

THE ART OF ECOLOGICAL SELFING: SPECULATIVE ECOBILDUNGSROMANE IN
CLOUD ATLAS AND *NEVER LET ME GO*

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By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how contemporary clone narratives explicate human-made ethical dilemmas, and how the nonhumans seem to stay in the periphery even if they appear human-like. Central to this thesis is the idea of an *Ecobildungsroman*, which is a development narrative which focuses on nonhuman subjects rather than human ones. I examine David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* in order to detail how both novels critique the traditional genre of the *Bildungsroman* in order to show how the category of personhood needs to be challenged in order to permit space for nonhuman personhood.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Bildungsroman*, as a genre, provides a developmental space for a human character to transition from childhood to adulthood. This developmental space is often dominated by education—such as in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*—and depicts a character’s coming of age through educational self-development and acculturation. As Franco Moretti writes in *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, the traditional *Bildungsroman* “is truly such only if, at a certain point, it can be seen as concluded: only if youth passes into maturity, and comes to stop there” (26). In other words, the goal of the traditional *Bildungsroman* is for a character to pass from childhood into adulthood and adapt to society, and thus complete the transitional phase of youth.

Bildungsroman narratives are rampant within literature and have been molded to encapsulate nearly every type of developmental story: a *Künstlerroman* is the development of an artist; a *Zeitroman* is a developmental narrative that considers not only the protagonist’s evolution but also the socio-cultural evolution of his/her culture; an *Erziehungsroman* is a developmental narrative that focuses more on professional schooling than the classic *Bildungsroman*, and these are just a few examples of how effusive the variations of the *Bildungsroman* are.

While the categories of the *Bildungsroman* may be vast, they work from a solely humanistic mode. That is to say, the subject of the narrative is human, and thus the focus of the development is how aspects of the human and nonhuman world influence and mold the human character. The values that the traditional *Bildungsroman* reinforces is the idea that a human’s (predominantly male human subject’s) needs, concerns, and interests are esteemed above all else,

and there is no recognition of value in the development of anything other than the human. The *Bildungsroman* as a genre does not take into consideration the world beyond the human, and due to this I would like to challenge the genre to include what I would like to term a speculative *Ecobildungsroman*. Although I will discuss this term more in depth later, the basic tenets of how I define a speculative *Ecobildungsroman* are that the subjects of the narrative are nonhuman, and place (that is, the area in which the character is located) is an active force in the development of the nonhuman. In addition, what makes the speculative *Ecobildungsroman* different than a traditional *Bildungsroman* is that rather than just being a definition of certain characteristics of human development, it helps the reader question and experience the novel of a nonhuman from a more environmental perspective. Meaning, a speculative *Ecobildungsroman* raises the questions that critique the traditional *Bildungsroman*.

In relation to the critical sphere of ecocriticism, this thesis's notion of an *Ecobildungsroman* extends the trajectory of the study of the environment and literature to focus on nonhuman subjects. According to Cheryll Glotfelty in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ecocriticism is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment [taking] an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (xvii). Glotfelty's broad definition of ecocriticism allows for many openings in how to analyze literature in terms of the environmental aspects of a particular text, although she attempts to align ecocriticism with environmental justice. While an *Ecobildungsroman* could align with certain types of nature writing, I argue that this genre can focus on the nonhuman agents within texts to get the most complex understanding of how nonhuman figures experience development. I argue that it is a way to read a text while focusing on the nonhuman agents within. Thus, while the two texts I

have chosen to analyze (David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*) may not seem related to environmental justice on the surface, they both pose ethical questions in relation to a speculative present and a speculative future regarding the human engineering of clones.

David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* presents a narrative in which a human clone—which I will still deem a nonhuman since she is not *fully* human, at least in the society in which she lives—develops out of her use agency and into an identity she forms on her own. Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* articulates the narrative of a human clone who is created for organ harvesting, and though there is a developmental narrative present, it is prescribed by the larger society and she cannot write herself out of her narrative. Both novels pose scenarios in which the human society's ethical frame towards nonhumans is still lodged in humanistic tendencies, regardless of how human-like the subject are. As *Ecobildungsromane*, however, these novels foreground the nonhuman to show humanistic tendencies, and therefore they add to ecocriticism's aim for environmental justice. In addition, a major aspect of both of these novels is that they both present speculative futures that critique humanism through the eyes of nonhumans. Also, what these novels add to the conversation regarding the *Bildungsroman* is that while these nonhuman agents may exhibit attributes aligned with the 19th century idea of development, they show how the humanistic conception of this ideal is evacuated and outdated.

An *Ecobildungsroman* challenges the traditional *Bildungsroman* by encapsulating nonhuman agents and the conceptualization of development for cyborgs, clones, and postclones. I choose to analyze clone figures in this thesis because their narratives exemplify just how far removed humans seem to be in relation to nonhumans. The clones of both Mitchell and

Ishiguro's novels are modeled after human subjects, and even have the ability to think, act, and emote like "real" humans, yet they are still treated with the disregard that humans demonstrate in their actions with other nonhuman figures, such as flora and fauna. The fact that subjects that physically represent human attributes are still disrespected and dehumanized accentuates just how human culture is steeped in humanism, and how there seems to be no space for the nonhuman subject, no matter how human-like, to have a developmental narrative of their own. The notions of the cyborg and clone figures allow for a developmental space in which to question the ideas of the *Bildungsroman* in a new sphere, particularly since the humanistic ideals are subverted.

I have chosen to work on *Cloud Atlas* and *Never Let Me Go* because they both exhibit an acute attention to the nonhuman world and how it affects these characters' developments, the subjects are nonhumans, and they portray two different ways in which an *Ecobildungsroman* can take place. In *Never Let Me Go*, the reader witnesses Kathy H. and her counterparts as they consider themselves human, even though they are clones designed to donate their vital organs as soon as they become adults. Kathy's narrative allows readers to experience the world through a clone who, for most of her childhood, does not understand that she is not human. While her narrative causes friction from the second-wave ecocritical notions of the environment (hence, she does not necessarily have life-changing moments within physical nature), she "develops" in a way that gives her an acute understanding of herself and her identity as an other-than-human character. What makes *Never Let Me Go* a unique *Ecobildungsroman* is that while Kathy "develops" in one sense, she is only ever able to develop within the prescribed narrative that the larger human society built for her and the other clones. While Kathy's narrative functions as an

Ecobildungsroman, though, what Ishiguro's novel presents is an acute critique of the traditional *Bildungsroman* and the 19th century definition of what it means to be human.

In *Cloud Atlas*, Sonmi-451 develops an environmental awareness and consciousness once she becomes a post-clone, a figure that allows her develop out of her use-identity as a waitress. Through her environmental awareness, Sonmi is able to write and publish her *Declarations*, a manifesto that strives for equality between clones and humans, and, as is documented in the last chronotope of Mitchell's novel, between humans and nonhumans. The goal of this project is to not only explicate the inherent humanism in other-than-human subjects, but also show how these characters are impacted by the environment in their self-acculturation, and hence become anti-humanistic narratives. Both of these novels depict an *Ecobildungsroman* in different modes, but also explain the necessary nature of the *Bildungsroman* to develop into more other-than-human narratives. Of course, it is necessary to note that even the vocabulary of this thesis follows along the trajectory of humanistic vocabulary: the idea of development is a purely humanistic concept, as is the notion of a success or failure of development. One could use the term "growth," "modification," "alteration," or even "evolution," but these terms also connote a notion that is human-centric. Even the idea of "selfing," as I used in my title, comes from the humanistic idea of a human having a "self" or a conception of oneself; as is the idea of interiority. So, it is evident that we lack an adequate vocabulary to describe what nonhuman "development," for lack of a better word, looks like, should look like, or could look like.

One of the aims of the project, though, is to show that even though I do not have a vocabulary that does justice for the idea of an *Ecobildungsroman*, nonhumans should be treated with and viewed with the value and worth attributed to human agents who are able to go through

the process of development. In addition, we should contemplate and be aware of the fact that the way in which we think, act, and imagine is always changing, and hopefully eventually we will have an understanding of the nonhuman world that is not so human-centric and binary-laden.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE *BILDUNGSROMAN*

Before delving into these novels, though, it is necessary to map the *Bildungsroman* from its origin and show how it has not only changed since the 1800s, but also show how it is moving into a more environmental sphere as both human time and climatological time progresses. For this portion of my project I will discuss four key *Bildungsroman* concepts made by previous scholars and evaluate Helena Feder's new work on ecology and the *Bildungsroman*, so that we can better understand how this genre can be directed towards an environmental endeavor, rather than just a humanistic one. Tobias Boes (*Formative Fictions*) provides a discussion of how nationalism and cosmopolitanism molded the origin of the *Bildungsroman* in the 1800s, whereas Gregory Castle (*Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*) and Jed Esty (*Unseasonable Youth*) explore how modernism and modernist writers began to problematize the inherently westernized and humanistic underpinnings of the genre. Franco Moretti, author of *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, discusses the *Bildungsroman* as a symbolic form of modernity and how it aids socialization by teaching the reader how to live with contradiction and compromise. These four scholars map how the *Bildungsroman* has evolved (and, in some ways, devolved) from a purely nationalist genre to one that at least attempts to account for more than just a humanistic, westernized audience. It is important to note, too, that our ideas regarding development have progressed as new forms of literature emerged throughout literary history: as I will discuss below, the idea of development stems from the creation of the nation state—i.e. the

notion that the individual progresses for the sole purpose of the nation—and we now think of development in a highly individualized setting.

By genre, I do not mean the typical notion of a text (or an image or song) being classified by a particular formula or convention. When I talk of the genre of the *Ecobildungsroman* I instead think of how genre is defined in John Frow's book *Genre*, which is that genre "is a universal dimension of textuality...[and] genres actively generate and shape knowledge of the world" (2). In addition, Frow states that genre is "a form of symbolic action: the generic organization of language, images, gestures, and sound makes things happen by actively shaping the way we understand the world" (2). In this sense, then, an *Ecobildungsroman* is a "form of symbolic action" because novels like *Cloud Atlas* and *Never Let Me Go*, are shaping how the reader views the nonhuman world and, as is argued in this thesis, how humans should rethink the human one. A genre is, then, a way of enacting things, and it is never exactly stable. It is a kind of world-building, which is evident in the texts explored in this thesis.

The *Bildungsroman* first appeared as a narrative with the aims of preserving a normative ideal, signaling a nationalist mindset regarding development. In order for a character to develop into the person he or she was supposed to be—i.e. able to perform a specific role in order to benefit the larger society—they had to follow a certain set of norms as prescribed by their specific nation. As documented by Tobias Boes, Karl M Morgenstern first developed the term "*Bildungsroman*" during a lecture in 1819 in which he applauded *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* for "preserving German life, German thought, and the morals of our time through its hero, scenery and environment" (1-2). While the premise still revolved around humanistic development of the protagonist, Morgenstern gave credit to scenery and the environment as well,

although he did not go into much detail about the agency of the scenery or environment. What interests Boes about Morgenstern is that Morgenstern has a “conceptual distance from the problematic definition of the *Bildungsroman* as a genre that stages the development of an individual toward a normative ideal” (5). Morgenstern instead provides three key components of a *Bildungsroman*: “an emphasis on change in the protagonist, a relationship between this change and the specific national setting in which the protagonist moves, and the positive effect that the depiction of this change will have on the reader” (5). While these elements may seem a bit vague—Morgenstern does not go into the “change” that occurs—this line of thought was relatively revolutionary as the notion of things, people, epochs that change from their predecessors was previously nascent. While this may seem like a conservative or even mundane reading of a *Bildungsroman*, it is actually a relatively radical reading of both the genre and historical time.

In this way, the *Bildungsroman* seems to be a genre that parallels the creation of nation-states, and thus imagined communities. As Benedict Anderson notes in *A Life Beyond Boundaries*, a nation is “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (49). This correlates with the *Bildungsroman* because the subject who is going through the process of development, even if they are not fully aware, is aiming at becoming a working part of this imagined community. While Boes’ book critiques Morgenstern’s definition and explanation of the *Bildungsroman*, he also notes that Morgenstern’s ideas are useful because they identify instructive lessons that are seen in nearly all *Bildungsromane*. Boes states, “...any attempts to give national form to the life of a protagonist will always resist fulfillment in institutional structures, thereby violating the demands for finality

and normative closure that are constitutive of traditional *Bildungsroman* criticism, and they will always remain internally asynchronous, thereby revealing a cosmopolitan character” (7). It is important to note that while Morgenstern talks of a national subject, Boes talks of a cosmopolitan one (meaning, Morgenstern’s subject has a national identity, and Boes’s has a global one). In this vein, Boes adds that in order to properly interpret and analyze *Bildungsromane*, the reader must not only pay attention to the “concrete historical circumstances” of the novel, but also how the novel “transgresses the ordering structures—both geographical and historical” by which the reader projects meaning onto the text (7).

What Boes provides is a lens to understand the *Bildungsroman* from a predominantly historical perspective, with the emphasis that the reader must not only interpret the novel and character in the ways that it fits into that historical time, but also how the novel and protagonist subvert or push against that historical time/value. What Boes argues for—which somewhat aligns with Morgenstern, but with a less nationalist lens—is a performative theory of the *Bildungsroman* genre, meaning rather than the novel revealing a national form “at the end of its plot” it produces the national form “by means of its mimetic capacities as well as its direct rhetorical address to the reader” (28). Boes’ critique of the traditional form of the *Bildungsroman* is also that critics should not posit the unity of the character and the soul-nation allegory, yet, at the same time there seems to be a reproduction of the nation through other characteristics of the novel. Boes also emphasizes the common critique of the *Bildungsroman* in that it pushes for a normative ideal, which relates to much of modernist scholars’ issues with the traditional definition of the *Bildungsroman*.

