

## Introspecting social alienation in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

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Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki, Japan, in 1954. His nine works of fiction acclaimed various honours around the world specifically Booker prize and Nobel Prize in Literature. His works has been translated into over fifty languages. The publication of award-winning novel, "The Remains of the Day" made him the most famous European novelist at the age of thirty-five. His sixth novel, "Never Let Me Go" deals with three individuals who were brought up as clones in an elite place called Hailsham.

This current paper will reflect on how each characters perceive the world and how isolated they feel amidst countless people around the world. Ishiguro's novels are filled with memories, their potential to forget, to silent, to digress and distort and above all to haunt. "Never Let Me Go" is a novel written through the vision of Kathy who is now thirty-one years old and has been a carer for more than eleven years. She reminisces about her relationship with Tommy and Ruth. Tommy is continuously bullied by fellow students for his lack of creativity and is prone to uncontrollable rage but otherwise he is kind and sweet. On the other hand, Ruth is controlling and always pretend to be a special person than she was.

The novel is classified into three parts. First part deals with Kathy's childhood and her friendship with Tommy and Ruth in Hailsham. Second part focuses on her adolescent age after completing their schooling in Hailsham and transferred to cottages in order to enjoy their adult lives. Third part deals with her life as a carer and her past memories. As the novel progresses, it's become quite remarkable how creativity is treated with highest value among Hailsham students. They used to exchange their artworks for other valuables. It is a tradition that best works from each class will be selected by a Belgium woman called 'Madame' and it is rumoured that their works will be showcased in her gallery. This specific character Madame is terrified of these students and later it was revealed that it was not horror but disgust that she felt for them.

Kathy takes interest in Tommy when she encounters his usual tantrum and help him to control his anger. They confide in each other about their secrets and feelings. Readers can understand that the rules implemented in Hailsham is not normal because students have to take extra careful measures to maintain their health. After schooling sixteen students from Hailsham live in cottages where they can explore and live like an adult. At this point they know that they are clones created to donate their organs at particular age. They have less mortality than normal humans so they have to go through childhood, adulthood and old age within thirty to thirty-five years. While they are in cottage, they search for their possibilities whom might have been taken as a specimen for their clones. Around this time, they came across a rumour about 'deferral' that means if two people were truly in love then they can extend their period of time for four years before donations so they can spend some time with their loved one before donation began.

After ten years Kathy is working as a carer who looks after donors. Eventually she became a carer for Ruth. Ruth persuade Kathy and Tommy to visit an abandoned boat. Ruth reveals that she felt guilty for keeping

both Kathy and Tommy apart and wants them to try for deferrals. In few years Ruth died and Tommy and Kathy learned a hard truth from their guardian Miss Emily and Madame that the idea of deferrals was a made-up rumour spread by students who longed for a spark of hope to live on. This novel ends on a tragic note by highlighting a fact that Kathy spends her time looking back and not looking forward and comes in terms with her reality and accept her fate without throwing any tantrums.

Social isolation is a condition where a person find it difficult to connect with other people of his society or atmosphere. As a sociological concept it has multiple layers of significance and can be allude to both an individual mental state and to a sort of social relationship. Social isolation alludes to the sentiment of being isolated from one's locale. Karen Horney's theory of neurotic needs proposed that every individual has certain emotional need to be fulfilled. These neurotic needs and their fulfilment can affect a person's social skills in multiple ways. Horney has classified these needs into three categories based on the defence mechanism adopted by an individual to overcome them. They are- (I) Needs that move one towards people, (II) Needs that move one away from people, and (III) Needs that move one against people. In the case of Kazuo Ishiguro's characters, they tend to move towards and away from other people. Even when these characters move towards other people, they are mostly unable to found personal bonding with others, in the cases where they succeed in bonding, they have to put other relationship at stake.

The novels of Ishiguro frequently portray characters who are far removed from reality and perfectly content living inside their fantasy world. These characters commonly keep their emotions and feelings to themselves and even their bonding with another human feels superficial. "The loneliest moment in someone's life is when they are watching their whole world fall apart, and all they can do is stare blankly." (Fitzgerald, 1925) These lines are highly applicable to the characters in *Never Let Me Go*. They lose everything. They are very much aware of their situation but they cannot do anything about it. Though major characters are clones, they are nothing less than human. As such, they too have certain neurotic needs which needs to be fulfilled. When they are unable to fulfil them, they tend to act out and create chaos around themselves and in other people's lives. The major neurotic needs of the characters in *Never Let Me Go* are – the need for independence, the need for love and approval, the need for a partner, the need for power, the need for privacy and furthermore. Of these, the need for love and approval is exhibited by almost every character in *Never Let Me Go*. Being together with a friend or a partner, and engaging in physical relationship is their only way to defy the system in which they have brought up.

Didn't we all dream from time to time about one guardian or other bending the rules and doing something special for us? A spontaneous hug, a secret letter, a gift? (NLMG, 60)

This extract serves as an example that shows that despite their birth by artificial methods the clones are inherently human and capable of feeling everything as normal human can. They also yearn for love from parent, though they never know who their parents were. Likewise, it demonstrates the degree to which the exacting standards at Hailsham diminish human closeness: any uncommon association with guardian is highly illegal. At another point in the novel, Kathy clarifies that students from Hailsham do not embrace each other. In *Never Let Me Go*, human closeness is the main way the clone opposes the rigid framework they are forced to live by. It's hard not to notice that each character is always with a company or a lover. They are aware that their lives are limited and any moment they have to donate their organs and eventually die. Usually, donors die after fourth donation and some may even die after their first donation. But they chose to be with their partner. In the case of Ruth, she understands that Kathy and Tommy are naturally drawn towards each other. Thus, she becomes hostile towards Kathy and verbally hurts her. Finally, she understands her mistake of keeping them apart and tries to get them back together rather forcefully.

The character of Ruth can be described as controlling. She is more of a decision maker when it comes to three of them. She is the one who separate both Tommy and Kathy. This can be seen as her response of being unable to make decision about her life. The control imposed on her makes her cold towards everyone and she overcomes her inability to control her own life by controlling other people's lives. In the end, when she joins Kathy and Tommy, she forces them together. The next prominent need of the clones is the need of independence. The clones are forced to live in a certain way and give up their hope for a fruitful life. They wish to live free and with their families like every human but it is far from possible. This causes them to live carefree and do whatever they put their minds to, without crossing rules implemented for them.

The most crucial need for the clones is the need for private action. The characters are fully aware of their condition yet, they do not even try to escape or run away, apart from seeking deferral, which was only a myth. The characters are well aware of their purpose, willingly give up their lives for some people whom they have no relation with. They accept their fate silently. It can be seen as sign of fulfilling their need for private action. They being alienated from society try to get recognition through donating their organs. Their lack of purpose in life, apart from donating their organs and die in the process makes them free from any obligations and rules that separate them from mainstream community.

By finalizing this paper, the deprivation of one's neurotic needs prevents a person from functioning properly, which in turn, might isolate them from society. The neurotic needs of a person should be satisfied to lead a healthy life style. It is a nutrient of the mind that makes a person a social being. If the neurotic needs are dismissed, their functionality is highly affected. Ishiguro's characters suffer the pangs of loneliness and they are unable to find a connection with other people in their society. They constantly try and fail at belonging to someone or something. The reason for their unfulfillment of their neurotic needs.

**Works Cited:**

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