ostracism or mere disapproval"[27]. They also explain

26 McDonald, Keith. "Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as "Speculative Memoir"". *Biography.* 30.1 (2007), p.77.

27 Allan, Keith and Burridge, Kate. *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. p.1.

that taboos are “open to beneficial exploitation”[28]. Their use at Hailsham is probably the best example of this possibility since it has a specific purpose: it is meant to reinforce social cohesion and, by extension, to thwart any attempt to rebel. Hailsham students are not supposed to discuss subjects such as the Gallery, the donations or the fact that they are so “special”, etc. Taboos are far from being universal: their use inside a given community creates a strong sense of belonging: “To an outsider, many prohibitions are perplexing and seem silly. But they are among the common values that link the people of a community together. What one group values, another scorns. Shared taboos are therefore a sign of social cohesion”[29]. Many examples show that the creation of taboos works as a self-regulation system at Hailsham. Each time a student breaks an unwritten rule (even inadvertently), s/he is punished by the others without any intervention of the guardians. There is for example an unspoken rule about the Gallery (the student’s creations collected by ‘Madame’) : “we should never even raise the subject in their presence” (*NL*, p.31). At some point, Kathy recounts an episode involving Carole H., a student who broke the rule during a lesson. Pronouncing the forbidden word is compared to letting slip a rude word or as using a guardian’s nickname to his or her face: she “immediately put her hand over her mouth with an 'oops!'” (*NL*, p.32). Fortunately, Mr Roger immediately relieves the tension by smiling indulgently and saying: “Let it pass, we'll pretend you never said that” (*NL*, p.32). Later, Marge K. will not be as lucky as her when she raises another sensitive subject with Miss Lucy. During a lesson dedicated to the detrimental effects of smoking, Marge K. asks the guardian whether “Miss Lucy had herself ever had a cigarette”(*NL*, p.68). The other students are enraged: “we'd all been glaring at Marge, really furious she'd asked such a rude question” (*NL*,p.68). They cannot imagine that the guardians could smoke. As a consequence, Miss Lucy’s answer comes as a shock: “I'd like to be able to say no. But to be honest, I did smoke for a little while. For about two years, when I was younger”(*NL*, p.68). She adds: “what you must understand is that for you, all of you, it's much, much worse to smoke than it ever was for me (…) You've been told about it. You're students. You're... special”(*NL*, p.68). Kathy says that some of them were longing to ask why it was “so much worse for us” (*NL*, p.69) but that no one did. We will see later that Miss Lucy is the only guardian who endangers the system by talking too openly. After that episode, students violently punish Marge: “for days afterwards I remember how we made Marge's life an utter misery” (*NL*, p.68). This is proof that the guardians managed to create an efficient system that no one can put in jeopardy without experiencing resistance coming from the community. In this process, the words *embarrassment*, *embarrassing* and *embarrassed* that appear no less than sixteen times in Kathy’s story are key-words:

28 Id., p.7.
29 Allan, Keith and Burridge, Kate. op.cit., p.9.

> If we were keen to avoid certain topics, it was probably more because it embarrassed us. We hated the way our guardians, usually so on top of everything, became so awkward whenever we came near this territory. It unnerved us to see them change like that. I think that's why we never asked that one further question, and why we punished Marge K. so cruelly for bringing it all up that day after the rounders match. (*NL*, p.69).

This feeling is exactly what prevents these students from asking inconvenient questions. On this point, K. Allan and K. Burridge say that "[b]y default we are polite, euphemistic, orthophemistic and inoffensive; and we censor our language use to eschew tabooed topics in pursuit of well-being for ourselves and for others"[30].

The use of taboos is not the only technique used by the guardians to condition the clones. As they are in control of every aspect of the latter' instruction, it is also their function to establish norms and conventions. As Black points out, this possibility to normalise and to promote ethically unacceptable ideas can become extremely dangerous: "Ishiguro specializes in showing how moral crimes or ethical lapses often stem from the desire of ordinary individuals to adhere to the everyday codes that give their lives structure and meaning"[31]. Language will play a significant role in this process of normalisation. It is worth noting that all totalitarian regimes used the same technique. In the article "Language policy during the fascist period: the case of language education", Gabriella Klein argues that during the fascist period in Italy, Mussolini particularly focused on language and education in order to reinforce the sense of community in his country. He implemented a clear language policy design in order to establish norms: "precise language education interventions permitted formal, monocentric, and endonormative standardization"[32]. Language became an instrument of social control able to powerfully influence the "speakers' thought processes"[33]. At Hailsham, we can find the same mechanism at work. It is particularly interesting to focus on the way the guardians characterise the clones' role in the wider world. While the reader considers the donors as victims, the fact is that they are far from being victimised by the guardians. As Keith McDonald points out, it is quite the reverse :

> The children (or captives) are described as "special" and "gifted" by their guardians (or wardens), and their murders are described as "completions," a jarring reminder of their sole purpose in the eyes of society, and of the ways in which language can normalize atrocities deemed necessary in a given ideology.[34]

30 Allan, Keith and Burridge, Kate. op.cit., p.2.
31 Black, Shameem. op.cit., p. 793.
32 Klein, Gabriella. "Language Policy during the Fascist Period: the Case of Language Education". *Language, Power and Ideology: Studies in Political Discourse.* Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1989, p.42.
33 Id., p.41.
34 McDonald, Keith. op.cit., p.78.

Clones are heroised: in the Hailsham world, being a future donor has to be understood as a privilege. I argue that this glorified vision of themselves will haunt them until the end of their short lives and is exactly what will prevent Kathy and Tommy from rebelling after Miss Emily's traumatic speech at the end of the story. When she tells them that the deferral theory does not exist, she also reveals that Hailsham was only an experiment meant to prove to a society that considered clones as less than human that "if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being" (*NL*, p.261). However, even if this news comes as a shock, it cannot trigger a revolt because Miss Emily manages to make them understand that after all, they are lucky. Being part of the Hailsham's experiment was definitely a privilege so they should feel grateful for what they received : "I hope you can appreciate how much we were able to secure for you. Look at you both now! You've had good lives, you're educated and cultured" (*NL*, p.261). This discourse echoes the reassuring words they were told when they were children and becomes the only comforting idea they can cling to while inevitably going towards death.

The last technique linked to language that I want to explore is what Kathy calls the "told and not told idea" (*NL*, p.82), which is probably the most insidious form of manipulation used by the guardians at Hailsham. It is important to bear in mind that it is Kathy who draws our attention to this technique. She is aware that she has been manipulated and we will see later that it is exactly what enables her to manipulate the addressee of her story. The "telling without telling" idea corresponds to the fact that the guardians prepare the children to sacrifice themselves in an indirect way by always being allusive. For example, they discuss donations and sexuality at the same time so that the teenagers are too excited to be concentrated. This creates a diversion :

> One thing that occurs to me now is that when the guardians first started giving us proper lectures about sex, they tended to run them together with talk about the donations. At that age– again, I'm talking of around thirteen–we were all pretty worried and excited about sex, and naturally would have pushed the other stuff into the background. In other words, it's possible the guardians managed to smuggle into our heads a lot of the basic facts about our futures. (*NL*, p.83).

Another technique consists in introducing delicate subjects such as the fact that they cannot have babies when they are too young to properly understand the message but old enough to absorb it. At some point, Ruth reminds Kathy of the complexity of Miss Emily's announcements compared to her lessons: "When we were remembering these long speeches, Ruth remarked how odd it was they should have been so unfathomable, since Miss Emily, in a classroom, could be as clear as anything"

(*NL*, p.43). Miss Emily voluntarily used a form of language that was too difficult to understand. Ruth and Kathy remember that ‘unworthy of privilege’ or 'misuse of opportunity’ were for example two very recurrent expressions in her speeches. Guardians also make use of many euphemisms which represent a “characteristic of ideologically distorted language”[35] according to Klein. For example, the word *clone* is only used two times in the whole novel and is replaced by the term *student* the rest of the time. In the same way, the verb *to die*, a concept at the heart of the story, is supplanted by the verb *to complete*. As a consequence, when the guardians speak, the children can only decipher a vague message : “we were all very special, being Hailsham students, and so it was all the more disappointing when we behaved badly. Beyond that though, things became a fog” (*NL*, p.43). The objective of this technique is to prevent any piece of information to come as a “complete surprise” (*NL*, p.83) in order to anaesthetise them. In “Copying, cloning and creativity: reading Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*”[36], Rosemary Rizq analyses the novel from a psychoanalytical perspective drawing heavily on the work of the French Jean Laplanche and more particularly on his notion of ‘afterwardsness’. According to Laplanche, “the child cannot help but assimilate the enigmatic, traumatizing, unspoken messages conveyed by the adult”[37]. As a consequence, the children can only *feel* the inhuman aspect of their fate without being able to consciously understand it:

> Maybe from as early as when you're five or six, there's been a whisper going at the back of your head, saying: “One day, maybe not so long from now, you'll get to know how it feels.” 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. (*NL*, p.36)

At some point, Miss Lucy, who no longer tolerates the situation, decides to talk in a direct way to the children : “It’s time someone spelt it out” (*NL*, p.80). Her discourse puts the whole system in jeopardy since it raises the children’s awareness in an explicit way : “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” (*NL*, p.81). In the context of Hailsham, this discourse is extremely subversive. Nevertheless, it will only have one effect on the children : provoking deep embarrassment (“Once she'd seen the puzzled, uncomfortable faces in

35 Klein, Gabrielle. op.cit., p.242.
36 Rizq, Rosemary, “Copying, Cloning and Creativity: reading Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*”. *British Journal of Psychotherapy.* 30.4 (2014): 517-532.
37 Id., p.526.

front of her, she realised the impossibility of completing what she'd started" (*NL*, p.82)). It is not by chance that Miss Lucy disappears from the institution after this episode.

Is language the only instrument used to control the clones? Many critics have argued that the art system is "a governing ideological force"[38] at Hailsham. In "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics", Black develops the idea that "Hailsham builds a virtual electric fence through an emphasis on artistic production"[39] in three points. The first one is that Hailsham's art system encourages students to "think instrumentally about the worth of their peers, thus preparing them for an acceptance of their own instrumental lives"[40]. At Hailsham, your value and sense of identity are determined by how creative you are. During the Exchanges, the children sell their creations to other students and receive tokens that they can spend later at the Sales in order to acquire possessions. The art system creates an interdependence among students and is therefore a means to reinforce the sense of community in the same way as the taboo system does. When Tommy refuses to be creative, he is bullied by the others :

> (…) there were rumours almost every day of pranks that had been played on him. A lot of these were the usual stuff – weird things in his bed, a worm in his cereal – but some of it sounded pointlessly nasty : like the time someone cleaned a toilet with his toothbrush so it was waiting for him with shit all over the bristles. His size and strength – and I suppose that temper – meant no one tried actual physical bullying, but from what I remember, for a couple of months at least, these incidents kept coming. I thought sooner or later someone would start saying it had gone too far, but it just kept on, and no one said anything. (*NL*, p.15).

Black's second point is that the Exchanges and the Sales are meant to prepare them for donations : "Held four times a year, the rhythm of the Exchanges mirrors the four organ donations that each student expects, or hopes, to make"[41]. Moreover, Rizq underlines that the Sales and the Exchanges both involve rubbish, an important theme in the novel. During the Exchanges, students sell for example "paintings and sculptures made from old bits of trash and garbage such as bottle tops and crushed tin cans"[42] in order to buy items that have been rejected by the outside world during the Sales. According to Rizq, this recycling of personal possessions "foreshadows the future recycling of their own body parts"[43]. Finally, and this is Black's third point, the art system gives them the illusion that they are part of a fair system as they are paid for what they produce (circular economy).

38 Black, Shameem. op.cit., p.793.
39 Ibid.
40 Id., p.795.
41 Black, Shameem. op.cit., p.795.
42 Rizq, Rosemary. op.cit., p.520.
43 Ibid.

However, the students do not realise that in their situation, it is a one-way process : they will not receive anything for their organs (“What seems reciprocal is always only one-way”[44]).

A last argument can be added to the reasons why the art system can be considered as complicit with the clones’ exploitation : the Romantic interpretation of their artwork keeps the clones “unaware of their own inhumanity”[45]. At some point, Miss Emily inadvertently leaks a crucial piece of information concerning the Gallery when a student, Roy J., asks her why Madame always takes away their best creations. To that point, all they know is that it is a “most distinguished honour to have work selected by Madame” (*NL*, p.40). Miss Emily will disseminate the belief that art “revealed what you were like inside”, that it “revealed your soul” (*NL*, p.175), an idea that will obsess Tommy from that moment on. The latter will end up convinced that the Gallery is intrinsically linked to the ‘deferral theory’ that says that if two students manage to show that they are deeply in love, they can ask for a postponement of their donations in order to have extra time together :

> Madame's got a gallery somewhere filled with stuff by students from when they were tiny. Suppose two people come up and say they're in love. She can find the art they've done over years and years. She can see if they go. If they match. Don't forget, Kath, what she's got reveals our souls. (*NL*, pp.175-176).

Tommy knows that if his theory is accurate, his artistic unproductivity at Hailsham will ruin his chances to apply for a deferral with Kathy. By consequence, he tries to make up for lost time and begins to produce dozens of drawings while he is at the Cottages. However, when Tommy and Kathy finally visit Miss Emily in order to apply for the deferral, the latter destroys their hopes as well as the myth of art as a mirror of their innermost selves. On this point, Whitehead precisely writes:

> What the students learn, however, through their eventual appeal to Madame and Miss Emily, is the harsh truth that their artwork is significant not for who it reveals but for its proof of what they are. Miss Emily corrects the students' misconception with a devastating precision: "We took away your art. . . . to prove you had souls at all "[46].

Kathy’s reaction to this revelation is quite telling about the fact that Hailsham students have never questioned the idea that they may not have a soul or that they could be considered as “less than human” : “Why did you have to prove a thing like that, Miss Emily? Did someone think we didn't

44 Black, Shameem. op.cit., p.796.
45 Id., p.790.
46 Whitehead, Anne. op.cit., p.66.

have souls?" (*NL*, p.260). Thanks to the art system and the existence of the Gallery, Hailsham managed to maintain the illusion that the humanity and value of the clones were not compromised.

In this section, we explored the manipulation techniques used by the authority against the children at Hailsham. The creation of taboos, the normalisation and glorification of the status of donors, the "telling without telling" technique or the creation of the art system are so many elements that the guardians are going to use in order to control the clones and thwart any attempt to rebel. We have pointed out that many of these techniques were meant to reinforce the sense of community among the students. The system is therefore able to nip dangerous behaviours in the bud: if a student asks an inconvenient question or refuses to collaborate in the art system, he is automatically punished by the other students (self-regulation of the system). Our point was to show that, under the circumstances in which the clones had been brought up, a straightforward rebellion was not possible. It is important to bear it in mind even if the characters' apparent passivity is extremely frustrating for the reader. In the next section, we will demonstrate that not only a straightforward rebellion was impossible but also that any form of direct disobedience would have been pointless.

1.3. The pointlessness of a straightforward rebellion

While most critics were frustrated by the fact that the characters do not endeavour to rebel, only few of them have tried to define what it actually meant to rise against the authority in the context of *Never Let Me Go*'s society. In other words, many critics have overlooked a crucial question: who represents the clones' real oppressor? It is obvious that up to the last pages of the novel, the authoritative voice is represented by the guardians who seem to mercilessly lead clones towards death. The students share the same vision, which is evidenced by the fact that when Kathy and Tommy finally decide to face the authority and apply for a deferral, they only try to make contact with Madame and Miss Emily[47]. Nevertheless, the question is: would a direct form of disobedience against the guardians change anything to the clones' situation? Nothing is less certain after Miss Emily's final speech which represents a watershed in the story. After her disclosures on the real purpose of Hailsham, the reader's vision of power relations in the story is shattered: the

47 Whitehead, Anne. op.cit., p.67.

institution represented a social experiment meant to change the way society saw its providers of vital organs. The guardians struggled to bring decency to the clones' conditions of life and to make society acknowledge the situation of all the "students being reared in deplorable conditions, conditions (…) Hailsham students could hardly imagine" (*NL*, p.260). While the guardians turn out to be on the clones' side, the real enemy becomes the anonymous people designated by "they", the "normals", the "people outside", the "people out there". The only way to rebel efficiently in *Never Let Me Go*'s society is to prove the clones' humanity to "normals" in order to stop the exploitation. However, as Griffin points out, these absolute authority figures are inaccessible:

> Ordinary human beings', people who are not part of the particular command-and-control structure which the clones inhabit, figure only as images: 'actors you watch on your videos', individuals observed through plate-glass windows, pictures in porn mags, or in advertisements[48].

It is useless to fight against shadows. Clones can only rebel against the only form of authority to which they have access: the guardians. However, this act turns out to be equally pointless as the latter represent their allies. Clones are trapped: as highlighted by Griffin, this impossibility to represent themselves to those who rule their life is intrinsically linked to the fact that they cannot be seen as fully human[49]. Griffin quotes the philosopher Judith Butler who precisely wrote: "those who gain representation, especially self-representation, have a better chance of being humanized, and those who have no chance to represent themselves run a greater risk of being treated as less than human, regarded as less than human, or indeed, not regarded at all"[50]. As a consequence, we might think that engaging in dialogue with normals and trying to convince them with words would represent a solution. However, it is important to bear in mind that when Kathy writes the story, the status of clones is already a post-controversial topic for *Never Let Me Go*'s society[51]. In spite of the guardians' efforts to keep the debate going, we learn that Hailsham eventually closed owing to a lack of political support. As Miss Emily explains, the normals simply chose to turn a blind eye on the origin of the organs: "They didn't want to think about you students, or about the conditions you were brought up in. In other words, my dears, they wanted you back in the shadows" (*NL*, p.264-265). At this point in the story, the horrifying discovery is that the debate is already over and that language, this so-called superior means of communication, has already reached its limits in the fight. At the same time, this moment quite interestingly marks the failure of another higher means of expression: art. The clones' creations collected by Madame were supposed to move people from the outside world and make them realise that clones were more than "[s]hadowy objects in test tubes" (*NL*, p.261). This is the Romantic myth that we mentioned in the first part of the chapter: the idea

48 Griffin, Gabriele. op.cit., p.652.
49 Id., p.655.
50 Ibid.
51 Carroll, Rachel. op.cit., p.62.

that art would show what they really were inside, that it would reveal their souls. Unfortunately, these strategies involving language and art, two powerful means of communication, have failed to prove the clones' humanity and, thus, to save them.