As the *Bildungsroman* progressed, particularly in the rise of Modernism, scholars had to figure out how to analyze texts that did not fit the specific developmental trajectory that had previously been paramount in *Bildungsroman* narratives. One cannot analyze, say, *Jane Eyre* the same way that one would analyze Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. And so, the idea of anti-development, or arrested development, became a way through which the *Bildungsroman* needed to be interpreted. Jed Esty's *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* provides an interesting and productive critique of the *Bildungsroman*, this time through a lens of colonialism and idea of antidevelopment. In modernist texts, such as Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Joyce's *Ulysses*, the traditional notion of the *Bildungsroman* changes because these novels—as well as the political, religious, and educational cultures they represent—undergo “Metamorphosis, dilation, consumption, evacuation, [and] inversion,” which subverts the realist and traditional conception of “biographical time” and the transition from childhood to adulthood (2). Additionally, modernist texts regarding development are not as straightforward as texts written before this period, so traditional development is both stunted and stylistically transformed.

In relation to novels such as *Lord Jim*, *The Voyage Out*, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Esty notes that “all three are antidevelopmental fictions set in colonial contact zones, where uneven development is a conspicuous fact of both personal and political life” (2). The traditional *Bildungsroman* is set within a westernized context, and it is during the modernist period that writers began to unpack how the western world could not suffice as the singular *Bildungsroman* notion. That is, how can the rest of the world have a developmental narrative if they are not a part of the westernized world? And, even in the western world, how can one

singular type of develop account for people of all classes, races, genders, and identities? Esty states, “Modernism exposes and disrupts the inherited conventions of the *Bildungsroman* in order to criticize bourgeois values and to reinvent the biographical novel, but also to explore the contradictions inherent in mainstream developmental discourses of self, nation, and empire” (3). Esty reiterates many of Boes’s claims about the *Bildungsroman* but focuses on how modernists molded the trope as a critique of the bourgeoisie (which can be synonymous with the West in general).

In disrupting the traditional aim of the *Bildungsroman*, modernists created a space for non-westernized characters to develop, but modernist authors often complicated this narrative by not allowing the characters to develop into western ideals. For example, working within the legacy of modernism, the postmodern novel *The Cat’s Table*, by Michael Ondaatje, depicts a child protagonist who migrates from Colombo to England. In the novel, the primary space of development is upon a ship called the *Oronsay*, which acts as a Foucauldian heterotopia.¹ Michael (the protagonist), being what the Western world would consider an “other,” is a transnational subject that cannot fit into the traditional *Bildungsroman* because he does not have the access, opportunities, or status to do so. Thus, his development will be unique rather than following the motifs of the traditional *Bildungsroman*.

However, as Esty points out, since characters who are “othered” are then placed into the western world (such as Michael, who travels to London), their developmental stories are sometimes stunted or unable to be completed. Even for non-colonial subjects, Esty goes on to

¹ Lesley Higgins and Marie-Christine Leps define Foucault’s heterotopia as “...a real space that represents, contests, and inverts all other spaces produced by established relations of power and knowledge” (“Becoming Pluricultural in Ondaatje’s *Oronsay*” 1-2). A ship is the perfect example of a heterotopia because, particularly in the case of the *Oronsay*, it is a mixture of people of all races, ages, status, and education.

note that “In open and sustained violation of the developmental paradigm that seemed to govern nineteenth-century historical and fictional forms, such novels tend to present youthful protagonists who die young, remain suspended in time, eschew vocational and sexual closure, refuse social adjustment, or establish themselves as evergreen souls via the tender offices of the *Kunstlerroman*” (3). What Esty offers is a reading of the *Bildungsroman* as it relates to the tension between capitalism (which is open-ended) and the nation (which is a bounded countertemporality) and how these two elements present a symbolic struggle between youth and adulthood (5).

Gregory Castle also writes on the modernist bildungsroman in *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, but rather than focusing on time and the nation, he focuses on how the “failure”² of the bildungsroman in the modernist era allows self-cultivation to resist institutionalization (1). During the modernist period writers pushed against the stereotypical developmental story that takes place through socialization—i.e. *Jane Eyre*—and revealed more in developmental narratives that *do* focus on academia, but also center on aesthetic education and individual freedom within self-development. For Castle, the failure of the modernist *Bildungsroman* is that the characters “fail to achieve inner culture or harmonious socialization,” which depicts the inherent issues within the westernized *Bildungsroman* (2). *Bildungsromane* in the 19th century focused more on socialization (such as most any Jane Austen novel), whereas *Bildungsromane* in the 18th century focused more on “a tradition of aesthetico-spiritual (or classical) Bildung, for innovative models of understanding and representing self-cultivation” (3). However, although

² The “failures” that both Esty and Castle write on are not derived from a sense of value or a dualistic good vs. bad type mindset; the “failure” of the modernist bildungsroman is often looked upon as a good thing—i.e. it fails to keep to the stereotypical classic bildungsroman, but it creates a new way of thinking about the genre of the bildungsroman.

modernist writers strived for more of an 18th century *Bildungsroman*, they were still frustrated by the classic form, which is why modernist developmental narratives are so complex.

Castle provides an excellent categorization of the traditional elements of the *Bildungsroman* in “Coming of Age in the Age of Empire,” which elucidates the aspects of the modernist *Bildungsroman* as modernists inherited it. These elements can be found in examples such as *Jane Eyre*, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and, in regards to Castle, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

...a rebellion against the father and the social values he represents, the desire for self-mastery and the journey away from the father and the home, apprenticeship and vocation, the instrumental function of women along the way, crises in the process of self-development, and the reconciliation with the father than social values he represents, often represented as a symbolic return. (Castle 363)

Of course, the flexibility of the *Bildungsroman* allows authors to mold these features to fit their narratives, such as in Brontë’s novel the “father” figure is presented as the Lowood institution during her adolescence and Mr. Rochester during her adult years. From the basic premises of the *Bildungsroman* foundation and its essential definition, the idea of a *Bildungsroman* is an inherently humanistic concept: it is the development of one’s human character within humanistic societal contexts. As Morgenstern noted previously, he was interested in *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* because of its scenery and environment, but not much else is said of the nonhuman world in regards to the *Bildungsroman*.

MOVING BEYOND THE *BILDUNGSROMAN*

During the 21st century the *Bildungsroman* can be an increasingly permeable genre: while its roots are deep and thick in humanism, contemporary narratives such as *Cloud Atlas*, which focus on nonhuman and other-than-human characters, challenge the inherent humanism of the genre and create a new iteration of development. Where could the nonhuman and the other-than-human character play into a humanistic concept, whether western or not? The nonhuman or other-than-human character deserves a rightful space to develop, particularly clones and cyborgs. If humans are to view and treat nonhumans with more respect and view them as autonomous, then it makes sense to explore texts where the nonhumans seem and appear human—it is a stepping stone in the right direction. These types of characters resemble the modernist subject in that they are created in a static space and are expected to stay in this static space, without development beyond their use-identity. But clone and cyborg characters can inhabit spaces beyond this use-identity, as will be seen through this project, and deserve the developmental spaces to become more than themselves. The traditional *Bildungsroman* does not take into consideration the world beyond the human, and due to this I would like to challenge the genre and use the term *Ecobildungsroman* in order to examine texts in which the primary subjects are nonhuman but human-like.

As I previously mentioned, the basic tenants of the *Ecobildungsroman* are that the subject of the text is a nonhuman, and “place” is an active force in the “development” of the nonhuman subject. I use the term “place” broadly because, at least in my definition of an *Ecobildungsroman*, it can encompass everything from the physical building of Hailsham and pastoral nature of Kathy’s experience in *Never Let Me Go*, to the technophilic environment that

Sonmi~451 experiences in *Cloud Atlas*. The nonhuman and human world are equally interdependent and interconnected, so it is impossible for a human to come to terms with his or her humanity without the input of the nonhuman world, which is explicated and explored in Helena Feder's *Ecocriticism and the Idea of Culture: Biology and the Bildungsroman*. Feder articulates the traditional understanding of the *Bildungsroman* as "...humanism's story of becoming human as becoming part of culture, the humanist origin story of culture itself, of its self-creation out of nature" (19). Feder, having laid out this humanistic and anthropomorphic definition, evolves it to include the larger ecosphere: the *Bildungsroman* "...is also the story of 'nature,' and of our knowledge of human animality and nonhuman agency" (19). Feder's addendum does justice to the idea of an *Ecobildungsroman*—not only is it the trope of a figure's self-actualization and acceptance of and into culture, but it is an understanding of how the nonhuman world has its own agency.

I would like to posit that an *Ecobildungsroman* is the development of a nonhuman character in regards to his or her status not only in the societal realm of the human, but also in that of the nonhuman world. Most *Bildungsromane* end with the principle character coming to terms with her stasis as a cog in society—or, of course, in relation to modernism, her refusal of her stasis in society—and finding her "place" and "purpose." This project focuses on how this notion is challenged when clone subjects become the focal characters and are then placed in a narrative in which they are supposed to develop. This project also explores how the idea of "fitting in" or finding one's place in society is challenged when the subjects are nonhumans.

The *Bildungsroman* favors a system that places value in 19th century humanistic values, predominantly the dignity and worth of all people (even though most *Bildung* subjects are male).

Referring back to Castle's definition of the steps of a *Bildungsroman*, there is a value of the family unit, the push for self-actualization, the notion that each person has a specific purpose, as well as the idea of starting in one "self" and developing into another "self." What an *Ecobildungsroman* questions is who (or what) should be allowed to undergo this process; is thinking in terms of "development" as the process from one state of being to another the most productive way to think about personhood; what is the endgame or goal of a "development" narrative for a nonhuman; what does the idea of "family" look like from a nonhuman perspective; and what does interiority look like from a nonhuman perspective, or what does interiority even mean when the subjects are not human? While this thesis will not be able to answer all of these questions, one of the goals of my project is to at least get us thinking in terms of the nonhuman rather than the human. *Cloud Atlas* and *Never Let Me Go* present two narratives, one in which an *Ecobildungsroman*, at least to the reader, seems successful, and one which vocalizes the imperfections of the *Bildungsroman* genre to a speculative extreme. What these narratives show the reader not just how the traditional genre is forced to break and bend when nonhuman characters become focal subjects, but also how development cannot continue to be viewed and explored in a solely humanistic reality.

**CHAPTER I: THE ATLAS OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS: THE
ECOBILDUNGSROMAN OF SONMI~451**

“Souls cross ages like clouds cross skies,
an’ tho’ a cloud’s shape nor hue nor size
don’t stay the same, it’s still a cloud an’ so
is a soul. Who can say where the cloud’s
blowed from or who the soul’ll be ’morrow?
*Only Sonmi the east an’ the west an’ the
compass an’ the atlas, yay, only the atlas o’
clouds*” (*Cloud Atlas*, 308, emphasis mine).

David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* is a novel which presents its reader with a variety of foundations to begin a critical analysis. With six interlocking chronotopes³ spanning from the 1840s to a post-apocalyptic future, *Cloud Atlas*’s universal consciousness—and intertextual narratives—its temporality, and its diffuse amount of characters allow for innumerable transitive analyses. However, scholarship regarding Mitchell is still nascent, particularly in regards to elements beyond his structural artistry. Critics such as Peter Childs, James Green, and Lynda Ng explore Mitchell’s exposé of slavery and oppression in their respective articles, yet overlook his similar attention to the nonhuman world, particularly in the last two chronological chapters of his novel, “An Orison of Sonmi~451” and “Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Ev’rythin’ After.” Patrick O’Donnell, author of *A Temporary Future: The Fiction of David Mitchell*, maps Mitchell’s use of intertextuality⁴ in how the six novella-esque sections of the novel pursue multiple interconnected chronotopes. O’Donnell emphasizes the “narrative responsibility” of each story,

³ “Chronotope” is a term Mikhail Bakhtin discusses in “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics.” His essay defines chronotopes as “spatial and temporal indicators fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history. The intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope” (FTC 84).

⁴ This term usually refers to the relationship between separate texts, but discourses surrounding Mitchell use it to describe the conversations between the six narratives.

and how the partial “lives” rely on one another to complete the structure of the novel (81). O’Donnell also explores Mitchell’s use of a universal consciousness as a unifying structural principle: “The details attending the complex structure of story to story and adjacency of principle characters...reveal modes of telling, reception, and transmission over time and space that reflect consciousness and interiority to be collective, rather than singular” (82).

The concept of principal characters being adjacent *and* collective applies to the broader context of the novel, but it culminates in Sonmi~451, Mitchell’s clone character who serves as a representation of the collective consciousness. Peter Childs and James Green, authors of *Aesthetics and Ethics in Twenty-First Century British Novels: Zadie Smith, Nadeem Aslam, Hari Kunzru and David Mitchell*, discuss intertextuality in regards to Mitchell’s display of slavery, whether in colonial, corporate, theocratic, tribal, or economic settings. Slavery is a common theme in his Matryoshka structure, but enslavement—particularly corporate and theocratic—is an essential element in the environmental topoi of Sonmi’s narrative. Courtney Hopf, author of “The Stories We Tell: Discursive Identity Through Narrative Form in *Cloud Atlas*,” adds to the conversation of intertextuality by discussing how all of Mitchell’s characters are shaped through discourse and influence one another, despite diegetic boundaries. Caroline Edwards, author of “‘Strange Transactions’: Utopia, Transmigration and Time in *Ghostwritten* and *Cloud Atlas*,” discusses Mitchell’s deconstruction of “free-market utopianism” and “dystopian hypercapitalist colonialism,” and how these exploitive structures influence and imprison various characters. All of the significant motifs scholars discuss—slavery, a universal consciousness, reincarnation, sexism, etc.—all seem to culminate in Sonmi.

The function of an *Ecobildungsroman* presents an intricate landscape through which to analyze this novel, particularly since the intertextual maps of Mitchell's world develop only due to the "partial lives" of each chronotope and the narrative responsibility of each character to depict the development of the novel as a whole (O'Donnell 81). Not only does the matryoshka scope of *Cloud Atlas* echo throughout the structure of the novel, it also echoes in the mode through which he instantiates formation and development. Taken as a whole, the novel can be seen as one dynamic *Ecobildungsroman* or *Bildungsroman*, depending on the reader's frame of mind, stretching through time, characters, genders, races, the human/nonhuman divide. As all of the principal characters (Adam Ewing, a lawyer in the 1840s; Robert Frobisher, a gay composer in the 1930s; Luisa Rey, a female journalist in the 1970s; Timothy Cavendish, an elderly publisher in the 2000s; Sonmi~451, a clone designed as a waitress in a futuristic Seoul, South Korea; and, finally, Meronym, a female Prescient in a post-apocalyptic future) are connected by a comet-shaped birthmark, they all seem to be articulations of a soul—for lack of a better word—that tries out both human and nonhuman bodies throughout the novel, but it is only in Sonmi's narrative—and her clone successor, Meronym—that the *Ecobildungsroman* seems complete. The emphasis on the last two characters, who are both nonhumans, connotes that the presence of nonhuman characters creates a shift in the narrative, particularly since the novel ends with these two figures chronologically.