Clones cannot rebel by straightforwardly saying "no" but the truth is that even if they could, it would be pointless as nobody would be disposed to listen to them. However, does that mean that clones are necessarily condemned? Does that mean there is no other way to convince the normals? It quite interesting to notice that there is at least one "normal" who ends up convinced of the clones' humanity at the end of the story: the reader. What if we considered that Kathy, who is the homodiegetic narrator of the story, actually addresses the normals through her storytelling? As Whitehead underlines, the fact that Kathy directly addresses the narratee inevitably raises the question of the reader's identity:

> It is notable (…) that Ishiguro also employs in the novel the device of an internal addressee: Kathy consciously tells her story to an intended listener ("you"), which raises the question of the reader's relation to the dystopic world that is depicted in the novel. Is Kathy addressing someone within her own world, or, finding no empathetic listener there, does she seek to bear witness to an unknown and unknowable future reader? More broadly, Ishiguro raises not entirely comfortable questions concerning the reader's relation to and complicity in the social injustices that he depicts[52].

In the words of the scholar Megan Boler, what if the readers of this kind of novels were asked "not only to empathize with the other, but to recognize themselves as implicated in the social forces that create the climate of obstacles the other must confront"[53]? At some point, Miss Emily says that the normals' "overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease. So for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you" (*NL*, p.263). According to Whitehead, the horror of Ishiguro's alternative society precisely lies in the fact that it was based on relations of care that are just too familiar for the readers[54]. The problem is that, in this particular case, "[p]ersonal selflessness, wanting the best for those whom we love, shades (...) into a politics of exclusion"[55]. After having built a strong empathic bond with Kathy, the readers discover with dread that they should actually identify with her persecutors. I totally agree with Whitehead when she writes that through Kathy's narration, "Ishiguro deliberately destabilizes our identification with Kathy and the other clones and raises uncomfortable questions regarding our proximity to those who benefit from the donation system". In the first part of this chapter, we explored manipulation

52 Whitehead, Anne. op.cit., pp.73-74.
53 Boler, Megan. *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*. New York: Routledge, 1999, pp.164-165.
54 Whitehead, Anne. op.cit., p.77.
55 Ibid.

techniques used by the guardians in order to make the clones accept their situation. However, I argue that this is not the only form of manipulation at work in the novel. We will see that Kathy is far from being passive: she plays with her addressee and eventually manages to achieve what the guardians failed to do: changing the clones' status by proving their humanity in the eyes of the normals. From this perspective, Kathy's story remarkably works: as highlighted by Shaddox, "[t]he shock for NLMG's readers comes not from realizing that the clones are human but that these humans are clones"[56]. The question is: how does she manage to do it? The challenge of our analysis will be to untangle the different mechanisms Kathy uses in her story to convince the readers.

In "Recollecting Memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*", Bizzini argues that Kathy H. shares an important characteristic with Christopher Banks, the narrator of Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans.* According to the critic, they both "leave aside the Benjaminian apocalyptic vision of the historical experience as paralysis and enter Hanna Arendt's domain of storytelling as action"[57]. Bizzini quotes Hannah Arendt who asserts that telling a story is the equivalent of asserting your identity as a human being by metaphorically coming to life for the second time: "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth"[58]. From this perspective, the telling of Kathy H. and Christopher Banks' stories can be interpreted as strategies to change the way society perceives their lives. I totally agree with Bizzini when she writes that storytelling allows the narrators to "enter the public realm of speech" and to "publicly defy their ontological situation as victims"[59]. Nonetheless, I do not assume that Kathy manages to convince her readers thanks to language as such. When she writes her story, she knows that human language is going to be pointless to interact with the normals since Miss Emily told her that the debate was already over. In the next chapters, we will see that Kathy manages to dismantle the system that created her by using strategies involving other means of expression. It is crucial to keep in mind that the guardians managed to smuggle ideas into the clones' heads by always being indirect. They never straightforwardly addressed the clones' status by saying that they were 'less than human', an idea that would have been too explosive to accept without batting an eyelid. Kathy, as a narrator, understands the necessity to be as subtle as the guardians to be able to implant the subversive idea

56 Shaddox, Karl. "Generic Considerations in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go"*. Human Rights Quarterly. 35.2 (May 2013), p.453.
57 Bizzini, Silvia Caporale. "Recollecting Memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go"*. *Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies*. 35.2 (December 2013), p.65.
58 Id., p.78.
59 Bizzini, Silvia Caporale. op.cit., p.77

that she is fully human in her readers' minds. In other words, there is a form of double manipulation at work in the novel: the first one involving the guardians and the clones and the second one, Kathy and her readers. In the next chapter, we will focus on the limitations of language as a means to prove the clones' humanity. Then, in the following sections, we will explore two other means of expression undervalued by our western society but efficiently used by Kathy as means of resistance in the novel: silence and animal language.

Chapter 2: Human language: the limitations of "man's identifying characteristic par excellence"

2.1. Storytelling and denial

It could easily be argued that clones never use language to rebel in *Never Let Me Go*. The fact that they never voice a refusal or any other form of resistance explains why critics were so frustrated by their behaviour. Most of the time, when clones discuss their position in society, they claim that they accept the fate that has been imposed on them. Interestingly, they often use the same words when they feel the need to justify their incomprehensible submissiveness: *to be supposed to*. At some point, the veterans invite Kathy, Tommy and Ruth to transgress the rules and visit a carer while they are in Norfolk. Kathy's answer contains the key words: "I don't want to visit a carer. *We're not supposed to* and I don't even know this guy". Later, when Ruth talks about her short experience as a carer, she says "I was pretty much ready when I became a donor. It felt right. After all, it's what we're *supposed* to be doing, isn't it?" (*NL*, p.227). Again, she pronounces those words as if they represented a kind of ready-made formula designed to account for what she is undergoing. Kathy's subsequent comment is quite telling about the fact that Ruth does not seem convinced by what she just said:

> I wasn't sure if she expected me to respond to this. She hadn't said it in any obviously leading way, and it's perfectly possible this was a statement she'd come out with just out of habit–it was the sort of thing you hear donors say to each other all the time. (*NL*, p.227)

The words uttured by Ruth are comparable to an automatic reflex part of a denial process: they prevent her from asking herself questions. At the end of the story, it is the exact same formula that is pronounced by Kathy. The very last scene of *Never Let Me Go* represents a heartbreaking episode: Kathy is alone, she has lost all the people that she loved and is about to become a donor herself. As readers, we can feel that she struggles not to be overwhelmed by her emotions. In a last effort, she manages to conjure up the magic formula synonymous with resignation: "I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be" (*NL*, p.288). In the protagonists' language, *to be supposed* is used as if it meant *to be willing to*. In other words, language deceptively gives them the impression that they are in control of their situation. This linguistic illusion allows them to pretend that they accept the unacceptable.

Then, when the characters do not use language to claim that they accept their fate, they use it to escape reality by telling each other stories. We have already discussed many of the myths that they developed such as the possible theory or the deferral theory. When the characters feel that it is too hard to face reality, they also create another version of reality or, more precisely, another version of their future. This is particularly true at the beginning of the Cottage period: as they unconsciously know that they have taken another step towards death, they need to reassure themselves by talking about their "dream futures" *(NL*, p.142). Kathy interestingly points out that, by contrast with the newcomers, the oldest veterans can no longer indulge in this form of fiction. As they have already started their carer training they just know too well that it does not make sense to talk about dream futures. When Kathy tries to understand why they spent so much time talking about these impossible plans, her explanation echoes our interpretation of language as the instrument of denial in *Never Let Me Go*:

> Maybe once Hailsham was behind us, it was possible, just for that half year or so, before all the talk of becoming carers, before the driving lessons, all those other things, it was possible to forget for whole stretches of time who we really were; to forget what the guardians had told us; to forget Miss Lucy's outburst that rainy afternoon at the pavilion, as well as all those theories we'd developed amongst ourselves over the years. It couldn't last, of course, but like I say, just for those few months, we somehow managed to live in this cosy state of suspension in which we could ponder our lives without the usual boundaries. Looking back now, it feels like we spent ages in that steamed-up kitchen after breakfast, or huddled around half-dead fires in the small hours, lost in conversation about our plans for the future. (*NL*, pp.142-143)

It is worth pointing out that the character most involved in the telling of these stories is Ruth: "when this sort of talk was going on, it was often Ruth who took it further than anybody (…)" (*NL*, p.143). The latter has a very strong personality: she is the one who manipulates but also the one who is easily manipulated because of her excessive need to believe in a better future. At some point in the story, she finds an advertisement depicting a "beautifully modern open-plan office with three or four people who worked in it having some kind of joke with each other" (*NL*, p.144). Ruth is hypnotised by the picture: "The place looked sparkling and so did the people. Ruth was staring at this picture and, when she noticed me beside her, said: "Now that would be a proper place to work." (*NL*, p.144). From that moment on, Ruth will keep talking about her dream of working in an office similar to the one of the advertisement:

> Ruth began telling us about the sort of office she'd ideally work in, and I immediately recognised it. She went into all the details – the plants, the gleaming equipment, the chairs with their swivels and castors – and it was so vivid everyone let her talk uninterrupted for ages (…) she even talked at one point about how the people in her office would all be "dynamic, go a-head types," and I remembered clearly those same words written in big letters accross the top of the advert. (*NL*, p.144)

Kathy discusses their belief in these stories: “I'm not sure what was going on in our heads during those discussions. We probably knew they couldn't be serious, but then again, I'm sure we didn't regard them as fantasy either” (*NL*, p.142). The fact that these stories represent more than words for them is clear when they all start a search for Ruth’s possible, that is to say, the person she has been modelled from. Rodney, one of the veterans, says that he caught sight of her possible in an office while he was in Norfolk. It is worth pointing out that there is a rumour going round that finding your model will enable you to “glimpse your future” and “get some insight into who you were deep down” (*NL*, p.140). During the search for Ruth’s possible, reality and fiction intermingle. At some point, Chrissie, Rodney’s girlfriend, tells Ruth: “You know, Ruth, we might be coming here in a few years' time to visit you. Working in a nice office. I don't see how anyone could stop us visiting you then” (*NL*, p.151). Ruth’s answer is just as irrational: “That's right (…) You can all come and see me” (*NL*, p.151). Later that day, before realising that the woman they are looking for is not Ruth’s possible, they feel relieved because they know that it is still time to go back to the Cottages without being disappointed: “We could still have gone back to the Cottages excited and triumphant” (*NL*, p.163). Ruth is curiously the only one who does not want to stay in the fiction as she is determined to check whether this woman is her possible or not. We will see in the next chapter that Ruth is a complex character: while she is the one always trying to escape from reality, she is also the only clone who occasionally uses a dysphemistic language in anger, creating thus a constrating effect with Kathy’s euphemistic discourse. At the end of Ruth’s life, Tommy and Kathy want to confront her with the fact that she never even tried to make her dreams come true. Ruth’s reaction to this remark represents one the few moments when language is not used to deny the situation but to mirror the reality of the characters' frustration:

> “How could I have looked into it?” For the first time, Ruth's voice had hardened, but then she let out a sigh and looked down again. Then Tommy said: “You kept talking like you might qualify for special treatment. And for all you know, you might have done. You should have asked at least” “Okay,” Ruth said. “You say I should have looked into it. How? Where would I have gone? There wasn't a way to look into it.” (*NL*, p.230)

Is the reader still convinced that Ruth is at peace with herself and that she considers that she is only doing what she is *supposed to do* as she lies on her deathbed? This, however, only represents a last knee-jerk reaction: at the end of her life, fiction and denial will get the upper hand, allowing her to calmly die. Kathy says that when she discusses some subjects with Ruth, the latter does not want to acknowledge many details as she wants to stick to her fictional version of life: “But Ruth didn't get my point - or maybe she was deliberately avoiding it. Maybe she was determined to remember us all as more sophisticated than we were” (*NL*, p.18). Interestingly, this is also true for Kathy’s other donors who all want to hear about the privileged status of Hailsham students before dying. The case

of one of them is striking: “What he wanted was not just to hear about Hailsham, but to *remember* Hailsham, just like it had been his own childhood” (*NL*, p.5). Creating another version of their life seems to be the only possible technique for clones to gain control over their fate. Instead of denouncing the unacceptable aspect of their future, clones prefer to convince themselves that their life was worth it.

According to some critics, the fact that the characters tell each other stories is a very positive element in the fight for the clones’ human status. Whitehead for example argues that clones manage to prove their creativity and humanity through their ability to imagine stories: “it is not only in their affective capacities and commitments that the clones reveal affinities to the human, but more particularly in the stories that they tell—narratives which are in turn underpinned by their affective drives and desires”[60]. Nevertheless, it could be argued that Whitehead talks about a positive unintended effect that is not linked to any form of conscious or unconscious rebellion. We should not forget that these stories first and foremost drive the characters to go towards death without resisting and that they flourished under the approving eye of the guardians. When Miss Emily explains that the deferral theory does not exist, she says that she did not take the trouble to reveal the truth earlier for the simple and good reason that the rumour was innocuous: "It's something for them to dream about, a little fantasy. What harm is there?" (*NL*, p.258). What if the deferral theory was not only an innocuous rumour but a sedative story used by the guardians? Quite interestingly, a parallel can be drawn between the stories created by the clones and the works of literature taught at Hailsham. It is not by chance that the students were mainly introduced to Victorian novels such as George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda:* “many works of Victorian fiction concern orphaned children”[61]. According to Rizq and Whitehead, the clones’ myth of possibles echoes the “orphan’s desperate search for the lost parent”[62] as it is suggestive of “an analogous desire to fill in the missing "first chapter" of their lives and thereby to secure a sense of identity”[63]. The guardians know perfectly well that Hailsham students are going to identify with these characters and believe that they could also head towards a better future. The problem is that there is a significant difference between Hailsham students and the heroes of these stories: clones are not orphans. As highlighted by Whitehead, literature at Hailsham “falsely raises the aspirations of the clones in a society that denies

60 Whitehead, Anne. “Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*”. *Contemporary literature*. 52.1 (2011), p.68.
61 Id, p. 71.
62 Rizq, Rosemary. “Copying, Cloning and Creativity: Reading Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*”. *British Journal of Psychotherapy.* 30.4 (2014), p.521.
63 Whitehead, Anne. op.cit., p.71.

them any prospect of advancement"[64]. The scholar even goes one step further and asserts that "the humanities education at Hailsham is at best a deception or lie, and at worst, complicit with the system of political oppression to which the clones are subject"[65]. As we have already mentioned, Miss Lucy is the only guardian who jeopardises the Hailsham system by talking too frankly to her students. It is worth noting that the subversive speech that we discussed in the first chapter is triggered by a dream future conversation between two students. Miss Lucy decides to interrupt Gordon and Peter who are talking about "what it would feel like if we became actors. What sort of life it would be" (*NL*, p.80) and who think that they should go to America to "stand the best chance" (*NL*, p.81). Miss Lucy's speech shatters the students' fantasy:

> I know you don't mean any harm. But there's just too much talk like this. I hear it all the time, it's been allowed to go on, and it's not right (…) None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars. And none of you will be working in supermarkets as I heard some of you planning the other day. Your lives are set out for you. (*NL*, p.81)

A first conclusion can be drawn after this first part of the analysis: being a speaking subject does not seem to help the clones to address the real issues. In other words, language does not seem to empower the characters. They rarely manage to put words on the reality of their frustration and anger. As highlighted by Seaman in "Becoming More (than) Human", their willingness to live is "one of the many topics they silently place out of bounds in order to be able to carry on"[66]. As they cannot face the reality of the monstrous society that generated them, clones use language to deny or escape their situation. While we will argue later that Kathy's narration is subversive and that she actually rebels, we will also demonstrate that she does not manage to do it thanks to language as such. Kathy also claims that she accepts her situation. However, we will see that the unacceptable aspect of her fate pervades in her use of language. In this chapter, we will raise key questions such as: Why does language not help the clones? Are there subjects that language fails to properly address? Before concentrating on Kathy's narration, we will first briefly explore the evolution of our interpretation of human language as a superior means of communication. We will see that these last decades have been marked by a "retreat from the authority and range of verbal language"[67].

64 Whitehead, Anne. op.cit., p.72.
65 Id., p.57.
66 Seaman, Myra J. "Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future". *Journal of Narrative Theory*. 37.2 (Summer 2007), p.266.
67 Steiner, George. *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, pp.21-22.

2.2. Is language power? The helplessness of language in the face of the inhuman

For a long time, our Western civilisation has considered human language as "man's identifying characteristic par excellence"[68] but also as the only means of expression that could empower people. As highlighted by Steiner in *Language and Silence*, this confidence originates from the deep-rooted idea that "articulate speech should be the line dividing man from the myriad forms of animate being, that speech should define man's singular eminence above the silence of the plant and the grunt of the beast"[69]. This thought was for example part of the basic principles of the Enlightenment movement, which granted the rational speaking subject a privileged status in society. During this period, man was seen as a superior being able to create meaning and to construct knowledge through a powerful means of expression: words. As highlighted by Kalamaras in *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension*, this position suggested that using other means of expression would threaten the supremacy of our human status: "if people can come to know their world through acts of language, and thus gain power, then relinquishing this capacity without access to an alternative mode of knowing can lead to a debilitation of meaning-making capabilities"[70]. Kalamaras argues that we have to go back to the writings of classical rhetoric to understand our Western interpretation of language as power[71]. He explains that our understanding of the world originates from the Aristotelian world view, based on rationalism and categorisation, which considered Man as "a being of the word"[72]. This theory refuted and finally prevailed over "Plato's concept of an ontological reality separate from language"[73]. By contrast, Steiner considers that the inherently verbal character of our civilisation comes well before Aristotle and was first a legacy from the Hebraic and Classical mythology that, later, Christianity strongly contributed to perpetuating:

> The primacy of the word, of that which can be spoken and communicated in discourse, is characteristic of the Greek and Judaic genius and carried over into Christianity. The classic and the Christian sense of the world strive to order reality within the governance of language. Literature, philosophy, theology, law, the arts of history, are endeavors to enclose within the bounds of rational discourse the sum of human experience, its recorded past, its present condition and future expectations[74].