For the scope of this project I focus on Sonmi~451, Mitchell's fabricant—clone—character. While the collective consciousness is a unifying structural motif throughout the novel—in that all characters are adjacent and collective—the narrative arc culminates in Sonmi~451. While any of the particular narratives of the novel would be rich for analysis, I have

chosen to focus on this specific character and “chapter” because she is a nonhuman, but, more so, because she is a clone. In addition, place is of utmost importance in her narrative and acts as a force through which she has the ability to develop. While “An Orison of Sonmi~451” may not be the final chronotope in *Cloud Atlas*—the final narrative is “Sloosha’s Crossin’ An’ Ev’rythin’ After”—she is the focal point (since she becomes deified through her martyrdom) to both the narrator, Zachary, and the secondary character, Meronym, of the final narrative of the novel. In addition, the chronological narrative ends with Mitchell indebteding the title to Sonmi—she is “the atlas o’ clouds” (308).

The centrality of Sonmi being an other-than-human character troubles exactly what it means to be human in an ecosphere where development is not just a humanistic concept, but an ecologically diverse concept. Sonmi’s narrative follows the conventions of an *Ecobildungsroman* in that she is a nonhuman and place is an active force in her development, but the ways in which her narrative follows these conventions allows for a complex analysis of what happens when a nonhuman subject becomes the focal agent in development. In this chapter I discuss how Sonmi’s transition into and position as a postclone allow her the ability to gain agency and identity outside of her intended use-value, which allows her to develop an environmental consciousness. This environmental consciousness is what gives her narrative the ability to function as an *Ecobildungsroman*, and it is exhibited through educational development and her experiences in and understanding of the nonhuman world, all which lead her to write *Declarations*, her memoir-manifesto which demands equality between humans and clones, as well as other nonhumans. While these attributes may make her narrative seem like it is following

the traditional schema of the *Bildungsroman*, this chapter will explore how her development challenges the genre.

CLOUD ATLAS AS A NOVEL

Before delving into Sonmi's narrative, though, it is necessary to examine the novel as a whole in order to understand just how Sonmi's *Ecobildungsroman* functions. As I stated before, there are six interlocking narratives within the novel, and what makes *Cloud Atlas* such a fascinating work of literature is that the form of the novel itself bends the traditional trajectory of the novel mode. As Ian Watt states in *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*,

The impersonal authority of print is complemented by its capacity for securing a complete penetration of the reader's subjective life. The mechanically produced and therefore identical letters set with absolute uniformity on the same page are, of course, much more impersonal than any manuscript, but at the same time they can be read much more automatically: ceasing to be conscious of the printed page before our eyes we surrender ourselves entirely to the world of illusion which the printed novel describes. This effect is heightened by the fact that we are usually alone when we read, and that the book, for the time being, becomes a kind of extension of our personal life... (qtd. In McKeon 457)

Here, we see that one of the most important aspects of the novel form is the way in which the reader is able to enter into the world-making of the author, and the way in which a novel can be an extension of the reader. Mitchell's novel appears to play with this tradition, as the different sections of *Cloud Atlas* are not in a classic novel format. The first section is the journal of Adam Ewing; the second section is a collection of letters from Robert Frobisher to his lover Sixsmith; the third and fourth sections follow the traditional book chapter format, and depict the plight of Luisa Rey and Timothy Cavendish respectively; the fifth section is a deposition-esque dialogue between Sonmi-451 and an archivist; and the final section, the one pertaining to Zachry and

Meronym, while it could technically be considered to follow the traditional novel format, is written in such a dialect that it presents trouble for the reader to sit and move seamlessly through, as Watt's suggests. In addition, the final section, though written like a traditional novel chapter, is actually an oral account, as the reader finds out at the end.

However, as if the different textual sections themselves were not fantastical enough, the sections do not occur chronologically—they are presented in what I have previously mentioned as a Matryoshka doll style, meaning, for example, Adam Ewing's storyline is accounted for in two "chapters," one at the beginning of the novel, as well as the last (eleventh) "chapter," Frobisher's storyline is the second and tenth chapter, etc. All of the storylines proceed in this nesting doll structure with the exception of the one dealing with Zachry and Meronym—it is one succinct chapter located at the center of the novel. This structure is working in several unique ways: it allows the reader to inhabit the different lives of the characters through different modes, it causes the reader to experience each storyline in a different mode, and it makes the novel itself a novel through which completion is only achieved through the maze of narratives. This stylistic choice of Mitchell's is perhaps why his novel is so memorable, regardless of the reader's preference of genre: there are fictionalized non-fiction accounts, a mystery novel, an irreverent comedy, a science-fiction deposition, as well as a post-apocalyptic narrative written in a challenging dialect.

Yet, even though Mitchell deploys this structural mastery quite skillfully, each of the storylines follow a very traditional *Bildungsroman* format. Even though I will prove Sonmi's narrative can function as an *Ecobildungsroman*, as I will discuss later in this chapter, she follows many of the same tropes that are found in a traditional *Bildungsroman*, such as her educational

development. What makes Sonmi's narrative so fascinating is that she is playing out the traditional *Bildungsroman* in an environment where the "human" subjects are more technophilic than the nonhuman agents, which allows the reader to experience the pitfalls of the traditional *Bildungsroman* when a nonhuman subject becomes the focal agent. In many ways, as well, while Mitchell's ever-changing structure seems contemporary, he still follows the traditional aim of the novel form. That is to say, he follows the rubric of identification. As Watt discusses the novel form, he states that it provides "withdrawal from society and emotional release" and it is "devoid of the elements which restricted identification, and this more absolute power over the reader's consciousness does much to account for the peculiar triumphs and degradations of the novel form in general" (452, 460). Essentially, throughout each of the sections of *Cloud Atlas*, the reader is presented with a variety of expectations, such as in Sonmi's storyline which ends in an emotional release for the reader (Sonmi creates a change in society). So, in this way, the novel follows a very traditional format, even though its structure is unique.

SONMI: THE POSTCLONE

Sonmi's narrative functions as an *Ecobildungsroman* in that she is clone, but also in that she challenges the category of the nonhuman. Her transition into a postclone, which will be discussed in this section of this chapter, is what makes her narrative unique, and is one of the conventions that allow this novel to function as an *Ecobildungsroman*. What I mean by this is that her ability to make this transition—from a clone whose use-identity revolves around being a waitress to a clone who can write her own narrative—is a stage in her development. While she is a human clone, though, Sonmi is similar to the cyborg and posthuman figure theorized by Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, and William S. Haney. Most scholars consider Sonmi *at least* a

clone and *at most* a posthuman, but, as we will see, these figures do not seem to fully account for Sonmi. Donna Haraway's cyborg figure is detailed in her feminist critique "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," and this figure is a hybrid of machine and organism who collapses the boundaries between human and nonhuman.

Sonmi does share many of the traits of Haraway's cyborg, particularly in that she is a creature of a "post-gendered world" and "is uncoupled from organic reproduction" (Haraway 292). While Sonmi is physically gendered female, she is sexless internally and is created without reproductive abilities. However, Haraway's definition of a cyborg does not fully account for Sonmi. For Haraway, a cyborg seems to have some organically human components, whereas while Sonmi may be a human clone, there is nothing "human" about her. While Mitchell does not provide the reader with details as to the history of cloning in Nea So Copros, presumably Sonmi is several steps removed from a direct human clone, meaning the human genes and modification have been altered by the time she is created. In addition, the reader knows the Sonmi fabricant is a newer model than other clones because her counterpart at the beginning of the novel, Yoona, is an "older" model. She is created in a femininely gendered physique, but it is only her exterior that resembles a female human.

Sonmi's gender *does* impact the way she views the world and herself—it characterizes her experience as a clone. She even states, "I had grown as attached to my body as [humans do]," indicating that her physical presence is important to her understanding of herself (223). So, gender and the body *are* important to her narrative—they just do not fit into the model Haraway proposed. In addition to this gender drag, Sonmi resembles the cyborg in that she too is the "illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism"

(223). However, while she is indeed this illegitimate offspring, she differs slightly from the cyborg in that she *is* interested in her origin and, while her “father” (i.e. the patriarchal society that governs Nea So Copros) may seem inessential, “he” *is* essential in that once she figures out the thread between “him” and the creation of fabricants, she is able to upend the society. Sonmi is *not* unfaithful to her origin because by the end of her narrative, she returns to the place of fabricant origination to eradicate the forces that enslave fabricants.

Sonmi resembles the cyborg in that she collapses the boundaries between the human and nonhuman world, and, in a more general sense, she is a “hybrid of machine and organism” (Haraway 292). However, the hybridity of Haraway’s cyborg—and the modern conceptions surrounding the cyborg figure—is often pictured in two similar but separate formations: a predominantly human figure with technophilic prosthesis (i.e. Jamie Sommers from *The Bionic Woman*) or a predominantly technophilic figure with minor human prosthesis (i.e. T-800 from *The Terminator*).⁵ Sonmi does not resemble either of these figures—she has no readily apparent technophilic aspect to her physique (she is often mistaken as a human) and she does not act mechanically, like the Terminator. While it is obvious she is a fabricant, it is only because the Sonmi fabricants are all created to look the same. For example, on the second day of her short time at Taemosan University she is bombarded by students asking her questions because she *looks* like the other Sonmi fabricants. They ask questions such as, “Which Papa Song had I come from? Who had enrolled me at Taemosan? Were there more of me?” all because she looks like

⁵ While deciding on which characters to include for descriptions, I found there was an enormous lack of female cyborgs in television and literature. Motoko Kusanagi from Masamune Shirow’s *Ghost in the Shell* (1989) seems to be the first prominent female cyborg figure, whereas *DC Comics*’ “Robotman” debuted in 1942. Additionally, just for clarification, the reason I am not adding Androids to my list of terms is because an android—like Roy Batty of *Blade Runner*—is simply a robot disguised as a human. Cyborgs still have somewhat human features organically, whereas androids do not.

her other fabricant sisters, but not because she looks like a cyborg (223). While she looks like the other fabricants, the fabricants are not created to look like cybernetic figures.

Similar to Sonmi resembling the cyborg, she resembles Katherine Hayles and William S. Haney's posthuman, but this figure still does not fully account for Sonmi's character. The mechanical aspects of Sonmi are more or less ambiguous, similar to the organic composition of her clone physique. While she does have a technophilic body in the sense that she was created in an artificial "Wombtank" (where all fabricants are constructed) there are few indicators that link her to the traditional concept of a cyborg or a posthuman. Her capacity to learn and intake knowledge at an incredible speed is the more cybernetic aspect of Sonmi, and links her to aspects of the posthuman. Mitchell never formally mentions her ability to learn, but the way in which he describes the moments in which she learns philosophy and history situate her to have an endless amount of attention and an endless capacity for knowledge. In this way she is different from Frankenstein's creature, who learns solely from other humans rather than directly through books. While Sonmi seems to learn in both ways throughout her storyline, Mitchell presents her to the reader as a nonhuman who can function in both the human and nonhuman world, rather than just in one or the other. According to Katherine Hayles, a posthuman "configures" the human being so that it can be "seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines" (3). With this configuration, as William S. Haney notes, "As the body becomes technophilic, whether through the modification of organic structures or through genetic engineering, the quality of subjective experience mediated by the body...is bound to undergo significant change" (57). In other words, while the liberal humanist figure experiences society through conceptions in literature—or other modes of the arts and humanities—a posthuman "increasingly experience[s] reality

computationally in terms of data, or thought/information” (Haney 58). The reader sees Sonmi learn this way—she sits in a room with a “sony” (a computer-like device) and goes through a type of schooling. She mentions that on the sixth day from the beginning of her education she “mastered the sony’s usage and graduated from virtual elementary school. By sixmonth I had completed xec secondary school” (208). While she does not specifically mention what she is learning at this stage of her life, it is, presumably, the normal education that a pureblood would learn in their early stages of schooling development.

From Hayles and Haney’s depiction of the posthuman, data input and learning seem to occur mechanically or passively for the figure. In Sonmi’s case, however, she desires to learn and actively participates in the process. When the Archivist looks skeptical in response to her detailing her desire—and the speed—of her learning, she remarks, “You look skeptical, Archivist,⁶ but remember what I said about ascendants’ hunger for information. We are only what we know, and I wished to be much more than I was, sorely” (208). This is a critical moment in the text because it indicates that she is developing into something beyond herself and into an actual being, rather than the clone she was before. The act of learning and input is not a passive experience for Sonmi—it is an act fueled by desire.

Sonmi *does* use the term “information,” similar to Hayles and Haney’s posthuman, but what makes Sonmi differ from the posthuman is what *she does* with this information. While at University she even has a conversation about her lack of desire for passive knowledge intake: in a conversation with Professor Melphi (the professor who enrolls her in the university) she mentions that she is “depressed” and “losing curiosity” because of the “xperiments” she was

⁶ Sonmi’s narrative is structured like a deposition, and the Archivist is the individual who is interrogating her.

“obliged to undergo”.⁷ She states, “I said something about reading not being knowledge, about knowledge without experience being food without sustenance” (224). This indicates that while Sonmi does have the ability to intake information and knowledge, the way in which she uses this knowledge differs from the passive response of a posthuman. However, more importantly, this separates Sonmi from the posthuman because she desires experience rather than just knowledge. She herself stresses how important experience is in development, showing she has the desire to actively participate in acculturation, rather than just through education.

Hayles and Haney’s use of “data, or thought/information” suggests that data and information indicate a more clinical or scientific mode of thinking, rather than the modes of thought that evolve through the humanities and art. Rather than being able to interpret, experience, and think creatively about the world, the posthuman seems to only be able to take the world at face value. Hayles argues that the posthuman is “data made flesh,” but the data Sonmi is digesting—and becoming—allows her to be more than simply data. It allows her to evolve from her condition as an object of Papa Song into one where she creates her own meaning for herself and of the way she views the world.

Whole pages are devoted to Sonmi describing that she reads—from fictional historical texts, to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, to Plato’s *Republic*, to Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*—but these texts provide Sonmi more than just a lens to *interpret* Nea So Copros and the nonhuman world, they give her the ability to *experience* them, and this seems largely lacking in the traditional posthuman. For example, when presented with Rothko paintings in her apartment, she mentions that Professor Melphi’s daughter-in-law chose them specifically for her in the hopes

⁷ Mitchell is, unsurprisingly, ambiguous about what these experiments are, but presumably they are experiments to judge how Sonmi is developing at the university and how her “ascension” (the gaining of sentience) is developing.

that she might find them “meditative” (218). Sonmi admires the paintings, noting “Rothko paints how the blind sees” (218). Given the information that Hayles and Haney provide regarding the knowledge experience of a posthuman, the figure would presumably have a different experience with the paintings than Sonmi. While her response to the paintings is brief, there is a moment of understanding in her response that is neither clinical or formulaic: she seems to put herself in the position of a blind person and respond through that interpretation. This is a much more meditative and thoughtful response, rather than a response that would simply state the artistry of the painting from a face-value or clinical perspective.

The posthuman appears to be comprised of data alone, whereas Sonmi is not only “data made flesh” but also “experience made flesh.” Additionally, she learns empathy, which is absent from the theories of the posthuman, and develops an environmental consciousness. According to Haney, the posthuman cannot access sacred experience; the posthuman has advanced into a realm beyond human cognition and sacred embodiment. The notion of the posthuman emphasizes “cognition rather than emotional embodiment,” and this emphasis extends from a “matter of choice” to “becoming an unavoidable side effect of the possibility that artificial (especially genetic) modification of the human organism will end up modifying, or rather diminishing, the capacity of the human species to sustain the quality of consciousness necessary for sacred experience” (Haney 58). Now, in these terms, the inhabitants of Nea So Copros are more like posthumans than Sonmi—they are glued to their Sonys and live in a virtual world. Sonmi remarks on this when she states, “all purebloods have a hunger, a dissatisfaction in their eyes,” and the Abbess (which will be discussed later in this chapter) remarks, “If consumers found fulfillment at any meaningful level...corpocracy would be finished” (332). Thus,

consumers are void of meaning and more akin to posthumans rather than humans. These consumers do not experience the natural world as Sonmi does, they only experience it virtually and through the interpretation of the government, whose focus is consumerism.

If theories of the posthuman and cyborg can only account for an aspect of Sonmi's experience, it might be useful to apply another term to properly account for her narrative. I prefer the term "postclone" because it allows a clone figure to develop out of its use-agency and gain an intrinsic agency of its own. By "agency" here, I mean the ability to be an actant. Pulling from Bruno Latour, Jane Bennett explains in her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* that "an actant is a source of action that can be either human or nonhuman; it is that which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events. It is 'any entity that modifies another entity in a trial,' whose 'competence is deduced from [its] performance' rather than posited in advance of the action" (viii). Before Sonmi transitions into a postclone, she does not have the ability to be an actant; her competence and ability to act are posited in advance rather than through her own will. What I would like to add to Bennett's definition is that I believe, at least in Sonmi's case, there is voluntarism associated with agency. Sonmi voluntarily chooses to be an agent in her narrative, and it is through her choice to be an agent that she is able to make change occur in the novel.

Clones are usually bred for a particular purpose: Sonmi, for example, is designed to be a waitress. Outside of a clone performing its predestined role in society, there is no agency or value. Their identity and agency are encapsulated into these roles, and, similarly, their identity and agency have been performed *onto* them by their creators. When a clone has the ability to function outside of its use-identity, then, I would like to posit that they are a *post-clone*: they

have an agency of their own that is no longer tied to their use-value. This change to “post” is not a physical one—Sonmi still looks and appears like a clone, for example—it is more of a change in mental state and awareness in the clone. I choose the term “post” because there is a definite identity change between the clone who is still tied to its use-value and the clone who exists outside of that value. A postclone, then, is what the posthuman aims to be, except without the loss of sacred experience.

For this chapter I align this sacred experience with the notion of an environmental consciousness: Sonmi’s transition into a postclone is even more complex because it is this identity change that allows her evolution towards an environmental consciousness. This developmental narrative is Sonmi’s *Ecobildungsroman*—from a stasis of nascent consciousness and use-identity to one where she not only understands the sociopolitical and historical strata of Nea So Copros, but the nonhuman strata as well. Sonmi’s development of an environmental consciousness can be shown through her education, her understanding of her gender in the strata of Nea So Copros, through her interest in the ecological landscapes she encounters, and through her final moments in undoing the corpocracy of Nea So Copros. As she is no longer under the constraints of her use-identity, she can create meaning and experience the world of Nea So Copros. In addition, this change from clone to postclone is incredibly important because it allows her to experience and understand the inherent issues with use-value as both an insider and an outsider. While she herself is self-aware and possesses intrinsic agency, the other clones in Nea So Copros cannot, and this is the driving force for her to write *Declarations*. In her *Declarations* she demands that clones have an identity outside of their use-value and be treated and viewed as equal to humans. Through this development of an environmental consciousness she can not only

view the nonhuman and fabricant world with a humanist lens, she develops empathy, and this culminates in the arc of her narrative.

SONMI: THE FABRICANT

Before Sonmi transitions into a postclone, she is a fabricant who works as a waitress at a theocratic corporation, Papa Song, which is run by the corpocratic society of Nea So Copros—a futuristic model of Seoul, South Korea. A fabricant is a genetically modified human clone who is, essentially, a modern-day slave, although Unanimity abolishes the term. As Sonmi explains, “Corpocracy is built on slavery whether or not the word is sanctioned, indicating “fabricant” is just a refashioned term for slave” (189). Sonmi perhaps best explains the purpose of fabricants in this society during the end of her interview with the Archivist: “We cost almost nothing to manufacture and have no awkward hankerings for a better, freer life...we cannot run away. We are perfect organic machinery” (325). However, the absence of desire is not the fault of fabricants—it is the fault of the patriarchal and corpocratic society that creates them.

The mental capacities of fabricants are compromised due to their consumption of Soap, an amnesiad-laced drink created exclusively for fabricants in order to “deaden curiosity” and “personality” (185, 186). It is the only source of nutrition and sustenance for fabricants, but, as Sonmi later finds, there is amnesiad-free Soap.⁸ Soap itself is a complicated feature of Sonmi’s narrative, though: fabricants are created to be worked to death, repurposed after twelve years, and exchanged for new models. Soap is created through this “repurposing” as Soap is formed of recycled fabricants. Until ascension⁹—which *does not* happen for most fabricants—fabricants

⁸ Pure Soap does not contain amnesiads. The ruling powers of Nea So Copros adds amnesiads to Soap to prevent fabricants from gaining sentience.

⁹ Ascension is the term Mitchell uses for when fabricants become self-aware.

are unaware due to Papa Song's ruses and thus exist in futility, unaware that their purpose is to be worked to death and then recycled for the consumption by their fellow fabricants. So, while any fabricant could "ascend," the unique aspect about Sonmi is that in ascending she publishes her *Declarations*, which emphasizes the importance of her *Ecobildungsroman*.

The fabricants of Nea So Copros are genomed—genetically modified—for “grueling nineteen-hour workdays,” in which they recite the Six Catechisms, participate in Matins, “greet diners, input orders, tray food, vend drinks, upstock condiments, wipe tables...bin garbage” and participate in Vespers (203, 186). A fabricant's day is structured to be cyclical and there is a religious motif threaded within the structure of their stasis as clones. Unanimity structures Papa Song as a religious corporation when it comes to the fabricants—not only do they go through the cyclical motions of the Six Catechisms, Matins, and Vespers, fabricants' days revolve around the “enrichment of Papa Song” (186). Sonmi therefore views religiosity in a negative way, which furthers the irony of her becoming a deity in “Sloosha's Crossin' An' Ev'rythin' After.”

SONMI'S ECOLOGICAL SELFING

Cloud Atlas functions in a unique capacity regarding an *Ecobildungsroman* because Sonmi's “Orison” (a speech or a prayer), through the structure of an interrogation/deposition, takes place *because* she develops and becomes sentient. The entire narrative takes place—before she is executed due to her development into a postclone—as an archive so that development cannot take place for other fabricants. Harking back to Watt's discussion on the form of the novel, while the reader is provided with expectations during Sonmi's narrative—and these expectations are met—the form of the deposition is less emotive and more restrained than it would be if it were in a traditional novel structure. While the prose of the deposition is eloquent

and Sonmi's responses to the Archivist are quite beautiful, the structure prohibits the reader from engaging too deeply with the narrative. The form and the spacing between Sonmi's responses causes the reader to be aware of themselves while experiencing Sonmi's narrative—meaning, the reader has a harder time surrendering themselves “entirely to the world of illusion” (Watts, 457). Watts also mentions that the reader is often alone, which heightens the effects and affects of the novel, but the Archivist's presence in the deposition makes causes the reader to feel as if there is another figure present, thus making it harder to fall deeply into the novel.

The function of the orison also presents Sonmi as being aware of the beginning stages of her development through what she terms as her “ascension.” So, in a way, Sonmi documents and is aware of her development as it happens. Sonmi's description of ascension evokes a growing consciousness that relates to her function as a nonhuman figure whose narrative is developing. She describes the experience of growing “aware of [her] own ascension” in four parts: sentience (“a voice in [her] head), an evolution of and awareness of complex language patterns, an “acute” curiosity, and her sense of alienation from her fellow fabricants (199). The awareness of consciousness itself is a complicated notion but it presents the revelation that she can now think for herself and begin to understand the power structures around her. In addition, this consciousness allows her to have empathy, which allows her to not only experience and understand the world of Nea So Copros, but also, in the end, pushes her to write her *Declarations*.

The ability to possess and perform complex language patterns is incredibly important because this is one of the historical markers of “humanity,” but this is also important because she gains the ability to speak and comprehend the acute otherness of her inherent position as a

fabricant. Curiosity is also incredibly important to her development, not only in the menial fact that she is curious, but the fact that her curiosity stems from the nonhuman, postnatural world around her—not from the culture of the consumers or the larger strata of Nea So Copros. What drives this sensation of curiosity is her experience of the Sublime, which she documents in her first description of seeing the natural/postnatural world without a visual barrier:

I . . . gasped; six levels down was a cactus garden, birds hunting insects in the needles; further down the mountain a ford park, half full . . . beyond that, woods, sloping down to the spilled, charred-and-neon conurb, hi-rises, dormblocks, the Han River, finally mountains lining the aeroscoured sunrise. ‘A big view,’ I remember Wing’s soft, burnt voice. ‘But held against the whole world, Sonmi~451, all you see is a chip of a stone.’

My mind fumbled with such enormity and dropped it; how could I understand such a limitless world?

Wing replied, I needed intelligence; ascension would provide this. I needed time; Boom-Sook Kim’s idleness would give me time. However, I also needed knowledge. (207, emphasis mine)

Her desire to understand the world around her, to find her place not only in the nonhuman world but the larger ecosystem of Nea So Copros and beyond, stems from her inability to grasp the vast arena of flora, birds, insects, the river, and all of the aspects of the nonhuman world that were previously hidden from her. Here we see her first moments of an environmental consciousness—she is not only aware of the nonhuman world around her, she realizes how little she understands it. While her remarks in the former passage evoke semblances of the Sublime, it is more productive to view this as a growing environmental consciousness: while she feels the enormity of the world, her reaction is not one of terror. She does feel the sensation of being unable to take in the postnatural world that she sees in this scene, but rather than causing her to draw back from it, she is enticed to learn more about this new environment. Her desire to learn is not a desire for

mastery; she seems to acknowledge the vastness and oneness of the nonhuman world as it stands without her.

At this point in her development, she is hyperaware of the nature around her. Because consumers are more focused on their sonys than the world around them, they cannot conceptualize the nature that surrounds Nea So Copros. Of course, most Purebloods are unaware that there even *is* a natural or postnatural world beyond the city because everything they see in the streets or in the “conurbs” are virtual representations of nature. Even the Archivist admits, “I almost envy you” when Sonmi describes her first introduction to the world outside of Papa Song (201). This admission proves purebloods, even those who are higherstrata, are numb to the effects of the nonhuman world.

Sonmi views nature in a sublime way in most of her outings, but I would argue that this is just an outcome of her growing environmental consciousness rather than a direct implication of the Sublime. One of the most notable descriptions she gives that emulates her understanding and appreciation of the natural world is when she spends the morning with the Abbess in the colony, surveying the landscape: “The mountain dropped away; and updraft rose from the valley, carrying animal cries, calls, and snuffles...I felt impoverished. And such a sky of stars! Ah, mountain stars are not these apologetic pinpricks over the conurb skies; hanging plump they drip light” (331). In this scene, Sonmi emphasizes the difference between the nonhuman world of the semi-apocalyptic landscape outside of Nea So Copros. Sonmi never articulates a moment in which the characters around her feel this sensation; the closest moment is when Hae-Joo admits seeing an ADV-less moon would “freak him out,” which exemplifies his consumerist qualities more than those attributed to Sonmi (227). Hae-Joo cannot experience the awe Sonmi expresses

because he is too rooted in a society that values virtual reality and consumerism over the influence of the natural world. The Archivist admits “You speak like an aesthete” to Sonmi after one of her descriptions, furthering the sentient qualities that cause her to subvert the humanistic binary in the novel (212). Sonmi could not differ any more from the consumers, especially with her appreciation of nature. They act more like machines than Sonmi does, which is ironic since she was created to be a clone of a human.