However, as highlighted by Steiner, many recent historical events have profoundly affected the way we understand the world and shattered the common belief that "all truth and realness (…) can be

68 Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open : Man and Animal.* California : Stanford University Press, 2004, p.37.
69 Steiner, George. op.cit., p.36.
70 Kalamaras, George. *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension: Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, p.2.
71 Id., p.1.
72 Steiner, George. op.cit., p.36.
73 Kalamaras, George. op.cit., p.1.
74 Steiner, George. op.cit.,p.13.

housed inside the walls of language"[75]. How can human beings continue to create meaning in the aftermath of colonial massacres, the two World Wars and the Holocaust? How can human beings put sensible words on forms of violence that defy comprehension? In the words of Tyler, "[t]he limit of language is what can be said"[76]. These events, which represent nothing less than the "unprecedented ruin of humane values and hopes by the political bestiality of our age"[77] led to the collapse of the great confidence that the Western world had always placed in language. Guignery suggests that "in the postmodern episteme, words are no longer trusted and language is deemed inadequate for speaking the unspeakable"[78]. Literary texts, which are never "immune to recent history"[79], were strongly affected by this outbreak of barbarism in modern Europe:

> That ruin is the starting point of any serious thought about literature and the place of literature in society. Literature deals essentially with the image of man, with the shape and motive of human conduct. (…) What man has inflicted on man, in very recent time, has affected the writer's primary material – the sum and potential of human behaviour – and it presses on the brain with a new darkness.[80]

The fact that language turns out to be helpless in the face of the inhuman deeply altered the formal aspect of texts. It inevitably led authors to find new communicative tools when confronted with the unspeakable. In "Listening to Silences", Hedges and Fishkin highlight the fact that "[t]he new critical perspective, deriving from poststructuralism" considers "texts, in Frederic Jameson's words, not as 'seamless webs and triumphant narrative progressions' but as works with gaps and breaks, discontinuities and absences"[81]. Steiner perfectly summarises the current situation with the following question: "Are we passing out of an [sic] historical era of verbal primacy – out of the classic period of literate expression – into a phase of decayed language, of "post-linguistic" forms, and perhaps of partial silence?"[82].

In this chapter, we will try to demonstrate that Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* is unquestionably part of this debate. We will show that Kathy, as a narrator, is confronted with the unspeakable as this novel can be considered as a narrative of trauma. On this point, Carroll writes that Kathy's story "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,

75 Steiner, George. op.cit., p.13.
76 Tyler, Stephen A. *The Said and the Unsaid: Mind, Meaning, and Culture.* New York/London: Academic Press, 1978, p.171.
77 Steiner, George. op.cit., p.4.
78 Guignery, Vanessa. *Voices and Silence in the Contemporary Novel in English.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009, pp.6-7.
79 Steiner, George. op.cit., p.4.
80 Ibid.
81 Hedges, Elaine and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. *Listening to Silences: New Essays in Feminist Criticism.* New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.5.
82 Steiner, George. op.cit., p.vii.

inauthentic or illegitimate”[83]. In the next pages, our challenge will be to identify the linguistic symptoms of Kathy’s inability to face her story with words.

2.3. Kathy H., a reluctant narrator

Anomalies abound in Kathy's narration, which indicates that she might not be at peace with her story. Our point here is that even if Kathy claims that she accepts the role that was imposed on her, her unconvincing language reveals the inhuman character of her treatment. Kathy is what we could wall a “reluctant narrator”, which is a recurrent figure in contemporary literature[84]. In the words of M.L. Higdon, a reluctant narrator is someone “who has seen, experienced or caused something so traumatic that he must approach the telling of it through indirections, masks and substitutions”[85]. Guignery draws up an interesting list of language dysfunctions that are characteristic of this kind of storytelling:

> Hesitations, verbal lacunae, incomplete writings, fragmented stories, concision, procrastination, displacement, deferral, avoidance strategies, delaying tactics and aposiopeses marked by suspension points, blanks or dashes are all rhetorical ways of suggesting a reluctance to tell or to confess[86].

Some of these features are conspicuously present in Kathy's discourse and highlight the fact that she needs to take distance from her painful story. We will discuss these elements in the three following sections: nonlinearity of the story, digressions and gaps, and repetitions.

2.4. Nonlinearity of the story

The first form of anomaly that we can identify is the nonlinearity of the narration. The story, which represents Kathy’s memoirs, is recounted through a flashback. The chronological aspect of the story is undeniable: according to Britzman, the novel structure represents “an allegory of psychic development”[87] that follows three stages of life: childhood, youth and adulthood. Nevertheless, Kathy keeps jumping between the past and the present, which is quite confusing for

83 Carroll, Rachel. “Imitations of life: Cloning, Heterosexuality and the Human in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*”. *Journal of Gender Studies*. 19.1 (2010), p.63.
84 Guignery, Vanessa. op.cit., p.3.
85 Higdon, David Leon.“’Unconfessed Confessions’: the Narrators of Graham Swift and Julian Barnes.” *The British and Irish Novel Since 1960*. Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1991, p.174.
86 Guignery, Vanessa. op.cit., p.3.

the reader and which shows that she might not be able to face the story in a direct way. Her story is made up of fragmented memories selected with care. Kathy regularly changes direction: "But that's not really what I want to talk about just now" (*NL*, p.45), “but that's another story I'll come to later” (*NL*, p.64), “But I wanted to talk about my tape” (*NL*, p.67), “I want to talk about the Norfolk trip, and all the things that happened that day, but I'll first have to go back a bit, to give you the background and explain why it was we went” (*NL*, p.138). As readers, we are only invited to explore the memories that she wants to remember. Her decision to reorientate the story is often triggered by a difficulty to face events. At some point, she talks about the tape that Ruth gave her while they were at Hailsham. The fact that the tape outlasted Ruth is a cruel reminder of the horror that governs the clones’ lives. This object makes her feel emotional: “I don’t play it much because the music has nothing to do with anything. It’s an object, like a brooch or a ring, and especially now Ruth has gone, it’s become one of my most precious possessions” (*NL*, p.76). It is not surprising that the sentence following the extract is: “I want to move on now to our last years at Hailsham” (*NL*, p.77). It is worth noting that Kathy makes it clear that she is the master and commander by repeatedly using the verbal structure “I want to” when she decides to redirect the story. However, in this specific context, this seems to be a poor form of offset: being in control of her story unfortunately does not compensate for her lack of power over her own fate.

2.5. Digressions and gaps

“But I've gone off a bit” (*NL*, p.87) is an expression that Kathy could have used dozens of times in the telling of her story. The reader sometimes has the impression that she just tries to fill up the space with words. A telling example of this phenomenon is her long discourse regarding the fact that television has influenced Ruth and the veterans’ body language as they tend to imitate the American actors’ gestures. She particularly focuses on one movement that they keep reproducing:

> At the Cottages, though, when a couple were saying goodbye to each other, there'd be hardly any words, never mind embraces or kisses. Instead, you slapped your partner's arm near the elbow, lightly with the back of your knuckles, the way you might do to attract someone's attention. (*NL*, p.121)

This little gesture triggers pages of development and Kathy even baptises the event the “arm-slapping business” (*NL*, p.129), which accentuates the importance of the matter. How can we interpret this phenomenon? According to Guignery, logorrhea can have a precise function:

87 Britzman, Deborah."On Being a Slow Reader: Psychoanalytic Reading Problems in Ishiguro’s *Never Let me Go*". *Changing English*. 13.3 (2006), p.307.

> Compulsive verbosity in confessional writings can indeed work as a smokescreen to confuse or hide an issue: one may sidestep a trauma that cannot be addressed by submerging it in an endless flow of words. Incessant chatter saturates the text with such intensity, urgency and density as to suggest a need to take up the whole linguistic space and to prevent the emergence of any discordant and embarrassing voice version[88].

This sheds light on another closely related fact: while some trivial subjects are strikingly discussed in details, the real issues are barely addressed in Kathy's narration. According to Guignery, these two tendencies are not necessarily antithetical: "In certain conditions, excessive or redundant speech may indeed amount to an indirect form of silence, and some force of reticence can be said to be more powerful and meaningful than explicit statements"[89]. Kathy's digressions can represent a reassuring flow of words that prevents her from trying to put words on other painful subjects. It could easily be argued that Kathy's real issues hide behind this smokescreen of words. One of the best illustrations of this phenomenon is the absence of explanation regarding the beginning of Ruth and Tommy's relationship. At some point, Ruth, jealous of the special bound that links Kathy and Tommy, decides to separate them by starting a romantic relationship with the latter. Before dying, Ruth offers apologies and admits she ruined their chance to be together: "I kept you and Tommy apart. (…) That was the worst thing I did" (*NL*, p.232). This traumatic separation is an event of primary importance in Kathy's short life. It is not by chance that the last part of the story only consists in trying to fix this mistake and catch up for lost time. However, there is a significant gap in the story concerning this event: Kathy only furtively addresses it with distance by making use of an ellipsis. At some point in the story, she unexpectedly says: "Ruth and Tommy had had a serious bust-up. They'd been a couple for about six months by then" (*NL*, pp.94-95). It is a flashback in a flashback: Kathy tries to be as indirect as possible by clinging to another past event that occurred six months later to introduce the painful idea that she lost Tommy.

It is also worth noting that Kathy is far from being the only one to be affected by these two interrelated speech anomalies. The veterans are also subject to the same phenomenon. While they tend to be very loquacious while talking about trivia, they for example experience a form of muteness when it comes to the persons that used to be at the very centre of their lives: "The veterans were never slow coming out with funny anecdotes about characters they'd met on trips (…); but they hardly ever mentioned students who, right up until just before we'd arrived, must have been their intimate friends" (*NL*, p.132). At this point of our analysis, it is however crucial to bear in mind that these gaps conveying the characters' reluctance are quite specific. In the third chapter, we will discuss another form of silence that is radically different from the one we just

88 Guignery, Vanessa. op.cit., p.4.
89 Id., p.2.

discussed. The novel abounds with other forms of absence. The most obvious gap in the story undoubtedly regards Kathy's identity as a clone, an element that is only revealed quite late in the novel. We will see 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.

2.6. Repetitions

The various forms of repetition in the text are the last linguistic symptom of Kathy's reluctance that we will discuss in our analysis. At the level of the content, a first pattern can readily be identified. Kathy keeps repeating that she is lucky, that she feels grateful for what she received during her short life. She wants to convince her addressee that even in the darkest times, there were many happy moments: "When I think about Ruth now, of course, I feel sad she's gone; but I also feel really grateful for that period we had at the end" (*NL*, p.235), "I don't want to give the wrong idea about that period at the Kingsfield. A lot of it was really relaxed, almost idyllic" (p.237), "those last years feel different. They weren't unhappy exactly – I've got plenty of memories I treasure from them" (*NL*, p.77). There are however so many repetitions that the idea turns out to be dubious. There is one striking example where she uses repetitions even at the level of the words in the sentence: "That was when I first understood, really understood, just how lucky we'd been - Tommy, Ruth, me, all the rest of us" (*NL*, p.6). Does Kathy actually try to convince herself? On this point, Seaman writes that "Kathy, like the narrators in many of Ishiguro's novel, reveals a tendency to self-delusion as a coping mechanism"[90]. Some elements suggest that the use of repetitions precisely goes hand in hand with falsehood in Kathy's narration. At some point, Tommy shows his drawings to Kathy and asks her to give her opinion. There is a significant gap between what she thinks and what she actually says: "Tommy," I wanted to say to him, "you're going to make yourself a laughing stock all over again. Imaginary animals? What's up with you?" But I didn't. I just looked at him caustiously and kept saying: "That sounds really good, Tommy" (*NL*, p.179). Later, she tries to reassure him again by saying: "Tommy, there's no reason, no reason at all. These are good. Really, really good" (*NL*, p.188). In this brief extract, Kathy almost repeats each word twice, which does not ring true. We can easily imagine that we are confronted with the exact same phenomenon when she continuously repeats that she is perfectly satisfied with her life. These repetitions give her away

90 Seaman, Myra J. op.cit., p. 265.

and reveal frustration: Kathy struggles with the fact that she has to content herself with what she received. Her attitude reminds the reader of Miss Emily's words: "I hope you can appreciate how much we were able to secure for you. Look at you both now! You've had good lives (...)" (*NL*, p.261).

The last form of repetition that we can observe corresponds to Kathy's story in itself. Black interestingly writes that "[s]ince the novel reflects Kathy's rereading of her past, memory serves as the symbolic clone of experience"[91]. Kathy's story cannot coincide with reality since she inevitably reinterprets the past. As highlighted by Rizq, "memories are not isomorphic with events": "when we remember the past, we are not simply retrieving the unvarnished 'facts' of a situation"[92]. As a consequence, Kathy is not only a reluctant narrator but also an unreliable one. She is aware that she might not be able to accurately remember every event and draws our attention to this doubt several times: "Or maybe I'm remembering it wrong" (*NL*, p.8), "This was all a long time ago so I might have some of it wrong" (*NL*, p.13), "Maybe I've exaggerated it in my mind" (*NL*, p.77). Like Ruth who "was determined to remember us all as more sophisticated than we were" (*NL*, p.18), Kathy also seems determined to remember that her life was better than it was. The dysfunctions that contaminate her story highlight the fact that she does not serenely accept her fate. In the next pages, we will see that language does not only fail to be convincing but that it also fails to represent an efficient weapon of resistance.

2.7. A machine-like language

The writing style of *Never Let Me Go* has often been an object of criticism. Harsh words were used to characterise Kathy as a narrator and also, by extension, Ishiguro as a writer. While Kermode criticises the "familiar, chatty style"[93] of Kathy and Mullan her non-literariness[94], Walkowitz bluntly states that "Kathy H.'s unoriginality seems to be Ishiguro's too"[95]. Whitehead observes the exact same phenomenon:

91 Black, Shameem. "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics". *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*. 55.4 (2009), p.799.
92 Rizq, Rosemary. op.cit., p.525.
93 Kermode, Frank. "Outrageous Game". *London Review of Books* 21 April 2005, p.21.
94 Mullan, John. "A Life Half Lived." *The Guardian*. The Guardian 18 March 2006. Web. 6 February 2017.
95 Walkowitz, Rebecca L. "Unimaginable Largeness: Kazuo Ishiguro, Translation, and the New World Literature". *Novel: A Forum on Fiction.* 40.3 (2007), p.224.

> As many critics have noted (with telling frustration), Kathy is limited in both insight and imagination; in the words of Mullan, she is "not so much an unreliable narrator, as an inadequate narrator" (...). Mark Currie likewise observes that although the novel is framed by Kathy reflecting on her limited future as a donor, there seems to be little sense of development between beginning and end, as she maintains throughout a tone of "cheerful optimism" (...)[96].

However, all scholars do not share this opinion. Unlike the critics she quotes, Whitehead does not consider that Kathy's limited language is a flaw that weakens the quality of Ishiguro's work. According to the critic, these reductive views fail "to capture the full complexity of Ishiguro's narrative mode"[97]. Pandey shares the same view and argues that these comments suggest "an inability to recognise other linguistic spaces in which modern authors innovate"[98]. He suggests that the genius of Ishiguro lies in his ability to produce a language that realistically reflects the protagonist's condition. Kathy's limited and artificial language has a machine-like aspect that mirrors the status that she was given by the society that created her. In Rizq's words, Kathy's language is "an evocation of the constraints and mimetic conditions of Kathy's very existence. The clichés and colloquialisms she deploys articulate her experience in the manner of a schoolgirl who can only express herself by copying the words and jargon of her friends"[99]. It is not by chance that Taylor describes her as "a speaking clock"[100].

The key point here is that whatever the value given to Kathy's language, critics all seem to agree on one point: the machine-like aspect of Ishiguro's text is indisputable. As suggested by Rizq, a parallel is inevitably drawn between the text and Kathy who can also be considered as a "tissue of plagiarized fragments": "ominously, this is exactly how the children are viewed by the outside world that harvests their tissues and organs for its own medical benefit"[101]. As 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. We will argue that this failure originates from the fact that Hailsham students were only given a voice in order to pose as human beings.

96 Whitehead, Anne. op.cit., p.70.
97 Id., p.70.
98 Pandey, Anjali. "'Cloning Words': Euphemism, Neologism and Dysphemism as Literary Devices in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*". *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*. 18.4 (9 Dec 2011), p.394.
99 Rizq, Rosemary. op.cit., p.524.
100 Taylor, Alan. "The Dawning of the Clones". *Sunday Herald*. Sunday Herald 20 February 2003. Web. 8 March 2017.
101 Rizq, Rosemary. op.cit., p.526.

2.8. Only schooled to pass

At Hailsham, many strategies of assimilation are implemented in order to train clones to behave like genuine human beings. In the words of Carroll, “the protagonists are compelled to pass in the world of ‘normals’"[102]. At some point, Miss Emily suggests that the guardians' objective was to prove that "if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being" (*NL*, p.261) . Even if the guardians were fighting for the students' cause, they were far from being convinced by the clones' humanity. When Tommy and Kathy visit Miss Emily at the end of the story, the latter acknowledges that the guardians were all secretly scared of the students:

> Marie-Claude has given everything for you. She has worked and worked and worked. Make no mistake about it, my child, Marie-Claude is on your side and will always be on your side. Is she afraid of you? We're all afraid of you. I myself 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 from my study window and I'd feel such revulsion...” She stopped, then something in her eyes flashed again. “But I was determined not to let such feelings stop me doing what was right (...)". (*NL*, p.269)

There is a significant distinction between trying to prove the clones' humanity and trying to prove that clones can simulate human behaviour. Our point here is that language, "man’s identifying characteristic par excellence"[103], was only given to Hailsham students because it represented a convincing attribute to look like humans. When the novel was published, Menand wrote: "There is something animatronic about [Ishiguro's characters]. They are simulators of humanness, figures engineered to pass as ‘real’"[104]. Black suggests that even the cover of the Vintage International edition gives the impression that the protagonists were conditioned to "pick up personhood skills"[105]: “The design for the Vintage International paperback cover of the novel reinforces this vision of identity, featuring a close-up photograph of a young and attractive white woman whose face seems extraordinarily realistic but also glassily artificial”[106]. The artificiality of the clones' language is the product of Hailsham ideology: the guardians disseminated the idea that students can look like humans but are however implacably less than human. In this context, language becomes a prison. In "Imitations of life: cloning, heterosexuality and the human in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never let me go"*, Carroll precisely suggests that human language cannot help the clones because of their

102 Carroll, Rachel. op.cit., p.59.
103 Agamben, Giorgio. op.cit., p.37.
104 Menand, Louis. "Something About Kathy". *New Yorker*. New Yorker 28 March 2005. Web. 22 February 2017.
105 Ibid.
106 Black, Shameem. op.cit., p.799.

illegitimate status in society. She quotes the philosopher Judith Butler who explored the way in which society's "refusal to grant legitimacy or concede intelligibility reduces a category of beings to less than human status"[107]:

> To be oppressed means that you already exist as a subject of some kind, you are there as the visible and oppressed other for the master subject, as a possible or potential subject, but to be unreal is something else again. To be oppressed you must first become intelligible. To find that you are fundamentally unintelligible (indeed, that the laws of culture and of language find you to be an impossibility) is to find that you have not yet achieved access to the human, to find yourself speaking only and always as if you were human...[108]

Here lies the helplessness of the clones' situation: the voice they were provided with is only seen as a detail completing their human costume. Hailsham students can only speak *as if* they were human. This reveals the profound hypocrisy of the institution: while the guardians denounced the terrible conditions in which clones were usually raised, they gave a voice to students who do not have a better status than all the other clones who were probably brought up in cages like battery-farmed chickens. In the end, there will be no special treatment: once adult, everyone without exception will head towards the slaughterhouse.

Is the machine-like aspect of Kathy's language the only reason why language is doomed to fail to convince the normals of the clones' humanity? What if words were fundamentally helpless to address thorny concepts such as humanity or inhumanity? It is worth pointing out that while clones seem unable to prove their humanity through language, the guardians experience the exact same problem concerning the inhumanity of clones. We have already argued that the guardians implicitly dealt with the inhuman status of clones, that they could not directly introduce this idea. *What is a human being?* seems to be a question that exceeds language or, in other words, that belongs to the unspeakable. On this point, Ishiguro himself precisely says that addressing such a metaphysical question represents a challenge for contemporary writers because it sheds light on the limitations of our vocabulary:

> (...) having clones as central characters made it very easy to allude to some of the oldest questions in literature...'What does it mean to be human?' 'What is a soul?' 'What is the purpose for which we've been created, and should we try to fulfil it?'... In our present era, novelists have struggled to find an appropriate vocabulary... to discuss these questions...[109]

To contextualise this question into the theoretical debate that we introduced earlier, it is interesting to examine what the philosopher Wittgenstein wrote on the limits of language. In the

107 Carroll, Rachel. op.cit., p.63.
108 Butler, Judith. *Undoing gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004, p.30.
109 Ishiguro, Kazuo. "Future Imperfect". *The Guardian.* The Guardian 25 March 2006. Web. 8 March 2017.

words of Steiner, Wittgenstein was the modern philosopher "most profoundly intent on escaping from the spiral of language"[110]. In 1921, the theoretician expressed his profound distrust of words in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. In the conclusion of this famous work, he wrote: "It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words"[111]. According to him, ethics belongs to the areas of reality that cannot be addressed with language because of their transcendental status. It might seem problematic to suggest that this particular domain cannot be discussed: how can you therefore raise children's awareness to ethical questions for example? However, Wittgenstein does not mean that ethics cannot be expressed at all. Moral principles are part of areas of reality that have to be *shown* (and vice versa:"What can be shown cannot be said"[112]). The philosopher invites us to find other means of expression that, unlike human language, can approach the unspeakable. In the next chapters, we will demonstrate that Kathy understood the helplessness of words in her quest and that she manages to *show* her humanity through non-verbal forms of communication in her story. Just as the inhumanity of the clones was a notion implicitly introduced at Hailsham, Kathy establishes her humanity in a tacit but powerful way.

110 Steiner, George. op.cit., p.21.
111 Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* London/New York: Routledge, 2001, p.86.
112 Id., p.31.

Chapter 3: Silence as a weapon of resistance

3.1. Playing with the reader's identity

In the previous chapters, it was stated that discovering Kathy's identity as a clone represents a shock for the reader of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. This can be explained by the fact that before this revelation, Kathy does her best to establish a particular relationship with her reader by employing the device of an internal addressee. She regularly draws parallels between their two lives, which implies that they are peers: "I don't know how it was where you were, but at Hailsham (...)" (*NL*, p.13); "I'm sure somewhere in your childhood, you too had an experience like ours that day" *(NL*, p.36); "I don't know if you had 'collections' where you were" (*NL*, p.38) or "I don't know how it was where you were, but (...) (*NL*, p.67). As a consequence, some critics such as Whitehead suggested that "you" necessarily refers to another clone:

> As Mullan notes, the "you" to whom she speaks is immediately designated as "someone like herself, a 'carer,' a former 'student,' another 'clone'" (107). This mode of address recurs throughout the novel, for example in the repeated phrase "I don't know how it was where you were" (12, 62), which again implies that her listener is a fellow clone and carer, although not necessarily from a "privileged" institution such as Hailsham. Kathy's assumptions speak of her paucity of imagination and also of the insularity of her life; how can she imagine difference when she has known only others like herself?[113]

However, is Kathy really addressing another clone? In the first chapter, we argued that 'you' referred to a "normal" whom Kathy wants to convince of her humanity. Some elements suggest that this interpretation is relevant. It is for example not by chance that she draws all these parallels between her story and her addressee's life *before* the revelation of her identity as a clone. This shift should not be overlooked: while Kathy makes an intensive use of these parallels during the first eighty pages of the novel, she practically stops using this device after Miss Lucy's discourse that establishes that Hailsham students are radically different from human beings: "You're not like the actors you watch on your videos, you're not even like me" (*NL*, p.81). In this chapter, we will argue that Kathy consciously manipulates the reader during the first part of the story by keeping silent about key information such as the fact that she is a clone. We will show that she wants to be on an equal footing with her addressee, something that would not have been possible if she had revealed that she was a clone from the start. In the previous chapter, we demonstrated that language could not help her in her quest to prove her humanity and that she had to find other means of expression to

113 Whitehead, Anne. “Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*”. *Contemporary Literature*. 52.1 (2011), p.74.

"show" it, in the words of Wittgenstein[114]. Hiding her identity as a clone precisely gives her the opportunity to enter into a dialogue with a normal and to tacitly introduce herself as a genuine human being. In other words, Kathy manages to make her voice heard by making use of silence. This link might seem paradoxical at first sight, as our Western world has always considered silence as the language of the oppressed. In the next pages, we will discuss silence as an efficient means of expression and show that, contrary to common belief, silence can sometimes mean power.

3.2. Silence as a weapon of resistance

For a long time, our Western civilisation has interpreted silence as the language of the dominated and the powerless[115]. As pointed out by the linguist Kurzon, the "inability to speak in some social interactions" is traditionally seen as a "lack of power on the part of the silent person"[116]. Where does this idea originate from? According to Steiner, this is closely related to the fact that our society has always considered language as power, an idea that we explored in the previous chapter: "[i]t is language that severs man from the inarticulacies, from the silences that inhabit the greater part of being. If silence were to come again to a ruined civilization, it would be a twofold silence, loud and desperate with the remembrance of the Word"[117]. Kalamaras explains that this is particularly a prevailing view in the wake of poststructuralism. The movement associates the concept of silence with a nihilistic state comparable to "a psychic death"[118] and positions it against human language as "a condition the speaking subject must overcome, an abyss or lack that inhibits one's power to make meaning"[119]. Many contemporary feminist critiques express the same view and denounce the silence imposed on marginalised and discriminated groups of people and, more particularly, on women. In *Silences* (1963), Olsen interestingly develops the notion of "unnatural silences" that Hedges and Fishkin describe as the "result from circumstances of being born into the wrong class, race, sex, being denied education, becoming numbed by economic struggle, muffled by censorship, or distracted or impeded by the demands of nurturing"[120]. The fact that silence is

114 Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* London/New York: Routledge, 2001, p.32.
115 Kurzon, Dennis. "When Silence May Mean Power". *Journal of Pragmatics.* 18 (1992), p.92.
116 Ibid.
117 Steiner, George. *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, p.x.
118 Kalamaras, George. *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension: Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, p.1.
119 Ibid.
120 Hedges, Elaine and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. *Listening to Silences: New Essays in Feminist Criticism.* New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.3.

central in women's culture implies that women's voices have been muffled[121]. In the words of Kalamaras, feminist critiques such as Gauthier, Olsen and Rich interpret silence as "a condition that the patriarchy consciously or unconsciously manipulates in order to maintain male privilege"[122]. As a consequence, they consider that women need to "*break* the silence that has for so long disenfranchised them"[123] and try to gain power by transforming their silences into words.

It is worth noting that this negative vision of silence is proper to the Western world. In the Eastern tradition, silence does not mean "mere passivity"[124] and can have positive connotations. In Chinese and Japanese, the character for silence interestingly refers to "positive qualities of alertness and sensitivity"[125]. As highlighted by Kalamaras, the pratice of silence is an activity that is at the basis of the Eastern mystical philosophy and that has "a generative capacity to make meaning that is every bit as valuable as the meaning the practice of discourse yields"[126]. According to the author, it is in "the reluctance to conceive of a condition of awareness not rooted in categorization and distinction"[127] that lies the limitation of the Western mind. In *Listening to Silences*, Hedges and Fishkin illustrate the Eastern perception of positive forms of silence with a concrete example: King-Kok Cheung's study of Joy Kogawa's novel, *Obasan*. According to the authors, the analysis of the novel represents a "useful corrective to our western tendency to valorize speech and language[128]". It sheds light on the expressive powers of different forms of silence that are able to convey positive values such as stoicism and protectiveness[129].

In his study of Ishiguro's work, Lewis draws his reader's attention to the fact that Kazuo Ishiguro, as an author born in Japan but raised in England, is interestingly a displaced person, that is to say, an author between two worlds[130]. We might wonder whether Ishiguro could consciously or not try to conciliate two cultures that are part of his identity by rehabilitating silence as a powerful means of expression in many of his novels. We will see later that it is not the first time that silence and restraint are placed at the heart of one of his novels: a parallel can for example easily be drawn

121 Hedges, Elaine and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. op.cit., p.4.
122 Kalamaras, George. op. cit., p.2.
123 Ibid.
124 Hedges, Elaine and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. op. cit., p8.
125 Ibid.
126 Kalamaras, George. op.cit., p.4
127 Id., p.5.
128 Hedges, Elaine and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. op.cit., p.8.
129 Ibid.
130 Lewis, Barry. *Kazuo Ishiguro*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p.76.

between Kathy and Stevens, the protagonist and narrator of *The Remains of the Day.* Could Ishiguro's rehabilitation of silence as a meaningful means of expression be a legacy of his Japanese background?

In the previous chapter, we discussed what Steiner calls the "retreat from the word"[131] in our Western society. It is worth noting that the questioning of human language as a superior means of communication also led to a revaluation of other forms of expression considered as less conventional such as silence. In *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension*, Kalamaras explains that the goal of his book is to "authenticate silence as a mode of knowing"[132]. According to the author, silence is "a condition of emptiness that is, paradoxically, full"[133], an idea that clearly goes against the traditional "Western perception of silence as a condition of annihilation"[134]. The new critical perspective even considers that silence can represent a "form of resistance to the dominant discourse"[135], a way to challenge the authoritative voice. Feminist critiques now consider that silences, "whether they take the form of observing, listening, thinking, meditating, dreaming, or deliberately refusing to respond to the speech of others", can become "active presences" that "offer ways of questioning or rejecting conventionally assigned social roles and, as well, ways of conveying truths or insights unavailable through conventional discourse"[136]. In the introduction of *Voices and silence in the contemporary novel in English*, Guignery precisely suggests that silence can be "interpreted as a political stance, a way to deny the authority of the oppressor"[137]:

> In the context of postcolonial and feminist studies, the poetics of silence and speech has clear implications. Authoritative voices have been used to dominate and subjugate the other, impose the official version and suppress the dissonant story (…). Various strategies are therefore implemented to propose an alternative and fight against the hegemony of the Ur-voice. In that case, silence, as a means of self-preservation and self-protection, is not necessarily synonymous with absence and submission, but can be a wilful way for the victim, the marginal, 'to defy language's claims to power and resist participation in the discourses of patriarchy and domination.[138]

In this chapter, we will argue that the silences used by Kathy in *Never Let Me Go* are part of "an active strategy of choice and resistance"[139]. *Never Let Me Go* is undoubtedly a subversive story as it represents a non-official version of the events presented through the voice of the oppressed. Kathy

131 Steiner, George. op.cit., p.12.
132 Kalamaras, George. op.cit., p.1.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Hedges, Elaine and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. op.cit., p.5.
136 Id., p.9.
137 Guignery, Vanessa. *Voices and Silence in the Contemporary Novel in English.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009, p.5.
138 Ibid.
139 Hedges, Elaine and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. op.cit., p.9.

as a narrator manages to address a normal by hiding her identity as a clone. This strategy allows her to come visible to the eyes of the 'people outside' and to speak on behalf of her excluded community. According to Shaddox, Kathy's narrative is what Keen calls an “ambassadorial strategy”, that is to say "a narrative means by which a representative of an out-group speaks to the in-group with the goal of cultivating empathy for the out-group"[140]. On this point, Guignery suggests that “[s]peech and silence are instruments of power, of self-assertion and self-definition: they take part in the constitution not only of an individual and his or her life story, but also of a group, a community, a nation, and their history"[141]. It is worth noting that the form of silence we are discussing here paradoxically involves language. In other words, the technique is not about completely giving up language as a means of expression but about using a clever combination of speech and silence: "contemporary authors still rely on voice as a mode of representation and a performative tool, and exploit silence not only as a sign of absence and renunciation, but also as a token of presence and resistance"[142]. One of the questions that we will address when we try to define Kathy's strategic use of silence is: can this interplay of words and gaps still be considered as silence? In the next pages, we will demonstrate that Kathy strategically uses silence as a weapon and that this underrated means of communication can mean power.

3.3. Kathy's "manipulative silence"

The type of silence that Kathy uses cannot be measured in terms of seconds or minutes as she remains the narrator of the story from the beginning to the end. As a consequence, we can describe it as "a metaphorical expansion of actual silence"[143]. In "Towards a Typology of Silence", Kurzon defines this form of silence as "thematic silence": "a person *when speaking* does not relate to a particular topic"[144]. The linguist highlights the fact that it represents an intentional form of silence: "it is the speaker who decides not to talk about a specific topic"[145]. We might wonder whether it really represents silence since the missing topic is not really replaced by an absence of expression. However, as highlighted by Kurzon, this is still a form of silence according to many scholars. He quotes Bilmes who, for example, writes: ‘‘The actual talk does not merely conceal or

140 Shaddox, Karl. “Generic Considerations in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go”*. *Human Rights Quarterly.* 35.2 (May 2013), p.459.
141 Guignery, Vanessa. op.cit., p.6.
142 Id., p.7.
143 Kurzon, Dennis. "Towards a Typology of Silence". *Journal of Pragmatics*. 39 (2007), p.1679.
144 Id., p.1677.
145 Id., p.1678.

overlay a silence; rather, it constitutes the silence’’[146]. We will see that Kathy more precisely uses a subtype of thematic silence that Huckin calls "manipulative silence"[147]. In the words of Kurzon, manipulative silence refers to a situation in which a writer or speaker leaves out "salient information in order to manipulate the reader or hearer to accept his or her point of view"[148].

Our analysis will be threefold. We will first explore two episodes of the story that might seem unimportant but that show that Kathy is able to consciously use silence as a strategy. Then, we will demonstrate that Kathy's silence in the novel takes the form of the telling without telling technique that she experienced in her childhood as a victim. We will see that this technique enables her to hide the controversial aspects of her life and to tacitly assert her humanity by laying the stress on elements of the story echoing the reader's own experiences. Finally, in the last part of the analysis, we will argue that Kathy's silences have another function: creating a white background on which the truth will appear like a blood stain. We will suggest that it is a clash between euphemistic and dysphemistic language that strengthens the performative aspect of the novel.

3.4. The use of silence as a conscious strategy

In his article "A Clone's Lament", Bowman describes Kathy as an eternal child but also as a "naïve narrator"[149] unable to question the system that generated her. However, Kathy should not be underestimated as a narrator. Some elements of the story suggest that Kathy knows perfectly well how to manipulate people and how to use silence as a strategy. She is often confronted with everyday delicate situations that are difficult to deal with. We will discuss two moments in the story that might seem trivial but that perfectly epitomise both Kathy's understanding of the pointlessness of language and her use of silence as a means of expression in its own right.

The first episode corresponds to a conflict that arises between Kathy and Ruth while they are still at Hailsham. Ruth often claims that she benefits from special treatment from the guardians while the latter are not supposed to show any form of favouritism. She never explicitly boasts about it but always uses indirect forms of communication, which irritates Kathy: "I hated it when Ruth

146 Bilmes, Jack."Constituting Silence: Life in the World of Total Meaning". *Semiotica*. 98.1/2 (1994), p.84.
147 qtd. in Kurzon, Dennis. "Towards a Typology of Silence", p.1678.
148 Ibid.
149 Bowman, James. "A Clone's Lament". *The New Atlantis, A Journal of Technology & Society*. 12 (Spring 2006), p.105.

hinted in this way. I was never sure, of course, if she was telling the truth, but since she wasn't actually 'telling' it, only hinting, it was never possible to challenge her" (*NL*, p.57). At some point, Ruth claims that she received a gift from Miss Geraldine, a pencil case: "Let's just agree. Let's *agree* I got it in the Sale." Then she gave us all a knowing smile" (*NL*, p.57). Later, Kathy manages to ensnare her by pretending that she checked the registers of the Sales: "(...) it was quite interesting really. You can see all the things people have bought". According to Kathy, Ruth's subsequent silence tellingly shows that she is hurt: "Now I saw how upset Ruth was; how for once she was at a complete loss for words, and had turned away on the verge of tears" (*NL*, p.60). In the following days, Kathy does her best to seek forgiveness as she feels remorseful. However, as the whole dispute originates from mere implications, she knows that she cannot straightforwardly deal with the situation: "The trouble was, because none of this had actually been talked about in the open, I couldn't find a way of bringing it all up with her. I did my best, meanwhile, to take any opportunity to imply to Ruth she had a special place in Miss Geraldine's heart" (*NL*, p.61). In other words, Kathy decides to do her best to be forgiven in a silent way, as she knows that she cannot openly tackle the whole issue. For example, when Midge, a classmate, asks where the pencil case comes from, Kathy seizes the opportunity and replies: "There are some very good reasons why we can't tell you where it came from" (*NL*, p.63). This answer, that ingeniously enables her to redeem herself also interestingly echoes the guardians' manipulative language. Miss Lucy used the exact same words when a student asked her why Madame collected their best works of art: "All I can tell you today is that it's for a good reason. A very important reason" (*NL*, p.40). Kathy assimilated the techniques that were used against her and her classmates when she was a child and clearly reutilises them against her peers. Why would not she use them against her reader as well? This episode proves that she cannot only be described as a mere "naïve narrator".