Sonmi, not indebted to the sony and AdV culture, is not distracted by the virtual reality trap, and is consequently able to conceive the injustice caused by Unanimity and corpocracy. Consumers and purebloods have forgotten empathy, one of Sonmi’s key features. She cares deeply about her genomed brothers and sisters, and she exemplifies this at the death of Wing-027. Boom-Sook and Hae-Joo discuss the “appalling afternoon” of Min-Sic: “His specimen, Wing-027, was burnt to Bacon.’ Min-Sic had mistaken a minus for a plus on the label of a bottle of petro-alkali. [Boom-Sook] smirked, giggled, snorted ‘Hysterical!’ and laughed.... I had never felt such fury. Because of an xec’s carelessness my only friend on Mount Taemosan was dead, and Boom-Sook viewed this murder as humorous” (210). This not only solidifies Sonmi’s heightened sense of empathy, but also draws attention to the severe apathy of purebloods. The fact that Boom Sook finds the “murder” humorous is an undeniable marker of how inhumane the pureblood stasis has become. This similar apathy and inhumanity is also exhibited when a highstrata couple meet Sonmi and Hae-Joo on a bridge and dispose of a fabricant doll. Sonmi states that the man opens an air-box and,

lifted out a striking, perfectly formed, but tiny female form, about thirty centimeters in height; she mewled, terrified, and tried to wriggle free. When she caught sight of us her miniature, wordless scream became imploring.

Before we could do or say anything, the man swung her off the bridge, by her hair, and watched her fall. He made a plopping noise with his tongue when she hit the rocks below and chuckled. ‘Cheap riddance’—he grinned at us—‘to *very* xpensive trash. (334)

Sonmi forces herself to remain quiet to protect both her and Hae-Joo’s disguises, but she is visibly distraught. This is the only scene in her narrative which investigates a fabricant younger than Sonmi (who is presumably designed to look like she is in her 20s), and it further exemplifies how unjust the society of Nea So Copros is, and how little empathy, understanding, or even respect they have for nonhumans and other-than-humans. These experiences culminate in Sonmi a desire for equality and justice, and thus she creates her *Declarations*.

AN ECOLOGICAL END: *DECLARATIONS*

Sonmi’s execution does not imply a failure on the part of Sonmi, it implies quite the opposite—it is the narrative end that she grants herself. Her *Declarations*, which consist of the events of Sonmi’s journey and her catechisms for ascended fabricants, are “reproduced billionfold” to the inhabitants of Nea So Copros: every xec, boardman, downstrata consumer, highstrata consumer, and fabricant all gains access to Sonmi’s manifesto. This manifesto causes the downfall of Nea So Copros and the end of the exploitation of fabricants, which is why Mitchell ends the novel in “Sloosha’s Crossin’ An’ Ev’rythin’ After,” proof that Sonmi is successful is causing the eradication of an unjust corpocracy. Mitchell leaves the time and fruition of the downfall of Nea So Copros somewhat ambiguous, but Sonmi’s purpose is not to cause the immediate fate of this society, but act as a catalyst for ontological ascension. A barrier exists between her and the purebloods that she does not fully understand, especially once she ascends. This relates to a conversation between Sonmi and Mephi at the university, in which Mephi explains why consumers and purebloods hate Sonmi (and all other fabricants):

‘fabricants are mirrors held up to purebloods’ consciences; what purebloods see reflected there sickens them. So they blame you for holding up the mirror.’

I hid my shock by asking when purebloods might blame themselves. Mephi replied, ‘History suggests, not until they are *made* to.’ (222)

Sonmi’s purpose in the novel is to act as a catalyst or model of ontological ascension, and she does so by being a mirror to the purebloods and consumers in Nea So Copros. Sonmi positioning herself as a mirror causes purebloods to conceptualize the degradation of their consciences, and, ideally, blame themselves for the creatures they have become. Yet, in order for society to reposition itself and “ascend” to a stasis like Sonmi, it must not only realize its faults but also eradicate the binaries that cause the disposture in the first place. Sonmi’s empathy allows her to not only experience the injustice her fellow fabricants are subjected to, but also causes her to realize a solution to end their misery.

The most emphatic scene emphasizing her ability to empathize is when she experiences the fabricant slaughterhouse, the redistribution of fabricant parts into Soap, and realizes the social structure of Nea So Copros depends on the exploitation of fabricants. She reaches the pinnacle of her ascension at this point, and exclaims to Hae-Joo,

That ship must be destroyed. Every Slaughtership in Nea So Copros like it must be sunk...The shipyards that build them must be demolished. The systems that facilitated them must be dismantled. The laws that permitted the systems must be torn down and reconstructed...Every consumer, xec, and Juche Boardman in Nea So Copros must understand that fabricants are purebloods, be they grown in a wombtank or a womb...Ascended fabricants need a Catechism, to define their ideals, to harness their anger, to channel their energies. *I am the one to compose this declaration of rights.* (346, emphasis mine)

This is the turning point of Sonmi’s subversion of the human binary: she realizes the only way to end the exploitation of the fabricants is to prove equality between the humans and fabricants,

thus diminishing the dichotomies that divide them. She aims for ontological repose for both life forms in order to sustain a utopia, possible only without binaries.

While Sonmi's personal narrative may end in execution, she persists in the final chapter, "Sloosha's Crossin' An' Ev'rythin' After" as a goddess. What Sonmi's narrative is challenging in terms of the traditional *Bildungsroman* is the idea of development as well as the idea of development having an end point. In some ways, it seems as though her development persists even after her physical body is gone, but this is complicated by the fact that people, like Zachry, misinterpret her. After Sonmi's narrative ends, an unspecified amount of time transpires, but the most important element in this timescape is that there is a "Fall" that occurs. During this "Fall," (which is hinted to as a type of plague that occurs due to Nea So Copros' apathy towards the environment) Zachry Bailey, a goat herder in the post-apocalyptic timeline of the novel, lives on Ha-Why (a futuristic Hawaii) in a primitive tribe called the Valleysmen. While the universal consciousness of the novel presents itself in Meronym, a "Prescient" who resembles Sonmi in multiple ways, the narrative comes from Zachry's point of view. While this segment of Mitchell's novel is rich for analysis, there is one aspect that not only explicates the environmental mindset of the novel, but also grounds exactly what Sonmi's narrative accomplished within the world of the novel.

Meronym comes from a "tribe" of Prescients, which seems to be a futuristic model of the Sonmi clones, and they are technologically advanced. She comes to Zachry's tribe to learn about them as well as their landscape, because the environment on the rest of the world has been decimated by a plague. Zachry's tribe believes a demonic figure named "Old Georgie" is the one who caused the plague, but near the end of this narrative Meronym explains that the "Old Uns"

(the humans of Sonmi's time, as well as the previous narratives) "tripped the fall" because of a hunger for *more*, which relates back to the previous capitalist notions of the novel. She states,

"...Old Uns' Smart mastered sicks, miles, seeds, an' made miracles ord'nary, but it din't master one thing, nay, a hunger in the hearts o' humans for more...more gear, more food, faster speeds, longer lifes, easier lifes, more power, yay. Now the Hole World is big, but it weren't big 'nuff for that hunger what made Old Uns rip out the skies an' boil up the seas an' poison soil with crazed atoms an' donkey 'bout with rotted seeds so new plagues was borned..." (272).

What this passage describes is how humanity's greed and desire to master the earth provoked the "Fall." By "rip out the skies" she is presumably relating to the puncturing of the Ozone layer, but she could also be referring to how in Sonmi's time the natural world was replaced by technology (recall Hae-Joo's comment that it would "freak him out" to see an AdV-less moon). The boiling of the ocean could refer to global warming, and the poisoning of the soil could easily refer back to DDT. The one section of her quote that is a bit confusing is the idea of "rotted seeds," but it could be assumed this refers back to some kind of medicine that was exploited.

Throughout "Sloosha's Crossin'," every time Meronym speaks it is in italics because the majority of the text comes from Zachry's thoughts and point of view. So, while it might just be a typographical error, it is interesting that the word "power" is the only term in this passage that is *not* italicized. This emphasizes how central to all of the mastery that the previous human civilization accomplished is the desire for power: power over the earth, power over the environmental as a whole, and even power over human and human-like life.

However, there is one glimmer in this chronotope that exhibits just how important Sonmi's impact was, even if it was too late to change the environmental epidemic that was already in the works. Meronym states, "[Sonmi] was borned'n'died hun'erds o' years ago...a short'n'judased life Sonmi had, an' only after she'd died did she find say-so over

purebloods'n'freakbirths' thinkin's...Sonmi was killed by Old-Un chiefs what feared her, but b'fore she died she spoke to an orison 'bout all her acts'n'deedin's" (277). So, at least from Meronym's point of view (and the fact that Zachry's tribe worships her) Sonmi's narrative functions as an *Ecobildungsroman*, in that Sonmi's time on earth caused a difference for the personhood of the clones. Her narrative critiques the traditional *Bildungsroman* in that rather than an individual developing just for their own interiority, she develops so that others can have interiority as well. It seems that her *Declarations* caused *some* sort of impact on the humans of Nea So Copros, although it is unclear exactly what Meronym means when she states that Sonmi found "say-so over" over human thinking.

Meronym represents what ascension has become: although she may be superior—in the function of having more advanced technology and historical knowledge than the Valleymen—she not once acts condescendingly. She does not operate in binaries or dichotomies: she views herself as equal with the Valleymen at all times and respects their way of life, even though it is more primitive than hers. Thus, Sonmi's ideal comes to fruition in Meronym, even if it is in a lesser form. Sonmi's purpose in the novel is best described by Zachry near the end of his narrative: "I watched the clouds awobbly from the floor o' that kayak. Souls cross ages like clouds cross skies...Who can say where the cloud's blowed from or who the soul'll be 'morrow? Only Sonmi the east an' west and' compass' an' atlas, yay, only the atlas o' clouds" (308). Sonmi is not only the postclone who subverts the binaries that permeate the societal structures of the narrative; she is also Mitchell's cloud atlas.

**CHAPTER II: CREATURES WHO CREATE: THE FAÇADE OF AN
ECOBILDUNGSROMAN IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *NEVER LET ME GO***

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* details the first-person account of Kathy H., a clone in the late 1900s who is chronicling her past experiences as a clone in an unspecified area of England. Her memoir-esque narrative depicts her upbringing in an institution called Hailsham, where she and other clones are reared in a liberal arts form of education. Originally The novel reads as a collage of both Kathy addressing the reader—as a fellow clone—in her present time, and her reminiscing on flashbacks of her childhood and young adulthood. The reader does not find out until a few chapters in that Kathy and her peers are clones, but once the reader realizes this it is discovered that not only are they clones, but they are clones who will become organ donors to humans once they have matured into adults (between the ages of 25-30). Structurally, the novel is divided into three parts (although the structure of Kathy speaking in the present and having flashbacks continues throughout the novel): part one, which details Kathy's experiences at Hailsham; part two, when the clones are moved to the cottages; and part three, in which Kathy articulates her time as a carer.

Upon a cursory glance *Never Let Me Go* seems like an *Ecobildungsroman* in that the subjects of the novel are both human-like and nonhuman. A traditional *Bildungsroman*, which focuses on the human (often male) subject, documents the experiences through which he passes from childhood to adulthood. In adulthood, at least in the traditional genre, the human subject often follows through with societal norms and finds the function through which he can act as a productive member in the society. His development—often primarily educational—allows him

to become aware of his personal agency, which then allows him to understand his identity as an adult. An *Ecobildungsroman*, on the other hand, places agency in the nonhuman subject, and explores how the notion of agency and interiority changes when a nonhuman replaces the human. By agency, I mean the ability to not only have agency, but also the ability to exert it. This harks back to the idea of agency in chapter one, where Sonmi is an actant and parts of her agency are voluntary. While I will go into this idea later, *Never Let Me Go* poses a challenge to agency in that while Kathy does have agency to an extent, there are questions as to just how productive her stasis as an agent is.

Never Let Me Go complicates the idea of agency because the clones are prescribed a particular developmental narrative which they do not have the ability to change. Rather than being able to exercise the freedom they *think* they have, they are subject to a narrative formed by the larger human society. While the reader is never introduced to the specific society for whom the clones are created (and by whom they are created) based on cues in the novel it can be presumed that this society is *at least* bourgeoisie-esque, and educated enough to manipulate and exploit biological and genetic processes in order to create clones. One specific clue the texts lends the reader is that clone production began shortly after “the war” (presumably World War II, since clone production began in the 1950s), so this human society is one that knows the horrors of war and what humans can do to one another. This shows the reader that this society will do anything to prevent similar catastrophes from happening, and are, in a way, progressively dehumanized themselves from the war. Ishiguro creates this “prescribed narrative” as a way to explore “certain aspects—psychologically for instance—of what happens when [humans] leave childhood, face up to adulthood, and then face up to [their] mortality,” but it is interesting that he

creates a subject that is a clone, rather than using actual human characters (214). He also states that the novel's primary function is to act as a metaphor "for the human condition" regarding mortality, and show how humans cope with adulthood—but, author's intention aside, this novel *does* deal with the human condition, but in a more negative light than he presumes (215). I argue that it shows the dark side of human nature rather than a positive one. Rather than being the "cheerful tale" that he assumes, it shows how far humans are willing to go in order to preserve their personhood, rather than preserving and valuing the personhood of nonhumans.

The students are reared from infancy at Hailsham, an isolated school whose aim is to curate the students as clones who are both "educated" and "cultured." From the first few chapters of the novel—before the reader realizes that Kathy and her peers are clones—it could appear that it is a traditional *Bildungsroman*: the students *do* learn and develop from an educational perspective and they are able to create art and literature. However, these creative processes and the level of development they are able to attain are restricted by the guardians¹⁰ at Hailsham.

At the same time, though, *Never Let Me Go* shares attributes with an *Ecobildungsroman* in two ways: the nonhumans are the subject of agency (even though, as the reader finds out, this agency is then later denied), and place is an active force in their development and notions of agency. As I stated in the introduction, when I say "place" it has a variety of meanings based on the novel and characters. In regards to *Never Let Me Go*, the "places" that are active forces are comprised of both physical institutes (such as Hailsham and the other areas the clones live) and the physical environment surrounding Hailsham and the other environments (both constructed and not) that the clones experiences. While these attributes are shared with an

¹⁰ The "Guardians" are the human teachers and caregivers of the clones while at Hailsham. While Kathy and the other clones talk about some guardians in particular, they are often just spoken of as a collective unit.

Ecobildungsroman, *Never Let Me Go* complicates it as the students' development is a performance, but not for the clones themselves as the aim of Hailsham is to prove to the larger society that clones have souls and should, at least, be treated more humanely.