At the end of the Cottage period, another episode sheds light on Kathy's meaningful use of silence. At some point, Kathy meets Ruth and Tommy who are arguing about the latter's drawings. Ruth openly mocks his creations in order to prevent him from making them public, as they could have a detrimental effect on their couple image. To support her view, she violates Kathy's trust and tells Tommy that Kathy also secretly thinks that the said drawings are ridiculous: "It's not just me, sweety. Kathy here finds your animals a complete hoot" (*NL*, p.194). Taken aback, Kathy needs a few seconds before being able to react: "My first instinct was to deny it, then just to laugh. But there was a real authority about the way Ruth had spoken, and the three of us knew each other well enough to know there had to be something behind her words. So in the end I stayed silent (...)" (*NL*,

p.194). Kathy explains later that, at that precise moment, she understood that using words to cope with the problem would not have helped her: "I could have just denied it, though Tommy probably wouldn't have believed me. And to try to explain the thing truthfully would have been too complicated" (*NL*, p.195). This sentence might seem banal but we will show that it actually encapsulates Kathy's strategy in the novel. She is fully aware that her humanity is not a subject that can be discussed with words and that trying to "explain the thing truthfully" would be too difficult. As a consequence, she consciously chooses to use silence, that is to say, the means of communication most adapted to the situation. Kathy invites her reader to consider that sometimes, struggling to find the right words to justify oneself is not the best option. This strategy could worsen the situation as there are cases when the "right" words simply do not exist. We will see that this is the clever logic behind Kathy's first sentences in the novel.

3.5. Telling without telling: Kathy's euphemistic discourse

Many critics have expressed the feeling that, as readers, they experienced the same form of linguistic manipulation as Hailsham students. Black, for example, reutilises Miss Lucy's well-known words ("You've been told and not told", "You've been told, but none of you really understand") and suggests that "[t]he same could be said of the readers of the novel, who return to the first few pages and wonder how they could have missed the sinister significance of such words as "donor" and "carer"[150]. Similarly, Rizq writes:

> Like the children themselves, we as readers are 'told and not told': the pace of our understanding is rationed, not because Ishiguro is a latter-day Agatha Christie, but because he wants us to inhabit his characters' gradually dawning awareness of their fate. References are oblique, hidden, visible only in the characters' actions, voiced in a deceptively understated prose.[151]

There is a double form of manipulation at work in the novel: Kathy reutilises the 'telling without telling' technique that was used against her at Hailsham. The question is: how does she proceed? Sometimes, she uses the same opaque term several times before defining it, which can be quite puzzling for the reader. At some point, Kathy for example talks about Tommy's lack of involvement in the "Spring Exchanges"(*NL*, p.15) with Ruth. Interestingly, Kathy has already mentioned the term "Exchanges" a few times when she finally decides to clarify what it actually refers to: "I

150 Black, Shameem. "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics". *MFS Modern Fiction Studies.* 55.4 (2009), p.792.
151 Rizq, Rosemary. "Copying, Cloning and Creativity: Reading Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*". *British Journal of Psychotherapy.* 30.4 (2014), p.520.

should explain a bit here about the Exchanges we had at Hailsham" (*NL*, p.16). Unfortunately for the reader, Kathy does not intend to elucidate all the opaque references that she uses.

The use of euphemisms is undoubtedly the major technique employed by Kathy to hide information from the reader. The best way to illustrate this phenomenon is to concentrate on the first sentences of the novel: "My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been a carer now for eleven years. That sounds long enough I know, but actually they want me to go on for another eight months, until the end of the year" *(NL*, p.3). We may have the impression that these sentences are crystal-clear but we are only deceived by their simple and direct aspect. As highlighted by Black, they are actually full of opaque references: how are we supposed to know what a carer is? How are we supposed to know that "eleven years" represents a long period of time?[152] *Carer, to complete, special, student, guardian* or *donation* are so many hidden euphemisms that will be unveiled later in the story. The interesting point here is that even if the addressee cannot understand the exact meaning of the words she uses, s/he easily gets used to them because they do not represent overt neologisms. However, as highlighted by Pandey in "Cloning Words: Euphemism, Neologism and Dysphemism as Literary Devices in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*", the seemingly ordinary terms she uses do refer to new realities: "Rather than invent new words, (...) Ishiguro uses known words neologistically so that rather than bear their traditional denotative signification, his 'known' lexemes function as linguistic chameleons"[153]. In other words, it is through "an uncommon use of common words"[154] that Kathy manages to avoid drawing the reader's attention to the controversial aspects of her life. The absence of "an invented, specialist vocabulary that references its own scienticity through words that connote expert knowledge and technicality"[155] allows Kathy to keep the illusion that her world is not different from the reader's world. This last element is crucial as Kathy needs the latter to identify with her.

Our point in this part of the analysis is that Kathy keeps silent about the darkest aspects of her life in order to be able to focus on what she has in common with her readers. Bizzini suggests that the fact that "no violence is ever mentioned openly" in spite of the horror of the plot and that "a special invented jargon is substituted for a more scientific vocabulary" precisely contributes to rehumanising the clones: "This linguistic strategy also helps to define a melancholic environment

152 Black, Shameem. op.cit., p.790.
153 Pandey, Anjali. "'Cloning Words': Euphemism, Neologism and Dysphemism as Literary Devices in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*". *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*. 18.4 (9 Dec 2011), p.385.
154 Griffin, Gabriele. "Science and the Cultural Imaginary: the Case of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go". Textual Practice*. 23.4 (2009), p.651.
155 Id., p.649.

and a constellation of different feelings in order to humanize the characters and help the reader to identify with them"[156]. While Kathy does not address the key issues in her life, she interestingly concentrates on other elements that might seem trivial but that actually represent the best proof of her profound humanity. In "Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future", Seaman precisely writes:

> By focusing the novel on the experiences and feelings of the clones - represented through Kathy's narration of her memories and experiences, especially with her closest friends, Ruth and Tommy - Ishiguro makes clear that their identity is no different from that of the humans who created them, or those of us who are reading their story; they are concerned with competition (Ruth continually manipulates Kathy to test her loyalty), sex (Kathy anxiously tries to prove that her great interest in sex, which she perceives as unusual and undesirable in a woman, is an inherited predisposition), and the quest for an individual identity (Tommy struggles throughout his time at the school against his reputation for lacking artistic skill and is the favorite target of bullies)[157].

In "Generic Considerations in Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go", Shaddox demonstrates the irrelevance of addressing the novel as science fiction literature and argues that the most critically productive approach to *Never Let Me Go* is to compare it to abolitionist literature of the 19th century. He argues that Kathy manages to rehumanise the clones by creating an emotional link with her reader, a vital connection in abolitionist literature: "while humanness can be recognized by legislative bodies, genuine social recognition comes only through the awareness of individual feeling in common, that is, through empathic resonance"[158]. According to the critic, there are at least two poignant scenes that illustrate the novel's title: the first one corresponds to Kathy dancing with an imaginary baby while listening to *Never Let Me Go* and, the second one, to Kathy hugging her lover who has a last uncontrollable outburst of anger before his death. According to the author, these scenes are crucial in the process of rehumanisation of Kathy and Tommy:

> These images, tableaux (...) appear calculated to evoke in the reader compassion, sadness, revulsion, and rage that the two clones and their friends, humans all, are treated in a grossly inhumane and wholly instrumental manner by a society that has placed cold reason and expediency above matters of the heart.[159]

Kathy's telling of her experiences echoes the reader's own life. According to Shaddox, the demonstration of her humanity does not seem to require any justification: "The message of the novel, human clones are fully human and so should not be treated as animals on the hoof, is not

156 Bizzini, Silvia Caporale. “Recollecting Memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go”*. *Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies*. 35.2 (December 2013), p.74.

157 Seaman, Myra J. "Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future". *Journal of Narrative Theory*. 37.2 (Summer 2007), p.265.

158 Shaddox, Karl. op.cit. pp.451-452.

159 Id., p.450.

argued or debated; rather, it is rendered by the reader's own affective resonance with Kathy and the other clone's emotional lives"[160].

Kathy understood that the only way to create a non-official version of the story that would be taken into account by normals and to fight against the hegemony of an authoritative voice was to tell the story using silences. The absence of the word "clone" during the first part of the novel challenges the foundations of the system: by voicing her story without revealing the only identity she has been given, Kathy manages to assert herself as a genuine human being. It is also worth pointing out that the very word "clone" only appears in direct discourse and is pronounced two times in the whole novel. The first time, it is Ruth who pronounces it (*NL*, p.166) and the second time, Miss Emily (*NL*, p.261). In other words, Kathy never produces the word herself, she only reports it and puts it between quotation marks, which can represent a rejection of this label. The reader discovers her 'identity' too late in story: unaware that she is the representative of "a form of life that eludes traditional sympathy"[161], the reader cannot turn a blind eye to her because he has inevitably identified with her. According to Black, "[o]ur own comfortable sense of empathetic solidarity with Kathy ultimately constitutes the horror of the novel's rhetorical technique"[162]. In the next pages, we will see that another rhetorical technique acccentuates the performative aspect of the novel: the presence of brief but explosive scenes in which dysphemistic words are used to reveal the truth.

3.6. Dysphemistic discourse and moments of truth

Kathy's euphemistic discourse can be interpreted in several ways. It could be argued that she does not pronounce the words "clone", "organs" or "die" because the reality of these words is too difficult to face. Pandey, for example, writes that the use of euphemisms can be interpreted as part of a coping mechanism: "Kathy’s pain of loss, and her refusal to acknowledge the truth prompts her to use euphemisms as her speech-act of choice. Despite all the deaths in the novel, not once is the word used"[163]. However, the scholar also suggests that this is arguably not the only explanation. Kathy should not only be seen as a passive narrator merely trying to protect herself. Her use of

160 Shaddox, Karl. op.cit. p.450.
161 Black, Shameem. op.cit. p.790.
162 Id., p.792.
163 Pandey, Anjali. op.cit., p.389.

silence through euphemisms can be seen as a voluntary linguistic act that allows her to generate a shock when the reader discovers the truth: "Ishiguro's juxtaposition of actual euphemism, far from being an accidental stylistic augmentation, is an intentional linguistic and lexical act that induces necessary dysphemism against such an industry"[164].

It can be interesting to revisit the episode that clarifies the position of Hailsham students in society: Miss Lucy's straightforward speech. In this scene that has already been discussed, she bluntly breaks the silence: "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" (*NL*, p.81). Interestingly, this speech seems to be a watershed for both the students *and* the reader. At this stage in the novel, the students as well as the readers have only been "told and not told", that is to say, protected from the truth by the euphemistic discourse they have been used to.

At some point, Kathy hints at the fact that Hailsham students have never been prepared to feel different from the people outside "when you've got guardians like the ones we had; when the gardeners and the delivery men joke and laugh with you and call you "sweetheart." (*NL*, p.36). Students are thirteen when Miss Lucy straightforwardly reveals the truth. Kathy highlights the fact that the episode represents a turning point in their lives. Before the event, they had never seriously thought about donations or discussed them. They only indirectly addressed donations with jokes such as the "unzipping" idea:

> The idea was that when the time came, you'd be able just to unzip a bit of yourself, a kidney or something would slide out, and you'd hand it over. It wasn't something we found so funny in itself; it was more a way of putting each other off our food. You unzipped your liver, say, and dumped it on someone's plate, that sort of thing. (*NL*, p.88).

However, after Miss Lucy's traumatic speech, their attitudes totally change. Kathy precisely says:

> (...) now I think about it, I'd say what Miss Lucy said to us that afternoon led to a real shift in our attitudes. It was after that day, jokes about donations faded away, and we started to think properly about things. If anything, the donations went back to being a subject to be avoided, but not in the way it had been when we were younger. This time round it wasn't awkward or embarrassing any more; just sombre and serious. (*NL*,p.88).

Miss Lucy's speech represents a rude awakening for the children: it is the first time that somebody puts unambiguous words on what they 'are' and on what is going to happen to them. As a result of the predominant use of euphemisms at Hailsham, expressions such as "vital organs", "created to do" or "not even like me" inevitably sound dysphemistic for the children. Similarly, it is the contrast

164 Pandey, Anjali. op.cit., p.390.

between Kathy's preceding silence and this resonating discourse that makes the news explosive and horrifying for the reader. In the words of Shaddox, Kathy manages "to make the intrigue immediately and viscerally felt", which undoubtedly represents a powerful device in her quest to make the reader shiver.

Many critics pointed out the strong performative aspect of the novel. The readers are often torn between different feelings. After the shock of the first discovery, they might feel that they have been misled by Kathy. They realise that she has been hiding crucial information from them, while pretending to introduce herself in an apparently sincere way. Black calls the phenomenon a "Betrayal of Empathy"[165] and quotes Walkowitz who identified the same recurrent mechanism in the work of Ishiguro:

> As the novel proceeds to betray its own invitation to empathetic humanist identification, it resonates with Rebecca Walkowitz's description of Ishiguro as an artist of treason. "Committed to change but also to conflict," Walkowitz argues, "Ishiguro commits to treason: his floating worlds betray their narrators, and they everywhere betray 'us'".[166]

Then, another feeling often takes over: restlessness. In the words of Whitehead, Ishiguro "challenges us to become (...) "agitated," stirred to anger by the inequities that define and circumscribe the lives of the clones"[167]. It is worth noting that while critics ascribe the creation of these feelings to Ishiguro, we directly attribute it to Kathy as an active narrator.

In the context of Kathy's euphemistic style, other scenes marked by dysphemistic language will reinforce the reader's outrage by amplifying the horror of the story. On several occasions, Ruth has outbursts of anger and pronounces shocking words that leave both Kathy and the reader speechless. The first and most significant episode occurs in the context of the search for Ruth's possible in Norforlk. Contrary to what Rodney thought, the attractive woman working in an office proves not to be Ruth's possible. The whole episode shatters Ruth's irrational hopes to have some insights into her future life. Her speech is undeniably dysphemistic:

> We all know it. 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. We all know it, so why don't we say it? A woman like that? Come on. Yeah, right, Tommy. A bit of fun. Let's have a bit of fun pretending. That other woman in there, her friend, the old one in the gallery. Art students, that's what she thought we were. 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. We know it, so we

165 Black, Shameem. op. cit., p.790.
166 Id., p.792.
167 Whitehead, Anne. op.cit., p.76.

> might as well just say it. 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. (*NL*, p.166).

According to Pandey, this episode represents "a climatic scene whose veracity leaves both reader and the protagonist Kathy shocked"[168]. The harsh words used by Ruth *("trash"*, "junkies", "prostitutes", "winos", "tramps", "convicts", "rubbish bins", "toilet") clashes with Kathy's use of positive words such as "carer" or "students". It is the confrontation between Ruth's outspoken language and Kathy's euphemistic language that makes the reader shudder.

In Ruth's last flash of anger, there is arguably a hidden message for the readers. At the end of her life, Ruth talks about Chrissie's 'completion' with Tommy and Kathy. The latter says that she came across Rodney and that "he wasn't too bad about it" because "[h]e said he thought Chrissie wouldn't have minded too" (*NL*, p.226). At this point, Ruth gets enraged: "Why would he know?" Ruth said. "How could he possibly know what Chrissie would have felt? What she would have wanted? It wasn't him on that table, trying to cling onto life. How would he know?" (*NL*, p.226). It is one of the rare moments in which donations are directly discussed. Hailsham students claim that they only do 'what they are supposed to do' but the truth is that, under the surgeon's knife, they try to "cling onto life". This expression clearly conjures up the title of the novel. According to Black, the expression *Never Let Me Go* can precisely be interpreted as "the symbolic, unheard cry of the subject on the operating table who faces the unknown after a fourth donation"[169]. The muffled voice of the dying clone resonates through Ruth's voice, a sound that can no longer be ignored by the reader.

Miss Emily's final speech has exactly the same effect on the reader since it represents another red stain on Kathy's white background. For Kathy, this long speech represents a watershed and is probably the reason why she desperately tells her story. During this scene, she does not only hear that she is different from the 'normals' and that she has to sacrifice herself. She learns that the society that created her is convinced that she is deprived of a soul. This means that her story with Ruth and Tommy and all the memories that she cherishes are meaningless in the eyes of the world,

168 Pandey, Anjali. op.cit., p.390.
169 Black, Shameem. op.cit., p.803.

which is unbearable. Kathy writes her story looking for dignity and respect before dying. In this sense, her quest is profoundly human.

As the characters manage to convey their humanity to the point that the readers cannot see the difference between clones and themselves, the readers are forced to reopen the debate concerning the clones' status and to embrace their cause. As highlighted by Whitehead, "[i]n closing the book, the reader is implicitly repeating Kathy's gesture in the final sentence - leaving the past behind, moving on to somewhere she too is "supposed to be." But the novel's title demands the opposite of us: "never let me go."[170]

170 Whitehead, Anne. op.cit., p.81.

Chapter 4: Animal language: when the body speaks

4.1. Human identity: different periods, different anxieties

What is a human being? What allows some organisms to deserve this privileged status? These are undoubtedly questions that are at the heart of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. These considerations do not represent a new preoccupation: in the words of the scholar Donna Haraway, we have always felt "an inescapable need for 'sth called humanity'" but "we know now, from our perspectives in the ripped-open belly of the monster called history, that we cannot name and possess this thing which we cannot not desire"[171]. In the past, the question of man's animality was a particular source of anxiety in the quest for the definition of our identity as human beings. In Giorgio Agamben's major work on animality *The Open: Man and Animal*, the philosopher argues that our Western thought is haunted by what he calls an "Anthropological machine" which keeps rearticulating the dichotomy between men and animals in order to produce a definition of what is exclusively human. An interesting way to illustrate the importance of this distinction is to focus on the anxiety provoked by the emergence of Darwinism during the Victorian period. The theory of evolution introduced by Charles Darwin in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) had the effect of a bomb as it destroyed the barriers between people and the animal kingdom. In *The Descent of Man* (1871), he precisely says: "The main conclusion arrived at in this work (...) is that man is descended from some less highly organised form (…) from a hairy, tailed quadruped, probably arboreal in its habits, [which] would have been classed amongst the Quadrumana [apes]..."[172]. This statement represented the refutation of the natural supremacy of man, of the idea that man had been created as a mirror of God. Man was actually part of the animal Kingdom, which gave birth to another idea that was perhaps even more terrifying at the time: the possibility of a biological devolution. It is worth pointing out that this fear of a regression of human nature pervaded late-Victorian literature. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) are probably the best examples of Victorian novels featuring degenerated beings. While Dr Jekyll is as physically accomplished as he is intellectually, his counterpart, Mr Hyde, is an animal-like man ("he seems hardly human. Something troglodytic, shall we say?"[173]) who remorselessly yields to his most bestial and darkest urges. Stevenson questions the very idea of a neverending positive evolution of human nature by bringing men back to a primitive and savage state: "Man has risen; if he has

171 Baker, Steve. *The Postmodern Animal*. London: Reaktion Books, 2000, p.18.
172 Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, p.385.

sprung from the brutes, he can descend again to the same level"[174]. Stoker's Dracula is very similar to Mr Hyde. Despite his excellent education, he is said to have a "child-brain"[175] and hairy palms[176]. These two examples clearly convey people's anxiety regarding the lack of a neat distinction between man and the animal kingdom during the Victorian era.

What about today's society? Is our relationship to animals still problematic? Does our own animality still jeopardize our identity as human beings? In "A Cyborg Manifesto", Donna Haraway argues that the animal-human relationship is no longer a major source of anxiety for people:

> By the late twentieth century in US scientific culture, the boundary between human and animal is thoroughly breached. The last beachheads of uniqueness have been polluted if not turned into amusement parks – language, tool use, social behavior, mental events, nothing really convincingly settles the separation of human and animal. And many people no longer feel the need for such a separation[177].

Many critics argue that, nowadays, our identity as human beings is much more challenged by technology than by anything else. As Steve Baker points out, "By the 1990s the rhetoric (…) proposed that the postmodern should also be considered a *posthuman* condition"[178]. In this posthuman era, where modern machines are everywhere, the challenge is maybe no longer to differentiate man from the animal but man from the machine. In "Theorizing posthumanism", Neil Badmington recounts an anecdote that is very telling about the fact that the line between organisms and machines has become the new border war. In January 1983, the editors of *The Time* magazine, who were supposed to select the Man of the Year 1982 according to the tradition, decided to feature a machine: the computer. Here is the explanation given to their readers: "Several human candidates might have represented 1982, but none symbolized the past year more richly, or will be viewed by history as more significant, than a machine: the computer." As N. Badmington highlights, "humans had failed to leave their mark" in 1982 and as a consequence, the "Man of the Year" had given way to "Machine of the Year"[179]. It is extremely interesting to focus on the reactions that this choice triggered. *The Time* mainly received very ironic comments but also violent reactions from an audience that could not accept the fact that "The Man of the Year has no soul"[180]. In "A Cyborg Manifesto", Donna Haraway highlights the fact that this anxiety is linked to an increasing blurring

173 Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde with The Merry Men & Other Stories*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1993, p.12.
174 Stevenson, Robert Louis, op. cit., p.127.
175 Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. London: Penguin, 2003, p.322.
176 Id., p.25.
177 Haraway, Donna J. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century". *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature.* New York: Routledge, 1991, pp.151-152.
178 Baker, Steve. op.cit., p.17.
179 Badmington, Neil. "Theorizing Posthumanism". *Cultural Critique, Posthumanism*. 53 (2003), p.12.
180 Id., p.13.

of the line between men and machines, a distinction that used to be clear with pre-cybernatic machines:

> They were not man, an author to himself, but only a caricature of that masculinist reproductive dream. To think otherwise was paranoid. Now we are not so sure. Late twentieth-century have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines[181].

Quite interestingly, we can find the same anxieties in the society described in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. Kathy, Tommy, Ruth and all the others are used as machines producing vital organs in a technologically-advanced society in which cancer is no longer a cause of death. What allows normal people to exploit them is a very simple and efficient idea: clones are "less than human"(*NL*, p.263). In the animal-human being-machine progression, clones, who are the product of science, are clearly seen as being part of the third category. When Miss Emily talks about the Hailsham experiment, she tells Kathy and Tommy that they wanted to "prove you had souls at all"(*NL*, p.260). The protagonists of NLMG have the same status as the Man of the Year 1982: they are not supposed to have a soul. Clones are not seen as being part of a process of sacrifice but as being part of a process of production: "For a long time, people preferred to believe these organs appeared from nowhere, or at most that they grew in a kind of vacuum"(*NL*, p.262). According to Miss Emily, this society will always make sure that there is a barrier against seeing clones as properly human because it reached a point of no return: "How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask such a world to put away that cure, to go back to the dark days?"(*NL*, p.263). As I have already argued, Kathy's voice breaks this barrier by making use of manipulative silence in order to conceal her hybrid identity. At the very beginning of the novel, Kathy defines herself in terms of what she is not: she defines herself as opposed to a machine. When she says "Carers aren't machines" (*NL*, p.4), we still do not know that she is a clone. As a consequence, what we understand is that being a carer is particularly difficult both physically and psychologically and she almost needs the strength of a machine in order to keep going. From the start, Kathy has a willingness to assert herself as a sensitive being and to hide the label that society imposed on her. In the same way, she refuses to give technical explanations concerning the fact that clones can survive without two or three of their vital organs. Only the "fourth donation" is used as a synonym of death, which means that, technologically speaking, this society must be extremely advanced. However, as Karl Shaddox points out, the scientific dimension of the story is conspicuously absent in the novel. The little car that Kathy drives is probably the most cutting-edge item in the story[182]. In the animal-

181 Haraway, Donna J., op. cit., p.152.

182 Shaddox, Karl. "Generic Considerations in Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go". *Human Rights Quarterly.* 35.2 (2013), p.449.

human being-machine progression, Kathy tries to come closer to the human being status by symbolically putting the machine to sleep. However, she does not only use silence to convince the reader of her humanity. My point in this part of the dissertation is that she uses another strategy throughout the whole novel to rehumanise clones. In order to strike a balance between the three terms (animal-human being-machine), I argue that she animalises clones. We will see that the latter all speak a form of animal language that, paradoxically, profoundly humanises them. In a posthuman society, going back to a primitive form of life is maybe the most efficient way to rehumanise people. As Eluned Summers-Bremner points out:

> Animals occupy the opposite pole to the scientifically engineered humans who are the book's central characters, with humanity somewhere between them. They represent regression in both imaginative and historical senses, and emerge at points of crisis where future knowledge threatens the characters or the reader[183].

The "animal language" that clones use corresponds to the expression of their self-preservation instinct. We will see that Kathy, Ruth and Tommy all speak the language of the animal that is endangered, of the prey whose body refuses to die. A machine that has been created and programmed to be destroyed is not supposed to experience that fear. If Kathy manages to show that clones are scared of death, that they all have knee-jerk reactions against their fates, she can dismantle the system that relies on the belief that clones are only machines carelessly heading for death for the common good. The animalisation becomes an act of resistance against the inhumanity of a system. Quite interestingly, this hypothesis has already been explored by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their becoming-animal theory introduced in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986), they illustrated their theory with a very relevant story, Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915). In this canonical novel that directly addresses the question of man's animality, Gregor Samsa, a traveling salesman, wakes up one day and discovers that he became a giant insect during the night. According to Deleuze and Guattari, this becoming-animal, or more precisely this becoming-insect, should not only be interpreted in the light of an Oedipus complex but should also be seen as a reaction against higher forms of authority: "What Kafka immediately anguishes or rejoices in is not the father or the superego or some sort of signifier but the American technocratic apparatus or the Russian bureaucracy or the machinery of Fascism"[184]. Becoming-insect in Gregor Samsa's society is an act of unconscious rebellion against what Guattari and Deleuze call society's "diabolical powers". In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's entire body says no to the monstrosity of his society:

183 Summers-Bremner, Eluned. "'Poor Creatures': Ishiguro's and Coetzee's Imaginary Animals". *Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*. 39.4 (2006), p.155.

184 Delheuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, p.12.

> To the inhumaness of the "diabolical powers," there is the answer of a becoming-animal: to become a beetle, to become a dog, to become an ape, "head over heels and away," rather than lowering one's head and remaining a bureaucrat, inspector, judge, or judged". The becoming-animal becomes a first step towards freedom: the possibility of an escape, a "line of escape[185].

In the second part of this chapter, we will see that it is possible to read the recurrent animal references in *Never Let Me Go* from this perspective.

4.2. The becoming-spider: when animalisation means rehumanisation

There is a crucial moment in *Never Let Me Go* when all the clones who are still children metaphorically become insects. Kathy and her friends know that Madame, the alleged owner of the secret Gallery, is about to visit Hailsham. They devise a plan in order to verify one of Ruth's theories:

> The plan we'd come up with to test Ruth's theory was very simple: we–the six of us in on it–would lie in wait for Madame somewhere, then “swarm out” all around her, all at once. We'd all remain perfectly civilised and just go on our way, but if we timed it right, and she was taken off-guard, we'd see–Ruth insisted–that she really was afraid of us. (*NL*, p.34)

The vocabulary used by Kathy already gives a first indication of their transformation. She says that the plan was to *swarm out* all around her, a verb that clearly conjures up the image of a group of insects. Later, when she describes Madame's reaction to this episode, it becomes even clearer that the children have the status of animals:

> [S]he just froze and waited for us to pass by. She didn't shriek, or even let out a gasp. But we were all so keenly tuned in to picking up her response, and that's probably why it had such an effect on us. As she came to a halt, I glanced quickly at her face–as did the others, I'm sure. And I can still see it now, the shudder she seemed to be suppressing, the real dread that one of us would accidentally brush against her. And though we just kept on walking, we all felt it; it was like we'd walked from the sun right into chilly shade. Ruth had been right: Madame was afraid of us. But she was afraid of us in the same way someone might be afraid of spiders. We hadn't been ready for that. It had never occurred to us to wonder how we would feel, being seen like that, being the spiders. (*NL*, p.35)

According to Kathy, what Madame feels is comparable to an irrational fear such as arachnophobia. Being the spider is an image that Kathy is going to maintain throughout the whole novel. When Tommy and Kathy come accross Madame years later when they want to apply for the deferral, she says: "she saw and decided in a second *what we were*, because you could see her stiffen – as if a

185 Delheuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. op.cit., p.12.

pair of large spiders was set to crawl towards her"(*NL,* p.248). Kathy really wants the reader to make a connection between clones and spiders. This parallel can represent a denunciation of this inhuman society that legitimates the fact that clones are killed because they are monstrous, "less than human". Kathy shows that the monster is never the defenceless spider but the one who swats it on the pretext that he is afraid of it. Then, in this posthuman society, being a clone and describing oneself as being a spider as opposed to being a machine also becomes a symbol of resistance, a way to redefine what being a clone is. By going back to an organism as primitive as a spider, Kathy wants to demonstrate that clones are made of flesh and that they are not the sophisticated scientific objects that society wants them to be. If we focus on the behaviour of the three main characters, we can very easily prove that they all speak a subversive language, the language of a prey whose body refuses to die. The animalisation of the characters is a powerful means to rehumanise them and, by extension, to dismantle the society in which they live.

Let us first discuss the way Tommy expresses his animal refusal to die. Tommy is the one who unconsciously understands the unacceptable character of his fate very early in his life. His first act of resistance probably corresponds to his production of an unexpected form of art at Hailsham: "Tommy had done this particular watercolour – of an elephant standing in some tall grass" (*NL*, p.19). He does not feel as gifted as the others and deliberately produced this childish drawing, "the sort of picture a kid three years younger might have done" (*NL*, p.19). Interestingly, the description of Tommy's first creation conjures up a primitive form of human life as it evokes parietal art. The animal he depicted can be interpreted as the manifestation of his own animality and self-preservation instinct. According to Kathy, that is "what started it all off"(*NL*, p.19): people started to mock him, the art system having been designed to create social cohesion. After this episode, Tommy refuses to be creative and, by extension, to be given an identity since it is precisely what defines you at Hailsham. Later, the expression of his animal self-preservation instinct takes the form of recurrent violent tantrums. When he screams, it is not only his head but his entire body that rebels against the authority. The first time Kathy describes one of Tommy's outbursts of anger, she highlights the fact that Tommy rages in an uncontrollable way as if he was only looking for an opportunity to explode:

> The other boys were now completely out of view, and Tommy was no longer trying to direct his comments in any particular direction. He was just raving, flinging his limbs about, at the sky, at the wind, at the nearest fence post. (…) Someone else pointed out how each time he screamed something he'd raise one foot off the ground, pointing it outwards, « like a dog doing a pee. (*NL*, p.10)

It is worth pointing out that Tommy is always compared to an animal when he has tantrums. Here, someone says that he looks "like a dog doing a pee" and later, Ruth asks him if he is all right by telling him: "Are you okay? Mad animal" (*NL*, p.12). Paradoxically, human language, which has always been seen as "man's identifying characteristic par excellence"[186], turns out to be useless in the clones' situation: "This is language, which, unlike animal communication, which operates entirely within the field of the biological, exiles human beings from direct access to our instincts, rendering our primal impulses conflicted, prone to endless meanings"[187]. Screaming, becoming an animal like Gregor Samsa, is an efficient alternative. As Akur Mizuta Lippit points out, in *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa slips away from the world of human language: "Gregor progressively loses the ability to communicate with words" but also with all the "familiar sounds emitted by human bodies"[188]. This transformation is precisely what enables him to escape from the oppressive society in which he lives:

> In the becoming-insect, it is a mournful whining that carries along the voice and blurs the resonance of words. Gregor becomes a cockroach not to flee his father but rather to find an escape where his father didn't know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats, to reach that region where the voice no longer does anything but hum: 'Did you hear him? It was an animal's voice,' said the chief clerk'[189].

At the end of his short life, Tommy says that he has probably always known a truth that could not be said with words: "Maybe I did know, somewhere deep down. Something the rest of you didn't" (NL, p.275). This truth brings him back to a primitive, animal state. Before his last donation, Tommy has a last heartbreaking outburst of anger that represents a last convulsion linked to his survival instinct. He is in the car with Kathy and they are back from Miss Emily's home where they discovered that the deferral theory was wrong and that they are condemned: "I heard the first scream. At first I didn't even think it was him, but some maniac who'd been lurking in the bushes. (…) Tommy's figure, raging, shouting, flinging his fists and kicking out" (*NL*, pp.273-274).

After this last tantrum, Tommy tries to reassure Kathy but his words sound empty: "I could see he was doing his best to reassure me it was all okay now, but his chest was still heaving and his legs shaking" (*NL*, p.274). Again, while human language is used to deny the situation, Tommy's body conveys another message saying that it cannot accept its own destruction. By animalising Tommy, Kathy demonstrates that he is anything but a machine.

186 Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal.* California: Stanford University Press, 2004, p.37.
187 Summers-Bremner, Eluned. op.cit., p.2.
188 Lippit, Akira Mizuta. *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p.145.
189 Delheuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. op.cit., p.13.

What about Kathy? It is through another form of animal language that our narrator proves her refusal to die. Kathy's body also screams and explodes but through uncontrollable sexual urges. At some point, Kathy confides in Ruth: "Do you ever get so you just really have to do it? With anybody almost? (…) Sometimes I just really, really need to do it" (*NL*, p.128). As Eluned Summers-Bremner points out, this powerful need to have sexual intercourse precisely leads her to think about her own animality: "Kathy begins to wonder whether her own sexual impulses are excessive – base and animalistic – after noting her desire to have sex sometimes with no accompanying feelings of attachment. This suspicion of animality leads her to search for a missing link in her history"[190]. This search for a missing link in her history corresponds to her search for the person she has been modelled from. The only place Kathy is going to explore is the world of pornographic magazines. She is convinced that "she comes from the ranks of disposable humans associated with the animal: the mad, the homeless, or those driven to sex work"[191]. The reason why she thinks that she should not feel these strong emotions regarding sex is that Miss Emily said they were proper to "normal" people who could have babies. Clones have been programmed to be sterile, which is supposed to be another major difference that differentiates them from human beings:

> We had to be extremely careful about having sex in the outside world, especially with people who weren't students, because out there sex meant all sorts of things (…) And the reason it meant so much (…) was because people out there were different from us students : they could have babies from sex. (…) And even though, as we knew, it was completely impossible for any of us to have babies, out there, we had to behave like them. We had to respect the rules and treat sex as something pretty special. (*NL*, p.84)

Miss Emily maintains that there is a clear divide between normal people and what she calls students. All the strong emotions triggered by sex are proper to human beings because they are linked to procreation, a function that clones do not have. She assumes that the latter cannot have the same feelings as human beings so she only asks them to "behave like them", or in other words, to pretend that they are human beings in order to go unnoticed in the outside world. However, by showing that sex is not a mechanical activity for her, Kathy proves that Miss Emily was wrong: "even though we couldn't have babies from doing it, the sex had done funny things to my feelings, just as Miss Emily had warned" (*NL*, p.128). Kathy is not only a machine that has been programmed to be sterile. She shows that she also has the same status as an animal, an organism that needs to procreate according to the laws of the natural world. It is also worth pointing out that she is not an isolated case: later in the story, Tommy but also Ruth admit that they are far from

190 Summers-Bremner, Eluned, op.cit., p.11.
191 Ibid.

being unconcerned by Kathy's sexual impulses. Even though they cannot physically have children, the clones' sexual behaviour gives away a deep willingness to live and to give life.