Place and space, such as Hailsham, Norfolk, and the Cottages, act as a means through which the clones understand their existence, and a way through which they experience and exert their interiority. Hailsham facilitates their childhood and the developmental space through which they think they have freedom, so there is a fear that if it is lost in memory then the clones themselves will cease to exist. This is also tied to Kathy's notion (which seems repeated by the other clones) that they have a communal identity—the larger social sphere treats clones as one single unit, and this echoes in how the clones view their relationships with one another. With the exception of the short time they are carers—or the extended time in Kathy's case—the students are always in a communal space: they live together at Hailsham, they live together at the Cottages, and when they are donors, they live in donor facilities. There is hardly time for them to be on their own or try to understand themselves outside of their relationship to the other clones.

What this novel also troubles is that the human world of *Never Let Me Go* creates nonhumans who look, act, and think like humans (with the exception that they cannot reproduce) but are still denied selfhood. Ishiguro plays into the norm of the "other" but then subverts the traditional sphere through which characters are othered: the clones are othered not because of their appearances, but through their ecological space. "Othering," as explicated by scholars like Jacques Lacan and Homi K. Bhabha, is produced through a colonial gaze on a colonized subject, and the effect is often that the colonizer is filled with jealousy, hatred, etc. While the "other" is different (most often by race or culture), they are also the means through which the colonizers

understand themselves, or at least see an aspect of themselves, which is where the vehement dislike stems. What makes *Never Let Me Go* fascinating in terms of this othering is that the “real” humans (including the guardians) express hatred and disgust in relation to the clones, but it is less about how they appear, and more about where they come from. That is, the clones can “pass” in society as humans, but when it is known that they come from a clone “home” or disbursement center, it is then that the disgust comes forth.

In this vein, the clones are isolated from the outside world, but are still in opposition to it—there is no space for autonomy or agency. By agency and autonomy, I mean that they cannot act as agents for themselves—they are only ever agents for the value of the outside world. While they themselves are able to perform the imitation of autonomy, it is only ever an imitation. Their developmental goal is to become cultured, educated and, above all else, “healthy” organ donors, and while they have a limited and prescribed space in which they can develop as human-esque figures, they never seem to be self-actualized. They are aware of their situation, that they will become organ donors and their lives are lived for the benefit of others, but they are unable to change this future. Their development at the end is pointless because they cannot claim personal agency for themselves, but are simply agents through which the outside world works through.

Ishiguro states that he created this narrative to highlight “what is actually quite positive and valuable about being alive” but was not aware of “any great mourning as [the characters] passed from one thing to another. [He] didn’t want them to worry about how to escape. [He] wanted their concerns to be more or less the same ones that all people had. What are the things that are important to us while we are here?” (214). The intention was to create characters that valued their existence without questioning it—while this could be said to be true for the common

human plight, at least humans have the agency or ability to *try* and change their circumstances. The clones do not have this luxury.

Although the novel shares attributes with both the traditional bildungsroman, it more accurately represents an *Ecobildungsroman*. *Never Let Me Go* troubles the traditional *Bildungsroman* through its narrative form as a novel, as well as the fact that the clones are only ever able to develop through the prescribed narrative written by the larger society. Thus, while the novel does focus on nonhuman subjects, and place does influence their understanding of self, they are only ever able to imitate agency. They cannot challenge development. While it may seem to negligible to examine this contrived idea of agency, it is interesting to explore the ways through which the clones at least *think* they are pursuing agential freedom and developing, particularly because it critiques the idea of “development” to an extreme.

This chapter has four main components: first, the form of the novel and how it critiques the traditional *Bildungsroman*; second, the importance of place in Kathy’s narrative; third, how the clones’ creative processes exhibits the simulation of an *Ecobildungsroman*, and fourth, how functionality is key to the clones’ identity. Place plays an important role to the primary character, Kathy, and how her relationship to place and the environment portrays a strong attribute of an *Ecobildungsroman*. Place also plays an important role in memory, and how nostalgia exists through the physical and metaphysical presence of Hailsham: memory and the past presence of place comprises her (and other clones’) understanding of existence. The communal identity of the clones is similarly tied to place. This chapter also explores how the simulation of their *Ecobildungsroman*, or their prescribed narrative, is most present in their educational experiences and their creative processes. While the clones cannot actually claim what the reader would

typically understand as agency, it is through these processes that the reader sees the clones at the closest stage to doing so. Kathy and her peers “create” in order to try to make meaning for themselves, and this is seen through their physical artwork, but also through their imaginative urges: the students are keen to fantasize (whether it be through the ideas of their “possibles” or, in Kathy’s case, fantasizing about Hailsham) and it is through this mechanism that they seem to escape their reality, even if just briefly. Their creative processes also demonstrate how materiality seems to be an extension of themselves: their creative objects are treated like commodities, similar to the students themselves. And, thirdly, this chapter analyses how functionality plays a key role in the life of the clones, and how Kathy attempts to defer the removal of the illusion of agency by playing her role as a “carer.”

A CRITIQUE THROUGH THE NOVEL FORM

Relating back to Watt’s idea of identification and the penetration of the reader’s subjective life, *Never Let Me Go* presents expectations for the reader but then withholds the results. He states, “...identification is a necessity of all literature, as it is of life. Man is a ‘role-taking animal’: he becomes a human being and develops his personality as a result of innumerable outgoing of himself into the thoughts and feelings of others; and all literature obviously depends upon this human capacity for projection into other people and their situations” (459). Essentially, the novel forms works because it allows the reader to inhabit the novel as well as the novel inhabiting the reader. Additionally, as Marthe Robert indicates in *Origins of the Novel*, the novel is “unlike any other literary genres, or even all other forms of art, where the thing represented is shown together with the method of representation” (65). That is to

say, the world of *Never Let Me Go* does not appear on the pages of the novel—it appears and exists in the imagination of the reader.

While *Never Let Me Go* appears in a traditional novel format—that is, it is uniform and reads automatically—it actually subverts this novel form through its narrative. Representation and identification are seemingly absent in the text: while there are parts of the novel in which the reader feels drawn to Kathy, her lack of emotion is one of the things that troubles the reader’s experience of the novel. “The complacency of the cloned students,” writes Shameem Black, “has provoked intense outrage among Ishiguro’s readers, who cannot understand and virtually all other characters in the novel express so little explicit anger at their condition and take so few steps to contest their fate” (791). The novel presents a situation in which the reader feels outraged by the reality of the clones, but, unlike Sonmi’s narrative, where she is able to write herself out of the narrative written for her, the clones of *Never Let Me Go* cannot do anything to change their circumstances. The novel generates identification but then takes it away.

This critiques the *Bildungsroman* form in that it completely evacuates the mythos of the humanistic ideals of the genre—rather than following the trajectory of traditional “development,” the clones are subject to no development at all. The only aspect of their identity that develops is their physical body, and their identity in and of itself is solely found in their physical form. They are given a traditional education, similar to the traditional *Bildungsroman*, but it is a ruse—they cannot use their knowledge to change their circumstances. Rather than becoming a cog in society and benefitting society, it appears that they are cogs to begin with. That being said, the novel can function as an *Ecobildungsroman* through various aspects present within the text.

SPACE, PLACE, AND AGENCY

In an *Ecobildungsroman*, place and the environment (the nonhuman world) are active forces in the development of the nonhuman characters, and act as a way through which these characters understand their agency. This notion is prevalent throughout *Never Let Me Go*, particularly in the primary character, Kathy, as she seems to feel as though her existence is tied to Hailsham. However, place is a construct in the novel. Hailsham, where the students live until they are sixteen, and the Cottages, where the students live before they become carers and organ donors, are constructed specifically for the purpose of rearing the clones. While most spaces are generally constructed for both explicit and implicit reasons, the construction of these spaces for the clones seems to be exaggerated. While I will go into this more later in this chapter, all of the spaces in which the clones live and experience life are created to either be pastoral or picturesque, and they are intentionally placed in these spaces by their guardians so as to preserve this mindset and the illusion that the clones are living “decent” lives. Their living spaces and the environment surrounding them are exaggerated to preserve the students, but also to keep them out of the eye of the larger society.

Before Hailsham is even created, the two primary caregivers, Madame and Miss Emily, know that in order for the students to have the illusion of “decent” lives, the location of the school is key. Near the end of the novel, when Kathy and Tommy discover the history of cloning, Madam states, “whatever else, we at least saw to it that all of you in our care, you grew up in wonderful surroundings. And we saw to it too, after you left us, you were kept away from the worst of horrors...” (261). Hailsham exists as a kind pastoral utopia in that its location and environment are both pastoral-esque, and they linger with Kathy throughout her life. While

Madam may have been using it term trivially, the term “wonderful” evokes the idea that Hailsham is a place “full of wonder” and a place to “excite wonder or astonishment” (*OED*, “wonder”). This framing of the term “wonderful” works well with the frame of Kathy’s experience of Hailsham, as it produces a sense of wonder throughout her life, and she does not seem able to shake the influence of the institution or its outer environment. The term “surroundings” is also telling because it conjures notions of containment or entrapment; however, this containment is hinged on the idea of a pastoral environment.

Hailsham stands “in a smooth hollow,” and there are “fields rising on all sides,” indicating to the reader that the schools exists in a kind of pastoral dream (34). There is one road leading to and from Hailsham, which itself seems to haunt Kathy: “...from almost any of the classroom windows in the main house—and even from the pavilion—you had a good view of the long narrow road that came down across the fields and arrived at the main gate. The gate itself was still a far distance off...Days could sometimes go by without us seeing a single vehicle coming down that narrow road...a car was a rarity...” (34). This scene not only furthers the idea that Hailsham is separate from the outside human world, but also furthers that it exists in a pastoral sense because the students themselves are distanced from the metropolis. If even a car is a rarity (and when an automobile appears it is either Madam or “lorries” bringing in supplies), then the reality of a city is even more distant to the clones, which is ironic since they themselves are a byproduct of an industrialized metropolis. Hailsham is completely isolated from the outside world and created specifically for the clones. The environment itself is constructed in that there are decades of prehistory (unknown to the clones and the reader) which determines how the

landscape is formed, but, more importantly, the students' time at Hailsham (and the physical placement of Hailsham) is framed to accentuate nature in a pastoral way.

One of the ways that the clones try to understand the world outside of Hailsham is by projecting their fears upon the "woods" that lay outside the bounds of the school. Hailsham exists in a pastoral utopia, and interestingly enough Ishiguro places their fear of the outside world onto the woods rather than, say, a city or town. Even though the clones themselves represent the nonhuman world, there is disconnect between their nonhuman world and the nonhuman world that is not prewritten or prescribed by the guardians at Hailsham. Kathy states, "The woods were at the top of the hill that rose behind Hailsham House. All we could really see was a dark fringe of trees, but I certainly wasn't the only one of my age to feel their presence day and night. When it got bad, it was like they cast a shadow over the whole of Hailsham; all you had to do was turn your head or move towards a window and there they'd be, looming in the distance" (50). The woods are a representation of the fear the clones have of themselves, or their looming futures, but it is interesting that Ishiguro juxtaposes the two environments, with one being portrayed negatively and the other positively. It is obvious that the woods represent the unknown, though: the clones project the woods to symbolize the outside world, and therefore fear it. As I mentioned before, it is as if the woods represent the metropolis, or the city lives they will experience once they become carers and donors. "There were all sorts of horrible stories about the woods," Kathy states, and

Once, not so long before we all got to Hailsham, a boy 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 cut off. Another rumor 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 to see what it was like outside...when she tried to come back in, she wasn't allowed. (50)

This is one of the first instances where the reader sees the clones' ability to imagine and fantasize, and it is telling that the fantasy is a negative one. Without an understanding of the outside world, the clones do not know what to expect, and since they have an inherent knowledge that they are viewed as "others," their immediate reaction is to create and believe "nonsense" stories about what would happen if they left the gates. Through this scene, it is apparent to the reader that the clones are not only able to recognize that they are separated from the outside world, but they are able to create and project their emotions into the environment. The idea of the woods juxtaposed with Hailsham also reinforces that Hailsham is *safe*, even if it actually is not—it is what discourages the students from running away and acts as a form of self-regulation. This will be discussed later in this chapter, but this scene is also indicative of the clones' creative processes: the rumors exemplify their storytelling abilities.

Hailsham is one of a kind—it was created by Madam and Miss Emily to be an alternative upbringing for clones. While the reader never learns exactly how cloning takes place or how other clones are reared, Madam and Miss Emily mention several times how other clones are in deplorable conditions and mature without the opportunities of the students at Hailsham. The goal of these two women, and their unnamed supporters, though, is to have the students create art that they can then exhibit at conventions, so that they can prove the clones have souls. I will discuss this further in the second segment of this chapter, but for now it is important to note that while Madam and Miss Emily create a safe and idyllic haven for the students while they are reared, they still seem to have no issue with the ethical dilemma of human cloning for organ donations.

Even more so, though, Hailsham seems to be created for people like Madam and Miss Emily, rather than for clones themselves: it exists as a kind of conscience-reliever for humans in

that the mindset seems to be geared more towards quality of life rather than life itself. Therefore, even though their intentions may be relatively humane, the structure of Hailsham itself, and the mindset behind it, is steeped in a total disregard for human and human-like life. I choose to place human and human-like adjacent here because there seems to be a way in which the humans view the organs they later harvest as human-enough for them to place in their own bodies, so it appears that they at least view the organs as valuable, even if not the clones themselves. Hailsham as an institution promotes the idea that it is ethical to promote the quality of life, rather than life itself; this idea, though, is still as deeply unethical as the murdering of the clones.

Kathy's period at Hailsham, and to an extent at the Cottages, are the primary developmental moments in her life. Through them she develops her idea of agency and self of self: she aligns her existence to place. Without Hailsham, or at least her memories of it, she fears she will cease to exist. There is also a sense of a communal identity between the clones and their relationship to place, even though we only see this through Kathy's perspective. Near the end of her narrative she mentions that she passes by another carer, one whom has been at Hailsham with her, Laura. After discussing the closing of Hailsham, Kathy states, "It was that exchange, when we finally mentioned the closing of Hailsham, that suddenly brought us close again, and we hugged, quite spontaneously, not so much to comfort one another, but as a way of affirming Hailsham, the fact that it was still there in both our memories" (211). While Laura and Kathy were not close—or at least not as close as Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth were—the linkage between the two women exists in their link to and memories of Hailsham.

When Kathy reminisces about a conversation she had with another clone named Roger C. Upon the mentioning of Hailsham being shut down to become a hotel chain, she asks "But

what'll happen to all the students?' Roger obviously thought I'd meant the ones still there...But of course, that wasn't what I'd meant. I'd meant *us*, all the students who'd grown up with me and were now spread across the country, carers and donors, all separated but still somehow linked by the place we'd come from" (212). Hailsham itself no longer exists, at least in the form that Kathy and the other clones remember, and even though Kathy looks for it when she becomes an adult, she cannot find it. The clones do not necessarily have an "origin story," but the closest notion they have to this is Hailsham. They do not have a national identity, and so Hailsham acts in a way as what their "nation" would be; it is the place they all originate from. Regardless of how where they are in their process of being either carers or donors (or even if they have passed away) this house acts as the place where it all began for each of them.

Which is why the outcome of Hailsham is so jarring, or at least the reader would think Kathy would seem jarred by the fact that their home has become a hotel chain to house humans. In a way, this can be read as analogous to the body of the clones: Hailsham, the place where the clones grow up, becomes a vehicle of which humans occupy; the clones themselves are vehicles through which humans receive vital organs. While the reader does not actively see Kathy emote other than through her nostalgia, it is presumable that this takes a toll on her. Not only is Kathy linking her existence to a place, she is also linking her existence to the memory of a place that no longer exists, at least physically.

The Cottages, though less idyllic than Hailsham, are also important in how this novel functions as an *Ecobildungsroman* because it is through Kathy's experiences there that she tries to break away from the link between her and the other Hailsham students and exerts at least the small freedom she *thinks* she has over her future. The Cottages "were the remains of a farm that

had gone out of business years before,” and it consists of an “old farmhouse, and around it, barns, outhouses, stables all converted” for the clones to live in (116). While Kathy never comments on the irony of this setting, it is interesting that the clones move from a pastoral environment to a farm that has been renovated to be habitable for clones. The clones are treated like livestock; while their time at the Cottages is mostly idyllic, the fact that they are transferred to a farm and live in a farmhouse is indicative of how the larger society views the clones—like animals primed before the slaughter.

It would appear to the reader that Kathy’s sense of self is less fixed when it comes to the Cottages, however. She views it like a lesser Hailsham, particularly in that she “could see hills in the distance that reminded us of Hailsham, but they seemed to us oddly crooked, like when you draw a picture of a friend and it’s almost right but not quite, and the face on the sheet gives you the creeps” (120). At this point in her life she becomes more removed from the existence she understands at Hailsham, and it is replaced with an uncanny or dislodged version of the school. At the Cottages, while she does end up taking her own route to her future as a carer, she begins to lose her sense of self. She does note, however, that when she first arrives at the Cottages, “...at least it was summer, not the way the Cottages would get a few months on, with all the puddles frozen and the rough ground frosted bone hard. The place looked beautiful and cozy, with overgrown grass everywhere—a novelty to us” (120). The students are taken from a pastoral environment to one that at least seems a bit wilder, or at least more unkempt.

This is important because while at Hailsham, the students had a very regimented schedule. At the Cottages, however, they are given the illusion that they have the freedom to do as they please. It is an illusion of freedom because it is still dictated by the larger society. It is

interesting, too, because as the scenery changes (that is, it goes from maintained to unkempt) the closer they get to the eventual endgame of them becoming organ donors, which could correlate with the fear of the woods that Kathy often remarks upon. While it appears that they have more freedom to do as they please, their pastoral childhood is slowly unraveling. While reminiscing on her time at the Cottages, Kathy notes,

If someone mentions the Cottages today, I think of easy-going days drifting in and out of each other's rooms, the languid way the afternoon would fold into evening and then into night. I think of my pile of paperbacks, their pages gone wobbly, like they'd once belonged to the sea. I think about how I read them, lying on my front in the grass on warm afternoons...I think about the mornings waking up in my room at the top of the Black Barn to the voices of students outside in the field, arguing about poetry or philosophy; or the long winters, the breakfasts in steamed-up kitchens, meandering discussions around the table about Kafka or Picasso. (120)

It is evident that what the students learned at Hailsham still lingers while they are at the Cottages; they seem to try to recreate the atmosphere of the school by implementing discussions about Kafka or Picasso, and Kathy spends her free time reading novels. Most importantly, though, what this passage shows is the lackadaisical nature of the students' time at the Cottages. Although Kathy is less nostalgic about the Cottages than Hailsham, she seems to associate more contentment with the Cottages, talking about her time there almost as if she was a wallflower.

Norfolk is important in regards to how *Never Let Me Go* functions as an *Ecobildungsroman* not necessarily for the physical space that it represents, but the imaginative lens through which the students, particularly Kathy, view it. In addition to Hailsham and the Cottages, though, it is a serene town, and to the reader's knowledge the only area outside of their two homes that the clones travel to during the novel. Norfolk is considered a "lost corner" to the students, and they believe that it was where "all of the lost property in the country ended up"

(66). More so, though, it is the place where the students think all of their prized possessions that have been lost will turn up, and, to an extent, it seems as though it is the place where Kathy thinks her items and the people she has lost will turn up. She states,

This might sound daft, but you have to remember that to us, at that stage of our lives, any place beyond Hailsham was like a fantasy land; we had only the haziest notions of the world outside and what was and wasn't possible there...What was important to us...was that 'when we lost something precious and we'd looked and looked and still couldn't find it, then we didn't have to be completely heartbroken. We still had that last bit of comfort, thinking one day, when we were grown up, and we were completely free to travel the country, we could always go and find it again in Norfolk. (66)

This passage depicts how the students view the world outside of Hailsham, and how secluded the clones are from the outside world. While they are taught about the outside society beyond them, they never get the experience of actually living or interacting with the people or the environment, and thus they can only fantasize about what they could do. It also represents how the clones have a childish sense of how the world works. More so, though, this passage depicts to the reader how the clones shape Norfolk: a place where what is lost can be found. In this way, Norfolk becomes a product of the clones' imaginations, and even when they finally venture to Norfolk, it is not the real Norfolk that they experience, but the Norfolk they've created while at Hailsham. An example of this is how Kathy imagines that her "lost tape" will one day be found if they travel to Norfolk. Purely by coincidence, the tape is found; however, what is more important is that the title of the novel comes from this lost tape, which is *Songs After Dark* by Judy Bridgewater. The title of the song so dear to Kathy is "Never Let Me Go," and the fact that Kathy finds it in Norfolk is indicative of how important Norfolk is to her; it also confirms at least part of her belief that this town holds all that she holds dear that has been lost.

This passage also ties into Kathy's existence being connected to place and people: as is seen in the final scene of the novel, Kathy associates Norfolk with her ability to remember Hailsham and her peers. Norfolk is also associated with Kathy's existence being tied to place and people in that it is during one of her drives as a carer in Norfolk that she creates a metaphorical scene with balloons. She states, "...I kept seeing those balloons again. I thought about Hailsham closing, and how it was like someone coming along with a pair of shears and snipping the balloon strings just where they entwined above the man's fist. Once that happened, there'd be no real sense in which those balloons belonged with each other any more" (213). This scene, and Kathy's association between the balloons and her peers, depicts just how connected she feels to them, and how she fears losing both her peers and their memories of Hailsham. The fact that a human is holding the balloons together is important too: not only was it a human who breathed life into the balloons, it is also a human who, analogously speaking, cuts the balloons away from one another.

Even here, it is evident how the larger human society tries to distance themselves from what they have done in creating the clones but take no responsibility for what happens to them. Kathy's association between herself and her fellow clones presents a very human-like response to the loss of one's home and one's loved ones, and even though the humans are aware of this—at least on the part of Madam and Miss Emily—the clones are left to try to understand and deal with this loss of place, people, and identity on their own. Yet, the reader is denied closure for this loss, resembling how the clones are left to themselves.

THE SIMULATION OF AN *ECOBILDUNGSROMAN*

The entire lives of the clones are prewritten for them before they are even created, which is one of the ways that this novel functions as an *Ecobildungsroman*. The guardians train the students to be able to perform well when it comes to anything artistic or educational: they are reared to be artists and spend their childhood not only learning through the humanities, but also through “culture” briefings. These briefings are when the guardians teach the clones about human culture (such as what different societies do in each country) and how to perform human actions, like ordering a coffee in a cafe. The goal of the guardians is for the students to be “cultured” and “educated” before they become carers and organ donors, which, as the reader sees by the end of the novel, is achieved. The way in which the students seem to be able to express themselves the most, and, perhaps, understand themselves best, is through the creative processes they are able to perform. Although their art serves a purpose outside of themselves—that is, they create it to be on display as a kind of platform of themselves—their creative processes seem to be the only form through which they can exert a kind of selfhood. Since they only understand themselves through their difference from humans, they try to create meaning through their creative processes. This is also the only time the reader experiences the clones performing without imitation: while they are trained by a particular teacher to accomplish their creative goals, they still have the freedom to paint, write, and create whatever they choose. Thus, the reader can at least see into how the clones try to develop and make meaning through their art and their fantasies revolving around their “possibles” (that is, the human models they were individually created from).

Rather than being politically driven, the clones create and imagine without a structure. The ability to create, whether it be through paintings or prose, is key to the clones' identity at Hailsham. From a basic standpoint, they are reared to be creative so that the representatives at Hailsham can exhibit their "souls" to the larger public, but on a deeper level it is through their creations that the clones try to understand and value themselves. However, their art is also framed in a materiality/object-oriented manner, which is exhibited by their "Exchanges." The Exchanges happen each month, and the students present their best work and sell it to one another. Thus, from a young age, the guardians at Hailsham were instilling a sense of important and worth in the students regarding their art, particularly that of their peers.

These items in the Exchanges were the primary possessions of the students, as Kathy points out that the items sold during the event were the means through which the students could build "up a collection of personal possessions" to decorate their rooms or have "something to carry in your bag and place on your desk from room to room" (16). These Exchanges had other effects on the students, though, as they instilled a sense of superiority within the student body. Kathy states, "I can see now, too, how the Exchanges had a more subtle effect on us all. If you think about it, being dependent on each other to produce the stuff that might become your private treasures—that's bound to do things to your relationships...how you were regarded at Hailsham, how much you were liked and respected, had to do with how good you were at 'creating'" (16). Thus, not only are the guardians dependent on the quality of the students' art, the other students are too. These exchanges also exemplify just how ingrained commodity culture is in the clones' life: their wellbeing, identity, and even relationships center on their ability to create objects. They also have to create objects that are meaningful to each other.

However, just because they are reared to be creative does not necessarily mean that they are inherently *good* at art, which is exhibited through Kathy's friend Tommy's character. His inability to excel in the pre-written narrative for him shows how the novel limits the actual development of the characters. He is one character the reader sees who is "bad" at art, which then affects not only his sense of self, but also his relationships with others. Kathy states, "...Tommy had had the feeling that he wasn't keeping up—that his painting in particular was like that of students much younger than him—and he'd been covering it up the best he could by doing deliberately childish pictures" (20). Tommy, although he is not necessarily aware of it, is the one character who tries to break out of the structure of Hailsham and the culture prescribed to the clones, and even though his attempts are futile—it changes nothing about his future—he is at least an example of how the clones at least sense that their predicament is unacceptable.

Tommy's action of deliberately trying to create "bad" art is one of the ways he tries to manipulate the system, but since there is no way for he or the other clones to actually break out of the system, his attempts are not fruitful. What is important, though, is that he seems to have an inherent knowledge that something is not right. This is seen not just through his production of art, but also through the "rages" that he experiences ever so often, although he cannot pinpoint why these rages arise and the other students are unable to understand or relate to the anger he exerts. With the exception of one of the final scenes of the novel, Tommy's rages end when he is a teen, but it is not because of development or a change in his emotion. The reason his rages end is due to a conversation he has with one of the guardians, Miss Lucy, in which she tells him that "if [he] didn't want to be creative, if [he] really didn't feel like it, that was perfectly all right" (23). It is evident to the reader that there is immense pressure for the clones to be able to create,

so it is strange that a guardian would tell Tommy this. While Miss Lucy later takes back these claims, this scene shows that Tommy's rages end due to him accepting a banal or apathetic attitude—similar to Kathy.

Another way in which the creative processes of the clones exhibit an attempt to understand themselves in the novel is through the fantasies that they create through their ideas surrounding their “possibles.” The clones understand that they are a reproduction of an actual human, and so they theorize that somewhere in the world there is the human that they are copied from. Their notion of “possibles” depicts how the clones seem to yearn for a developed self, even though their agency is thwarted. Kathy explains the notion of the possibles as thus:

The basic idea around the possibles theory was simple...Since all of us was copied at some point from a normal person, there must be, for each of us, somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life...One big idea behind finding your model was that when you did, you'd glimpse your future. Now I don't mean anyone really thought that if your model turned out to be say, a guy working at a railway station, that's what you'd end up doing too. We all realized it wasn't that simple. Nevertheless, we, all of us, to varying degrees, believed that when you saw the person you were copied from, you'd get *some* insight into who you were deep down, and maybe too, you'd see something of what your life held in store. (139, 140).

The clones desire insight in themselves, and they seem to understand that something is missing in their current state. Since they do not completely understand their interiority, or even their origins, they search for interiority through the idea of their possibles. In this scene the clones act much like orphans searching for a lost parent figure, which is a very human-like gesture. While the idea of possibles may not directly correlate to the novel as an *Ecobildungsroman*, it is the fact that the clones have the ability to fantasize and imagine situations regarding their “possibles” gives the reader insight as to how the clones are trying to find agency and understand themselves. The clones inherently do have *some* agency, which I will discuss in the next section

of this chapter, but since their agency is inherently limited by the larger society they fantasize about how their lives would be if they had full agency.