In the same way as Tommy and Kathy, Ruth uses another form of animal language. It could easily be argued that Ruth's greatest fear is to end up on her own. She knows that she is stronger when she is surrounded by people and this is the reason why she stole Tommy from Kathy when they were young even if she did not really love him. She has a natural tendency to adapt to any situation in order to be part of the group, even if it means denying her own identity. This is very obvious during the Cottage period: Ruth does her best to belong to the group of "veterans" who are coming from less privileged schools. For example, she gets rid of her Hailsham collection, that is to say, of her most valuable possessions. She wants to be on an equal footing with the veterans, to look like them. This attitude is also closely related to her self-preservation instinct and can be explained with the concept of mimicry. In *A Dictionary of Genetics*, mimicry is mainly defined as an antipredator strategy: "the similarity in appearance of one species of animal to another that affords one or both protection"[192]. In other words, some prey species try to look like chosen models in order to escape predators. In *Never Let Me Go*, the most feared predator of clones undoubtedly corresponds to normal people. My point is that Ruth but also the veterans are unconsciously going to try to look like normal people in order to feel safe. This is very obvious in the episode that Kathy calls the "arm-slapping business" (*NL*, p.130). In the Cottages, the clones' only real contact with the outside world is a restricted access to television. As a consequence, they are very influenced by it. At some point, Kathy realizes that the veterans keep imitating the actors and their gestures, which is very irritating:

> There was, incidentially, something I noticed about these veteran couples at the Cottages – something Ruth, for all her close study of them, failed to spot – and this was how so many of their mannerisms were copied from the television. It first came to me watching this couple, Susie and Greg (…). There was this particular thing Susie did whenever Greg set off on one of his speeches about Proust or whoever: she'd smile at the rest of us, roll her eyes, and mouth very emphatically, but only just audibly: 'Gawd help us'. (*NL*, p.120)

Kathy notices that TV programmes do not only influence the way they speak but also "the way they gestured to each other, sat together on sofas, even the way they argued and stormed out of rooms"(*NL*, p.121). At some point, she decides to draw Ruth's attention to a particular gesture that she keeps repeating and that probably comes from television: "I'd not actually seen the slap on the

192 King, Robert C., Pamela K. Mulligan and William D. Stansfield. *A Dictionary of Genetics, Seventh Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p.278.

elbow on the television, but I was pretty sure that's where the idea had come from" (*NL*, p.122). This remark triggers an argument between them as Ruth does not want to admit that she copied it from television. At some point, Kathy tells her: "It’s not something worth copying (…). It’s not what people really do out there, in normal life, if that's what you were thinking" (*NL*, pp.123-124). This attempt to look like normal people can be interpreted as an animal reaction of the body that refuses to die. Unconsciously, Ruth knows that she belongs to a prey species and that she has to find a way to protect herself. By using mimicry, that is to say, by trying to look like people from the outside world, Ruth is actually trying to hide in order to survive. It is fascinating to realise that while clones seem to passively assent to their deadly fate, their bodies and their unconscious betray them and tell us the opposite. Whereas it is possible to lead a machine towards its own destruction without experiencing any resistance, a body made of flesh will always react, consciously or not. The fact that all the characters use different means to express their self-preservation instinct (what I decided to call an "animal language") proves that they are far from being passive scientific objects. As a narrator, Kathy manages to demonstrate the clones' humanity by animalising them, by providing them with characteristics proper to animals. This process awakens the own animality of the reader and allows him to empathise with these animal-machines that do not want to die. Interestingly, the two opposite terms "animal" and "machine" seem to end up cancelling each other. The fact that this incongruous combination puts into question what it means to be human will be the subject of the next pages.

Chapter 5: The celebration of the blurring of the lines between animal, human being, and machine

5.1. Utopian transhumanism or dystopian posthumanism?

On 15 May 2017, a conference on the issue of transhumanism and bioethics entitled "Et si nous ne devions jamais mourir?" was held in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. Transhumanism was defined as a movement that intends to enhance our human condition, that is to say, to develop new technologies enabling people to artificially improve both their intellectual and physiological characteristics. Unexpectedly, the debate rapidly transformed into a relentless fight between the two main contributors: the philosophers Jean-Noël Missa and Mark Hunyadi. The former, who is also a physician, introduced himself as a liberal philosopher convinced that people should be free to choose whether they want to benefit or not from these new technologies. According to Missa, transhumanism represents an opportunity for people to live longer and happier lives. However, this utopian dream was vehemently criticised by the other contributor, the bioconservative Hunyadi. The latter suggests that keeping humanity unchanged in spite of the current frantic developments in genetics, neuroscience and artificial intelligence might be a more sensible idea. Interestingly, the idea that some scientific discoveries should not be exploited for the sake of our human civilisation is far from representing a new preoccupation. In utopian literature, the question was for example addressed by Sir Francis Bacon in *New Atlantis* (1627). In this work of fiction, Sir Francis Bacon describes an island governed by scientists who regularly discuss whether their discoveries should be exploited or kept secret:

> And this we do also: we have consultations, which of the inventions and experiences which we have discovered shall be published, and which not; and take all an oath of secrecy for the concealing of those which we think fit to keep secret; though some of those we do reveal sometime to the State, and some not[193].

This extract demonstrates that these scientists are deeply aware of the fact that technological progress can jeopardise the good working of an ideal society. As highlighted by Carey, Bacon "foresees the dilemma of the modern scientist whose knowledge, if it gets into the hands of politicians, may wreak havoc"[194]. The question is: does the technical possibility of an idea necessarily entails its desirability? Following the same line of reasoning, Hunyadi suggests that transhumanism will inevitably lead our civilisation towards a dystopian era for two main reasons. On the one hand, he denounces the fact that research in these scientific fields is mainly financed by

193 Bacon, Francis. *New Atlantis*. Seaside: Watchmaker Publishing, 2010, p.46.
194 Carey, John. *The Faber Book of Utopias.* London: Faber & Faber, 2000, p.64.

the big four internet giants (Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon). If these profit-driven corporations managed to commercialise a pill that would allow people to make their lives thirty years longer, it would mark the beginning of a new form of dictatorship. The structure of society would inevitably be shaken: the part of the population that would try to resist would become marginalised, just like people trying to be economically self-sufficient while living in a consumer society. Under these circumstances, would people really be *free* to make their own choices? Beyond the issue of freedom, Hunyadi addresses a more ontological question that is particularly relevant in the context of this study on Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. The abolition of our human limitations through technological solutions seems to be an alluring possibility. However, the philosopher expresses a form of anxiety concerning this utopian project aiming to annihilate any human problems. What if our vulnerability as human beings represented our humanity? Would the abolition of human problems also mean the destruction of our sense of humanity? Moreover, Hunyadi worries about another consequence that this movement could trigger. According to Hunyadi, the utopia of transhumanism will inevitably lead to posthumanism, a territory that only a few people are eager to enter. Posthumanism, unlike transhumanism, does not correspond to the enhancement of our human condition but to the endeavour to overcome it. Driven by the pursuit of immortality, posthumanists want to create a new species of superior beings that would radically break with our human condition. In *Humans, Animals, Machines: Blurring Boundaries*, Mazis describes the supporters of this movement in these terms:

> Yet there are also those who dream of "storing" our consciousness in computers or machines and thereby realizing the age-old dream of many to escape the flesh - or, what is called by these advocates, "the meat". In another reversal of traditional visions, immortality beckons to these individuals, not as realm of spirit but as having become downloaded into the invulnerable shell of the machine[195].

The development of this movement would mark a far-reaching anthropological shift for our civilisation. Interestingly, bioconservatists such as Hunyadi are not the only ones to be terrified by this movement situated at the far end of the transhumanist spectrum. Many scientists share the same anxiety concerning the current developments in artificial intelligence and genetics as they consider that this research represents a real threat to humanity. Even a convinced transhumanist such as the philosopher Nick Bostrom took part in the foundation of the The Future of Life Institute (FLI) whose mission is to "catalyze and support research and initiatives for safeguarding life and developing optimistic visions of the future, including positive ways for humanity to steer its own

195 Mazis, Glen. *Humans, Animals, Machines: Blurring Boundaries.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008, p.2.

course considering new technologies and challenges"[196]. On the list of "existential risks" established by the members of the FLI, we can unsurprisingly find (among others) the impressive advances in biotechnology and genetics but also in artificial intelligence:

> Artificial intelligence (AI) has long been associated with science fiction, but it's a field that's made significant strides in recent years. As with biotechnology, there is great opportunity to improve lives with AI, but if the technology is not developed safely, there is also the chance that someone could accidentally or intentionally unleash an AI system that ultimately causes the elimination of humanity[197].

The FLI manifesto is unequivocal: if humanity does not put progress under tight control, it will sign its own death warrant. Posthumanism can no longer be considered as mere fiction:

> During the early years of trains, many worried that the human body couldn't handle speeds greater than 30 miles per hour; people were hesitant to use the first phones for fear of electric shocks or that the devices were instruments of the devil himself; and there were equally dire predictions about planes, heart transplants and Y2K, just to name a few red herrings. While we hope that concerns about some of the technologies listed on this page will prove equally unwarranted, we can only ensure that to be the case with sufficient education, research and intervention[198].

Interestingly, these thorny questions about bioconservatism, utopian transhumanism and dystopian posthumanism are all addressed in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. On the surface, the society depicted in *Never Let Me Go* seems to be governed by a form of utopian transhumanism. It is described as "a world that has come to regard cancer as curable" (*NL*, p.263), that is to say, a seemingly better world in which people can have longer and happier lives. However, this society also epitomises the fact that there is only a short step between transhumanism and posthumanism as this better world is only the tip of the iceberg. The "normals" decided not to question a major component of their healthcare system: their providers of vital organs. They refused to acknowledge the fact that the new artificial species that they generated to "supply medical science" represented more than "[s]hadowy objects in test tubes" (*NL*, p.261) and that, therefore, they blindly entered the dark territory of posthumanism. They began to instrumentalise clones and became dependent on them. Questioning the latter' s nature would have meant destroying the normals' utopian world and going backwards:

> There was no way to reverse the process. How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask such a world to put away that cure, to go back to the dark days? There was no going back. However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their

196 The Future of Life Institute. The Future of Life Institute. Machine Intelligence Research Institute, March 2014. Web. 3 July 2017.
197 The Future of Life Institute. The Future of Life Institute. Machine Intelligence Research Institute, March 2014. Web. 3 July 2017.
198 Ibid.

> friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone 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. (*NL*, p.263)

In the seventies, the movement to which Hailsham belonged tried to open the normals' eyes and to question this blind exploitation. However, it failed not only because it underlined the nameless cruelty of the normals who harvested the organs of beings that might have had a soul, but also because it awakened a strong feeling of anxiety concerning the fact that they had created a monstrous new species of perfect imitations of human beings. In the collective psyche, if the status of these superior beings was made official, it would be the end of the normals' civilisation. At some point, Miss Emily conjures up an episode called "The Morningdal scandal" that is quite telling about this fact. She explains that it is precisely this controversial event that compromised Hailsham's fight for the clones' status:

> It concerned a scientist called James Morningdale, quite talented in his way. He carried on his work in a remote part of Scotland, where I suppose he thought he'd attract less attention. What he wanted was to offer people the possibility of having children with enhanced characteristics. Superior intelligence, superior athleticism, that sort of thing. Of course, there'd been others with similar ambitions, but this Morningdale fellow, he'd taken his research much further than anyone before him, far beyond legal boundaries. (*NL*, p.263-264)

As highlighted by Carroll, these experiments on the enhancement of human genetics that took place in "a remote part of Scotland" clearly allude to another historical groundbreaking experiment: the birth of Dolly, the first mammal ever cloned. This event occurred at the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1996. Carroll points out that "Dolly provoked extensive scientific, political and ethical debate and renewed public unease about the implications of the new genetics and the now foreseeable prospect of human cloning"[199]. In *Never Let Me Go*, when the work of James Morningdale was publicly disclosed, it provoked a wave of anxiety:

> It reminded people, reminded them of a fear they'd always had. It's one thing to create students, such as yourselves, for the donation programme. But a generation of created children who'd take their place in society? Children demonstrably superior to the rest of us? Oh no. That frightened people. They recoiled from that. (*NL*, p.264)

People felt that clones would jeopardise their own species as imperfect human beings could not compete with these frighteningly perfect beings. James Morningdale was immediately condemned and life returned to normal, that is to say, to a state of peaceful denial: "Well, he was discovered, they put an end to his work and that seemed to be that" (*NL*, p.264). After this episode, the normals decided to definitively forget about their providers of organs and about the possibility that they

199 Carroll, Rachel. “Imitations of life: cloning, heterosexuality and the human in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*”. *Journal of Gender Studies*. 19.1 (2010), p.61.

entered a posthuman era. The preceding chapters of this study aimed to demonstrate that Kathy's story intends to force the readers to open their eyes and to acknowledge the humanity of these creatures. *Never Let Me Go* is anything but a warning regarding the advances of science. It does not aim to curb technological development in order to protect the supremacy of this fragile species called humanity. It does not embrace the FLI idea that "[w]e humans should not ask what will happen in the future as if we were passive bystanders, when we in fact have the power to shape our own destiny"[200]. *Never Let Me Go* intends to show that if we are inevitably heading towards a world in which our definition of what it means to be human will be constantly challenged, it is our responsibility to accept this anthropological shift and to redefine the terms of our empathy in order not to yield to terrible politics of exclusion. *Never Let Me Go* is a call to acceptance and responsibility. It is the normals' responsibility to question the nature of their providers of organs in order not to lose their own humanity. Interestingly, some critics such as Seaman have ironically pointed out that the normals sorely lack humanity compared to clones: "the more 'real' and biologically enhanced humans are revealed to be lacking in the humanity expressed in so many ways by their scientific offspring. They, not the clones, are the nightmare posthumans"[201]. Creating this kind of behavioural contrast is a common technique to reverse the roles. As highlighted by Mazis, Shelley's *Frankenstein* perfectly exemplifies this method consisting in the rehumanisation of the monster through the dehumanisation of the other biological characters: "In Shelley's vision, the "monster" is initially more humane than its creator or the other humans it encounters"[202]. As a consequence, the reader ends up confused: "Who is machine, who is creator, and what is human?"[203].

While the previous chapters intended to show that Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* represents a rehabilitation of non-verbal means of communication underrated by our Western society, this final chapter aims to demonstrate that the novel also represents the celebration of hybrid identities in a posthumanist world.

200 The Future of Life Institute. The Future of Life Institute. Machine Intelligence Research Institute, March 2014. Web. 3 July 2017.

201 Seaman, Myra J. "Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future". *Journal of Narrative Theory*. 37.2 (Summer 2007), p.266.

202 Mazis, Glen. op.cit., p.4.

203 Ibid.

5.2. Towards utopian posthumanism

The preceding chapter dedicated to animal language intended to show that Kathy, as a clever narrator, plays with the boundaries between animal, human being and machine to rehumanise clones. As the latter are seen as machines by the society that generated them, she animalises them in order to strike a balance between the three catagories (animal - human being - machine) and to relocate them into the sacred "human being" box. The present chapter aims to go one step further and to demonstrate that Kathy annihilates all these well-established categories and radically redefines what it means to be human in the posthuman era. We will argue that Kathy widens the concept of humanness and that she celebrates the blurring of the lines between animal, human being and machine. In *Never let Me Go*, these three categories become part of the same continuum. This part of the analysis relies on the work of the postmodern feminist Donna Haraway who, in her famous "A Cyborg Manifesto", "proposes the idea of the cyborg – an amalgam of human and machine, biological and mechanical – as the model for a new form of consciousness and political activism"[204]. Haraway belongs to the post-structuralist movement:

> Post-structuralists see traditional Western rationalist philosophy as a flawed system based on dichotomies that are presented as natural truths but that are in fact fictional oppositions that serve to heighten the status of one term over the other. Post-structuralist theory seeks to undermine oppressive power relations by showing how these dichotomies are false and always break down under close examination[205].

Haraway offers a positive picture of the posthumanist landscape in which human beings only have to redefine themselves. Unlike the FLI members, Haraway argues that man is not attending his own funeral[206]. Following the same line of reasoning, Hayles suggests that "there is nothing more terrifying than a posthumanism that claims to be terminating "Man" while actually extending "his" term in office"[207].

Even if *Never Let Me Go* is a dystopia, it suggests that a utopian vision of posthumanism is possible through the narration of Kathy but also through the drawings of Tommy. Interestingly, it is relevant to draw a parallel between these two forms of expression as they both represent subversive art. They celebrate the profound humanity of hybrid characters presenting both animal and robotic characteristics. In the preceding chapter, we demonstrated that Tommy's first drawing depicting an elephant represented his self-preservation instinct as it conjured up his own animality as well as a

204 Haraway, Donna J. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century". *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature.* New York: Routledge, 1991, p.149.
205 Id., p.150.
206 qtd. in Badmington, Neil . "Theorizing Posthumanism". *Cultural Critique, Posthumanism*. 53 (2003), p.13.
207 Id., p.16.

primitive form of art such as a cave painting of prehistoric origin. In this part of the analysis, the focus will be on the subversive drawings that Tommy produces later in his life. At some point, Tommy introduces Kathy to the works of art that he secretly produced during the Cottage period in order to be able to apply for a deferral. Particular attention should be given to the way Kathy describes the drawings:

> That was when I first saw his animals. When he'd told me about them in Norfolk, I'd seen in my mind scaled-down versions of the sort of pictures we'd done when we were small. So I was taken aback at how densely detailed each one was. In fact, it took a moment to see they were animals at all. The first impression was like one you'd get if you took the back off a radio set: tiny canals, weaving tendons, miniature screws and wheels were all drawn with obsessive precision, and only when you held the page away could you see it was some kind of armadillo, say, or a bird. (*NL*, p.187)

At first sight, it is difficult to identify what Tommy's creatures are. They are so densely detailed that it is impossible to get a global image of what they represent. They are comparable to an impressionist painting whose strokes of colour only make sense when the public takes a few steps back. At first sight, Tommy's creatures look like a heap of metallic details: "The first impression was like one you'd get if you took the back off a radio set" (*NL*, p.187). However, in a second phase, distance has the ability to reveal the global organic aspect of the drawings: "only when you held the page away could you see it was some kind of armadillo, say, or a bird" (*NL*, p.187). Unlike Tommy's first drawing representing an elephant, these machine-like animals do not only convey the expression of his survival instinct. These drawings evoke his unconscious awareness of the hybridity of his identity as a clone. In the words of Summers-Bremner, "[w]here human anthropomorphize animals, Tommy too creates them in his image"[208]. While looking at these strange creatures, Kathy explores the feelings that this experience triggers. Her first reaction corresponds to a form of anxiety as she feels that these drawings represent subversive art and that Tommy might get into trouble for the second time:

> [F]or some time, I didn't come up with whole-hearted praise. Maybe it was partly my worry that any artwork was liable to get him into trouble all over again. But also, what I was looking at was so different from anything the guardians had taught us to do at Hailsham, I didn't know how to judge it. (*NL*, p.187)

Aesthetically speaking, she does not know how to judge these drawings as they do not correspond to any form of art to which she was introduced at Hailsham. Two interesting thoughts can be derived from this extract. The first one is that these drawings are part of an artistic (and ontological) revolution: Tommy produced a form of art that cannot be classified, that exceeds categorisation. By drawing these creatures, he symbolically asserts himself and celebrates his own subversive

208 Summers-Bremner, Eluned. "'Poor Creatures': Ishiguro's and Coetzee's Imaginary Animals". *Mosaic: a Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*. 39.4 (2006), p.155.

hybridity. While the elephant that he depicted when he was a child was defenceless, these strange creatures have been designed to be able to protect themselves. At some point Kathy explains that providing these creatures with weapons was a considerable concern for Tommy: "I remembered him telling me, in Norfolk, that he worried, even as he created them, how they'd protect themselves or be able to reach and fetch things, and looking at them now, I could feel the same sort of concerns" (*NL*, p.188). These drawings become the clones' battle ensign. Then, the second element that is worth pointing out is that these works of art are proof that Tommy is able to be creative and to innovate like a genuine human being. He is not merely trying to pass as a human being by using the tools provided by the guardians at Hailsham. He follows his own inspiration and shows his profound humanity through non-verbal means of communication.

Tommy's drawings have a function that is similar to Kathy's silence and the characters' use of animal language. The episode in which Kathy explores her mixed feelings about Tommy's creatures represents a mise en abyme of the rehumanising strategy used throughout the story. She first analyses the creatures at the micro-level and notices their machine-like aspect (their metallic features) as well as their animal condition. After a moment, the contemplation of these inhuman and unattractive creatures ends up having a strange effect on her:

> I wasn't sure if this was a cue for me to say how good the drawings were, but by this time, I was becoming genuinely drawn to these fantastical creatures in front of me. For all their busy, metallic features, there was something sweet, even vulnerable about each of them. (*NL*, p.188)

She first feels fascinated by them while being confused at the same time. Then, unexpectedly, another feeling comes up: sympathy. She feels moved by their "sweet" and "vulnerable" aspects. This reaction defies Kathy's comprehension and gives her a willingness to protect them, in the same way that the reader might want to protect Kathy and her friends after having realised that they were more than containers of vital organs that can be mercilessly exploited by scientists. Kathy's story and Tommy's drawings generate the same effect: they redefine the terms of our empathy. The incongruous combination of animal and machine-like elements becomes beautiful and profoundly moving after taking a few steps back. *Distance* is a key word in this process: "only when you held the page away could you see it was some kind of armadillo, say, or a bird" (*NL*, p.187). It is the same form of distance that allows Kathy to move her addressee through her story. The second chapter of this study aimed to show that there are some areas of reality that cannot be directly addressed with words. Thorny concepts such as humanity can only be shown with a form of distance that words do not allow. In the third chapter dedicated to the eloquence of silence, I

explored the effects of the metaphorical form of distance created by Kathy's use of silence. The contemplation of Tommy's drawings requires the same form of distance to be fully experienced. Tommy's drawings and Kathy's story both have the power to indirectly but powerfully move their audience. They prepare us to face the imminent advent of the posthumanist era. As pointed out by Mazis, regardless of whether we are in favour of technology or not, we cannot deny the fact that it has become increasingly difficult to establish the difference between men and machines:

> Whether this encroaching mechanization and love for the machine is seen as a menace, as source of oppression, alienation, and disconnection, or as salvation against the contingencies of a threatening natural world, a chaotic physical realm, and an avenue to greater order, productivity, and rationality of existence, it has become harder and harder to maintain a simple "us" versus "them" mentality with our machine confreres[209].

It is precisely this fact that is denied by *Never Let Me Go*'s society. The normals persist in maintaining "a simple 'us' versus 'them'". Kathy's story aims to overcome this barrier and to redefine what it means to be human in a posthuman era. It is worth noting that Kathy does not only celebrate the blurring of the line between humans and machines but also between humans and animals, other less-than-human beings that are also part of an exploitative structure. In *The Companion Species Manifesto*, Haraway criticises our Western society's blind instrumentalisation of animals and suggests that our relationship to these vulnerable beings plays a key role in the way we define ourselves as human beings:

> Instead of seeing domesticated animals, pets, and working animals as tools, as something external to human beings, she believes species incorporate aspects of the other into what they have become. This parallels her earlier work on the humans and machines have become assimilated within each other in their being[210].

Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* does not merely represent a novel meant to rehumanise clones. It aims to destroy barriers between established defining categories and to offer the vision of a continuum between animals, humans and machines. The three realms become part of the same community. As argued by Mazis, animals, humans and machines would benefit from a respectful collaboration:

> It is a mistake to define humans, animals, and machines as three separate kinds of entities, for there are mechanistic dimensions of animals and humans, as well as animal dimensions of humans and, in some ways, even of machines. The machine might be called the "postmodern animal". In the twenty-first century, it haunts the images of our souls, as an unkown face of who we are and who we are becoming, as a vision of wildness and unknown territories of new experience, and as a repressed dimension harboring fears that this is what we really are in important ways, just as the animal haunted our forebear's dreams, fears, and desires, and still does in ways unnoticed by most of us. To complete our triad, attributes we may have wished to

209 Mazis, Glen. op. cit., p.2.
210 Mazis, Glen. op.cit. p.5.

> reserve as exclusively human can be seen to also permeate animals and machines. (....) The human, animal, and machine are lodged within the core of each other's being[211].

Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* demonstrates that utopian posthumanism is not necessarily an oxymoron. In “Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics”, Black argues that "identifying with Kathy generates a new aesthetics of empathy for a posthumanist age"[212] and comes to this paradoxical but telling conclusion: "[t]o be most human, in the world of the novel, is to recognize oneself as inhuman"[213]. At the core of the novel lies the certainty that "there are ways for the three realms [animal, human and machine] to work together for mutual thriving"[214].

211 Id., p.21
212 Black, Shameem. “Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics”. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*. 55.4 (2009), p.803.
213 Id., p.801
214 Mazis, Glen. op.cit., p.233.

Conclusion

In Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, the strongest forms of communication are often strikingly silent. All the characters - clones *and* normals - reach this critical point where rational words can no longer help. During these key moments, their voices fade away and their bodies powerfully take over. In the fourth chapter, I carefully analysed the subversive body language of the three main characters: Kathy, Tommy and Ruth. It is worth noting that the normals similarly deal with their overwhelming feelings. At some point, Kathy describes Madame's physiological reaction when the latter comes accross clones at Hailsham:

> [S]he just froze and waited for us to pass by. She didn't shriek, or even let out a gasp. But we were all so keenly tuned in to picking up her response, and that's probably why it had such an effect on us. As she came to a halt, I glanced quickly at her face–as did the others, I'm sure. And I can still see it now, the shudder she seemed to be suppressing, the real dread that one of us would accidentally brush against her. (*NL*, p.34-35)

The power of her shudder cannot be translated into words. Madame experiences an irrational fear associated with the inhuman aspect of the students: "she was afraid of us in the same way someone might be afraid of spiders". The whole episode is silent but arguably more eloquent than any other extract from the novel. Interestingly, Miss Lucy experiences the same form of untranslatable feeling when she tries to reassure Tommy about the fact that he failed to produce works of art for the Gallery, that is to say, that he failed to demonstrate that he had a soul:

> It may not help you much. But just you remember this. There's at least one person here at Hailsham who believes otherwise. At least one person who believes you're a very good student, as good as any she's ever come accross, never mind how creative you are. (*NL*, p.28)

Miss Lucy is horrified by the way her students' lives have been planned as she is painfully aware of their profound humanity. Tommy tells Kathy that the guardian tried to look reassuring but that her body disagreed with her words:

> "Anyway, when she said all this, she was shaking."
> "What do you mean, shaking?"
> "Shaking. With rage. I could see her. She was furious. But furious deep deep inside."
> "Who at?"
> "I wasn't sure. Not at me anyway, that was the most important thing! (...) I don't know who she was angry with. But she was angry all right." (*NL*, p.28)

Later, Miss Lucy admits that she made a mistake and that she should not have told him that not producing anything for the Gallery was not important. She would like to explode and put words on her anger and profound sense of injustice but she cannot: "Look, there are all kinds of things you

don't understand, Tommy, and I can't tell you about them" (*NL,* p.109). Again, when Tommy recounts the event, he underlines the fact that it is her body that takes over:

> But she keeps shaking her head saying: 'It does matter. I shouldn't have said what I did.' So it occurs to me she's talking about later, you know, about after we leave here. So I say: 'But I'll be all right, Miss. I'm really fit, I know how to look after myself. When it's time for donations, I'll be able to do it very well.' When I said this, she starts shaking her head, shaking it really hard so I'm worried she'll get dizzy. (*NL*, p.108)

While Madame's shudder corresponds to the fact she felt the inhumanity of the students, Miss Lucy's body reaction betrays her anger and profound belief in the clones' humanity. In both cases, the characters are left voiceless. They experience feelings that prove so strong that they are reduced to the status of animals unable to use rational words. As argued in chapter 2, both territories - humanity and inhumanity - cannot be addressed with words as these concepts belong to the areas of reality than can only be "shown" in the words of the philosopher Wittgenstein[215].

This study intended to show that most critics might have missed the point concerning the alleged lack of any form of rebellion in the novel. The only way to efficiently rebel in *Never Let Me Go*'s society is to prove the clones' humanity to the "normals". However, the two extracts discussed above reinforce the idea that this thorny concept cannot be directly expressed with human language. As a consequence, clones have to resort to other forms of language to indirectly communicate their humanity. This analysis aimed to demonstrate that through her narration, Kathy manages to dismantle the system that generated her by manipulating her human addressee through the use of non-verbal means of expression. In chapter 3, I argued that her strategy mainly involved a clever use of silence: Kathy hides her identity as a clone during the first part of the novel. In other words, she metaphorically performs John Cage's silent piece *4'33"* in order to allow her addressee to listen to the very moving heartbeats of clones. Kathy understands that a resounding defence speech would be useless. Silence becomes a background that allows the reader to empathise with clones. After the first half of the story, the reader is explicitly informed that Kathy and the other characters are clones. However, it is too late to back-pedal and not to identify with these strange creatures.

Kazuo Ishiguro has proved more than once that he is a master at communicating strong emotions through his narrators' silences. In *The Remains of the Day* (1989), a novel awarded the Man Booker Prize for Fiction 1989, Ishiguro managed to create the same form of powerful effect through the silences of Stevens, the aged narrator of the novel who travels around England while

215 Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* London/New York: Routledge, 2001, p.31.

remembering his life and career as a butler at Darlington Hall. At some point, Steven compares the English landscape to more exotic and eccentric places: "What is pertinent is the calmness of beauty, its sense of restraint. It is as though the land knows of its own beauty, its own greatness, and feels no need to shout it."[216] The restraint of the land that "knows of its own beauty" and "feels not no need to shout it" echoes Stevens' own attitude towards Miss Kenton, the only woman that he has ever loved. Even if he never explicitly told her about his feelings, Miss Kenton and the reader could silently feel them. The extract also conjures up Kathy's love for Tommy: she does not need to articulate her feelings to convey them. In Ishiguro's novels, silence becomes an eloquent means of communication. The writer plays with the unsaid and magnifies it.

Then, as argued in chapter 4, silence is not the only non-verbal means of communication used by Kathy in *Never Let Me Go*. Throughout the whole novel, she shows that the characters all speak the subversive language of the endangered animal whose body refuses to die. In a society in which clones are seen as mere providers of vital organs, Kathy understood that the best way to rehumanise machine-like beings was to animalise them. Even if clones do not consciously rebel against the inhumanity of their fates, their bodies have knee-jerk reactions in the face of death. Kathy's powerful sexual urges, Tommy's recurrent tantrums or Ruth's use of mimicry as an antipredator strategy are so many examples conveying the characters' unconscious willingness to live. By emphasising the organic aspect of clones, Kathy dismantles the system that relies on the fact that clones can be instrumentalised as they are nothing more than "[s]hadowy objects in test tubes" (*NL*, p.261). Kathy demonstrates that clones are made up of flesh and blood and re-establishes a new balance between the three following realms: animals, humans, machines.

Finally, chapter 5 intended to go a step further and to demonstrate that *Never Let Me Go* is not only a novel questioning the limitations of human language as a means of expression and rehabilitating non-verbal languages underrated by our Western society but also a work of art destroying barriers between well-established categories (animals - humans - machines) and redefining what it means to be human in a posthuman era. As highlighted in this chapter, posthumanism can no longer be considered as a movement belonging to the realm of fiction. Many critics suggest that the current frantic developments in Articial Intelligence will inevitably lead us towards a world in which it will become increasingly difficult to discriminate men from machines. In *Never Let Me Go*, the upholding of a reductive "us" versus "them" allows normals to mercilessly exploit clones. However, Kathy's story puts this vision into jeopardy by redefining the terms of the

216 Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Remains of the Day*. London: Faber & Faber, 2005, p.29.

reader's empathy. Kathy destroys the barriers between the three realms and celebrates the hybrid identity of clones. The latter are described as animals made up of steel who paradoxically prove to be profoundly human.

At the beginning of the novel, there is an episode that might seem trivial but that perfectly shows how Kathy indirectly conditions her human addressee to challenge the system from the start. Tommy is having a tantrum while he is playing football. His unconscious attempt at rebelling against the Hailsham system is aborted by the other students who start mocking him. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the Hailsham system has been designed to generate a strong sense of community that prevents students from rebelling - auto-regulation. It is worth noting that under these circumstances, Kathy's reaction to the event is quite subversive: she decides to join him in order to console him. She interestingly says "I knew it would puzzle the others but I kept going" (*NL*, pp.10-11). She knows that she is supposed to mock him with the others but her empathy towards him takes the upper hand. Later, she adds that her "approaching Tommy that afternoon was part of a phase I was going through around that time – something to do with compulsively setting myself challenges (...)" (*NL*, p.13). However, Kathy arguably does not only challenge herself. She also defies the Hailsham system from within. Moreover, she invites the readers to gather the courage to have the same reaction when they discover the truth about the identity of the students. The readers have to realise that identifying with clones and embracing their cause will also "puzzle the others". However, they also have to realise that, ethically speaking, this is the only option. Kathy explains that the other students never straightforwardly bully Tommy because of the deterrent effect of "[h]is size and strength" (*NL*, p.15). As a consequence, they cowardly harass him behind his back:

> [T]here were rumours almost every day of pranks that had been played on him. (...) from what I remember, for a couple of months at least, these incidents kept coming. I thought sooner or later someone would start saying it had gone too far, but it just kept on, and no one said anything. (*NL*, p.15)

The exact same words could be used to talk about the relationship between clones and human beings: "it had gone too far, but it just kept on, and no one said anything". Kathy denounces both the cruelty and the cowardly detachment of the "normals". Kathy invites the readers to empathise with clones and, as the title indicates, to gather the courage to never let them go.

Never Let Me Go prepares the readers to face a new era. However, it could also be argued that it indirectly addresses current ethical problems associated with politics of exclusion. As highlighted by Black, many communities have been excluded from the definition of what it means to be human throughout history. Clones can be seen as the symbol of the dehumanised social outcast:

> When the novel invites us to extend sympathies beyond the category of human, it recognizes this category as exclusionary and troubling in itself. The implicit analogies between deracinated, genetically-engineered students and exploited workers in a multicultural Britain and a globalizing economy ask us to recognize how many people in our own world are not considered fully human[217].

Never Let Me Go indirectly but powerfully forces readers to consider embarrasing questions concerning the way our globalised world functions. Can we be so confident that our Western world treats all people on earth in a decent way? In a fascinating newspaper article entitled "Divided times: how literature teaches us to understand 'the other'"[218], Amanda Michalopoulou argues that it is the role of literature to raise these crucial issues: "[i]n an era of fear and division, fiction plays a vital role in dramatising difference and encouraging empathy"[219]. The journalist points out that marginalised heroes are at the basis of European Literature. Canonical works such as Shakespeare's Hamlet, Cervantes' Don Quixote or Goethe's Werther all feature the "other":

> When we read the emblematic works of the European tradition we begin to trace the outlines of a coded, radical understanding of the other. Unconsciously we begin to accept that the other is always a mystery and that easy characterisations lead nowhere. Imagine if Odysseus were nothing more than a filthy, shipwrecked man. And think just how much we learn from his arrival on the island of the Phaeacians about the people arriving every day on Europe's shores[220].

In the context of the refugee crisis that Europe is currently facing, the role of literature is needed more than ever:

> If we leave the treatment of the refugee crisis to the mass media, if we forget the shipwrecked men of literature – from Odysseus and Robinson Crusoe to Michel Tournier's Friday – we'll remain trapped in the stereotypes of refugees as a homogeneous mass of people who have come to tyrannise the west[221].

Never Let Me Go is part of this category of novels that "incorporate[s] the other in all its quirks and peculiarities into the social body" and that "allows for difference, and often even proclaims it to be genius"[222]. In other words, this type of fiction "transforms amorphous fear and pity into individualities. It tells us: the other is not what it seems"[223]. Interestingly, even if Ishiguro's novel is considered as a particularly dark dystopia, it indirectly encompasses the vision of a better world. In

217 Black, Shameem. "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics". *MFS Modern Fiction Studies.* 55.4 (2009), p.803.
218 Michalopoulou, Amanda."Divided times: how literature teaches us to understand 'the other'." *The Guardian*. The Guardian 2 December 2016. Web. 7 July 2017.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.

the words of Ursula K. Le Guin: "Every utopia contains a dystopia, every dystopia contains a utopia"[224].

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* suggests that changing our means of communication can change the way we understand each other but also the way we understand ourselves. The novel shows that words might be part of the confusing noise of the modern world, that is to say, of a noise that has disconnected human beings from the sound of their own heartbeats. Following the same line of reasoning as John Cage with his silent piece of music *4'33"*, Kazuo Ishiguro rehabilitates two non-verbal means of expression undervalued by our Western society. Silence and animal language turn out to be able to overcome boundaries and to connect human beings and clones with a common language: the low pulsation of their internal music.

224 qtd. in Miéville, China. '"We are all Thomas More's children' - 500 years of Utopia". *The Guardian*. The Guardian 4 November 2016. Web. 10 July 2017.

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