It is obvious to the reader, though, that the clones have an inherent sense that they are “othered” because even when they try to find their “possibles,” they know it is unrealistic that the type of normal human that they want to be is a model for a clone. While there is no basis for the following statement that Ruth makes, it is apparent that all of the clones agree: “They don’t ever, *ever*, use people like that woman. Think about it. Why would she want to? We all know it so why don’t we face it. We’re not modelled from that sort...we all know it. We’re modelled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren’t psychos” (166). While there is no evidence that this is correct, if the reader takes this at face value then it reveals even more about the clones’ predicament: not only are they othered by being clones, they are even more so othered by the fact that they are modeled after humans who are considered marginalized by the larger society. This is even more evident when the reader finds out that Kathy often looks through porn magazines to see if she can find her model. She states,

There were lots of pictures of girls holding their legs open or sticking their bottoms out...I moved through the pages quickly, not wanting to be distracted by any buzz of sex coming off those pages. In fact, I hardly saw the contorted bodies, because I was focusing on the faces. Even in the little adverts for videos or whatever tucked away to the side, I checked each model’s face before moving on. (135)

Kathy, convinced of Ruth’s argument that the clones’ origins are from marginalized humans, believes she is a copy of someone who is undervalued in society. What this scene dictates to the reader is not only that the clones can fantasize (in both positive and negative ways), but also that the clones themselves either do not value themselves, or do not know how. It is logical for the clones to assume that they come from models that are prostitutes or junkies because if they are

undervalued enough to later become organ donors (thus their life does have worth outside of their stasis as commodities) then their models must have been undervalued as well. Outwardly, the clones appear to value themselves; the reader never gets to see how the clones view their self-worth internally, though. The idea of being cloned from marginalized humans obviously takes a toll on how they view themselves, but perhaps they do not understand how to think otherwise.

While the creative processes themselves are important in exhibiting how the clones try to exert agency and identity, it also seems to be the way through which they try to cope with their existence. Since “creating” seems to be one of the only actions they learn to perform—not in a mechanical sense, but it seems to be the primary way through which they learn at Hailsham—it is important that they are able to mold the reason that they create. One instance of this is when Tommy takes up art again once he is a donor in hopes that he and Kathy can get a deferral (that is, they could have a few extended years before he has his final donation). And, perhaps more importantly, it is the way he treats his new artwork that not only gives the reader insight as to how he is coping with the fact that he is a clone, but also reveals a bit of his potential interiority. Upon seeing his “creatures,” Kathy states,

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. I remembered him telling me, in Norfolk, that he worried, even as he created them, how'd they protect themselves or be able to reach and fetch things, and even looking at them now, I could feel the same sort of concerns. (188)

While the “creatures” themselves may not be objectively beautiful, it is the caring attitude Tommy has towards them that makes this scene significant. Tommy is the one character that the reader sees who exerts this level of empathy. It is also telling that he performing empathy

towards “creatures” more nonhuman than himself—he seems to be representing what the human society failed to do when creating the clones. That is, they failed to conceptualize how their human clones would “protect” themselves, or even the quality of life they would experience. More devastatingly, though, is that the society who created the clones presumably knew that the clones would have to age before their organs could be harvested, thus they were aware that the clones would go through childhood and adulthood similar to themselves.

While Kathy does not necessarily have a moment in which she exhibits empathy through “creating,” there is a scene at the end of the novel that not only exhibits how she uses fantasies to cope with her stasis as a clone, but also portrays her inability—or at least her lack of desire—to change her circumstances. In this concluding scene of the novel, Kathy reminisces on Hailsham and her relationship with Tommy, and it takes place shortly after Tommy completes and shortly before she becomes an organ donor herself. She travels to Norfolk and looks out upon a field, and states,

That was the only time, as I stood there, looking at that strange rubbish...that I started to imagine just a little fantasy thing...I half-closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up, and I was now standing here in front of it, and if I waited long enough a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the field, gradually getting larger until I'd see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call. The fantasy never got beyond that—I didn't let it—and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be. (287-288)

In this scene, the reader experiences Kathy attempting to cope with the fact that her sense of self is gone—Hailsham, the place through which she links her identity, is no longer in existence, and the person she was closest to, Tommy, has already died. She fantasizes as a way to come to terms with the place and people that she has lost, but she is unable to completely experience these losses, because even though she has the ability to create this scene in her imagination, she

does not “let it” take control of her. She remains composed and returns to her duties as a soon-to-be organ donor.

Interestingly enough, she considers this moment of “emotion” (if it can be considered such) an “indulgence,” showing that she does not think she deserves to a moment of grieving or reflection. This scene not only exhibits her inability to change her stasis as a clone—even though she can exhibit human emotion and goes through the grieving stages of “real” humans—it also echoes fears from previous moments in the novel: she does not look out onto an idyllic field or pasture, she looks out onto a field filled with “rubbish,” echoing Ruth’s claims and her own fears that the clones are modeled after “trash” people. She states, “All along the fence, especially along the lower line of wire, all sorts of rubbish had caught and tangled...Up in the branches of the trees, too, I could see, flapping about, torn plastic sheeting and bits of old carrier bags” (287). Perhaps this is Kathy subtly coming to the realization that her childhood was more of a sham than anything else: even though she and her fellow clones were brought up in a frame where they were—at least by their carers—valued and worth more than just their organs, it was just a mirage, and their futures could only ever resemble this field filled with debris. As Madame states, they were only “pawns in a game” that they cannot imagine themselves out of, no matter how hard they try (268).

IDENTITY THROUGH FUNCTION AND AGENCY

In traditional *Bildungsroman* narratives, the subject has the ability, or learns the ability, to exert agency and become an agent in their own narratives. This notion is complicated in the *Ecobildungsroman* of *Never Let Me Go*, because while the students have certain areas in which they can exhibit agency, it is still limited by the larger society. The way in which I frame agency

is through Marilyn Cooper's definition in "Rhetorical Agency as Emergent and Enacted," in which she challenges the conventional notion of agency and states, "I argue that agency is an emergent property of embodied individuals. Agents do reflect on their actions consciously; they do have conscious intentions and goals and plans; but their agency does not arise from conscious mental acts, though consciousness does play a role. Agency is instead based in individuals' lived knowledge that their actions are their own" (421). Typically, agency is understood as a subject's ability to consciously and intentionally bring forth change, but what Cooper argues is that agency is not conscious or intentional, and the changes made by an individual are tied to their "inheritance, past experiences, [and] their surround" (421). I agree with Cooper's notion in that agency is a product of lived action and knowledge of one's actions; however, I do think that conscious mental acts *do* play an active role in a subject's agency, even if only in a small way. There seems to be a voluntarist attribute to the agency exerted in both of these novels, even if the clones of *Never Let Me Go* cannot claim it in its entirety.

This frame of agency, though, becomes complex when put in conversation with *Never Let Me Go*. First, there is uncertainty as to whether or not the clones of the novel can be considered "embodied": they are the embodiments of human models, and these human models will later possess the clones' organs, so the clones' bodies are never really their own (in an ownership sense). In addition to this, while the clones can think and act for themselves, it is always under the limitations and influence of people outside of themselves; thus, while they do have a sense of interiority, it is only to a prescribed extent.

While this can be said to be true for human agents (as they are limited by institutions, governments, etc.), in the case of the clones, it is to a more severe degree. While some aspects of

human life are prescribed, there is still more freedom than in the case of the clones. Secondly, while the clones do have the ability to consciously “reflect on their actions” and they have the ability to “have conscious intentions and goals and plans,” all of these attributes act more as farces because they are also prescribed and limited. While the clones may have the ability to have goals and plans, unless they work within the framework of their futures as carers and organ donors, these goals and plans cannot come into fruition. For a normal agent, while there are some prescribed elements to their circumstances, they still have the ability to at least frame and change their circumstances, even if only subconsciously. The last aspect of Coopers’ definition is the one with the most complications within the structure of *Never Let Me Go*: do the clones have agency if agency is “based in individuals’ lived knowledge that their actions are their own?” I would argue yes: although the clones live within a prescribed framework and cannot write themselves out of their narrative, they at least have the knowledge that their actions are their own. Even if their actions are ultimately *for* someone else, they themselves are the actants. Thus, even though their agency seems like a façade, they still have the ability to act.

This notion of agency plays into the framework of an *Ecobildungsroman* because even though the clones have a prescribed narrative, they are at least able to utilize their limited agency—thus showing how the humanistic ideals of the traditional *Bildungsroman* cannot hold when it comes to contemporary works that do not focus solely on human agents. However, it is interesting to explore how the clones exert this limited agency, and, in terms of Kathy, how she able to at least defer the system through the agency she purports. It is important to understand that the clones work within a framework where their identity is based on functionality, particularly in how they understand their bodies and their later roles as carers and organ donors.

While agency seems to be an internal and interior fact of a subject's identity, there seems to be a complexity since the clones' bodies are not their own; there seems to be a kind of disconnect. Their bodies seem to have agency themselves, since their bodies are the one factor about the clones that the larger society deems important. Thus, while agency may be found in the clones' interior, the larger society places agency and value on their exterior. This section of the chapter discusses how the clones attempt to exert agency through their actions, particularly when it comes to their bodies and their later occupations as carers and donors.

Center to this idea of agency is that the clones do not understand the full length of their nonhumanness: internal agency is lost—at least from the perspective of the larger society—and external agency is gained. What complicates this scenario, though, is that even though all agency and worth is projected onto their physical bodies, they do not understand their bodies—if they look the same as modeled humans, then they should be treated like humans, but they are not, which leaves them in a liminal space. Thus, they understand themselves as commodities and perform, for the most part, functions removed from emotion. This notion is best represented through Kathy's relationship with sex, and how sex becomes a function removed from emotion, thus dislocating agency from both her interior self and her physical body. Kathy states, "...as that summer approached, I began to feel more and more the odd one out. In a way, sex had got like 'being creative' had been a few years earlier. It felt like if you hadn't done it yet, you ought to, and quickly" (98). What is telling about this passage is that Kathy does not begin to have sex or have sexual urges because she wants to or because she feels prepared, it is because she does not want to be ostracized. This can also be tied to the fact that, although she has some interior

agency, agency is found via her body, so she feels the urge to perform in order to enact this agency.

What is also interesting about this passage is that she relates it back to the clones' sense that their value lies within their ability to create and create well—thus the reader can understand her reasoning in that a sexual act must be performed in order for her to be functioning correctly. When she does end up choosing a male to have sex with—although she does not actually end up doing so—she states,

So I'd chosen Harry, and I only delayed those couple of months because I wanted to make sure I'd be all right physically. Miss Emily had told us it could be painful and a big failure if you didn't get wet enough and this was my one real worry. It wasn't being ripped about down there, which we often joked about, and was the secret fear of quite a few girls. I kept thinking, as long as I got wet quick enough, there'd be no problem, and I did it a lot on my own just to make sure. (98-99)

Even in this passage, Kathy's rhetoric is clinical and function-based, rather than due to emotional desire. The fact that she "chooses" someone just for the function of sex, rather than choosing someone based on desire, is telling of how she views the agency of her body—it is detached from internal emotion. Also, she feels the need to practice so that the act is done correctly, rather than masturbating for her own pleasure. In relation to the structure of the narrative, this plays into the fact that the clones have a prewritten narrative: although they are taught about sex and the carers give them "permission," they do not understand the full implications of sex and treat it more like a function rather than an act with connotations. They cannot have children—or are at least told they do not possess reproductive organs—so the act, in theory, should solely be passion-related, but she does not possess the understanding of her body or position as a clone in order to associate sex with anything other than a function.

Kathy's association with sex and functionality is also apparent when she finally has sex—and becomes in a relationship with—Tommy once she becomes his carer. One would think this experience would be a pleasurable—or at least emotional—one for her, as all signs in the novel subtly point to the fact that she loves him (or she is at least convinced by others that she loves him). She states,

But even that first time, there was something there, a feeling right there alongside our sense that this was a beginning, a gateway we were passing through. I didn't want to acknowledge it for a long time, and even when I did, I tried to persuade myself it was something that would go away along with his various aches and pains...right from that first time, there was something in Tommy's manner that was tinged with sadness, that seemed to say, 'Yes, we're doing this now and I'm glad we're doing this now. But what a pity we left it so late.' (239)

She states that there is a “feeling,” but she does not indicate to the reader what this feeling is most likely because she does not understand it herself. The emotion she speaks of is in terms of Tommy: how he feels, what he must be thinking. Perhaps she is just projecting her feelings onto him after this act, but it seems as though she herself does not know how to process this exterior action with her interiority. In addition, while she does seem to want to have sex with Tommy, one of the primary reasons this action takes place is because they are under the impression they need to appear more intimate with one another in order to get a “deferment,” so the action seems like more of a function rather than an intentional choice.

While she is still under the pre-written narrative provided by the larger society, one of the ways in which Kathy exerts her agency and, in a small way, fights the structure of her clone stasis, is through her occupation as a carer. Even though she still performs within the prescribed narrative provided for her, she is able to extend her occupation as a carer, giving her the illusion of control. At the beginning of the novel she states,

I've been a carer now for over eleven years. That sounds long enough, I know, but actually they want me to go on for another eight months, until the end of this year. That'll make it almost exactly twelve years. Now I know my being a carer so long isn't necessarily because they think I'm fantastic at what I do...But I know for a fact they've been pleased with my work, and by large, I have been too. My donors have always tended to do much better than expected. Their recovery times have been impressive, and hardly any of them have been classified as 'agitated,' even before the fourth donation...it means a lot to me, being able to do my work well, especially the bit about my donors staying 'calm.' I've developed a kind of instinct around donors. (3)

Kathy is able to exert agency—or at least think she is exerting agency—through her ability to be a good carer. As some readers' may experience, Kathy's banal attitude (or, in her words, her ability to stay and keep others calm) is frustrating throughout the narrative because the reader expect her to come to a breaking point where she at least *tries* to refute the system. However, what the reader experiences is this "calm" attitude and her dismissal of her situation. She is the second-longest lasting carer, and it is her ability to keep others calm that allows her to defer her becoming an organ donor. While it may not be a conscious act—or, at least for the reader it does not seem like a conscious act—she is, if not changing her prescribed narrative, extending it, which seems like it is at least *almost* an attempt to challenge the system. If not, it is at least the closest a clone can be to challenging the system. This relates to the novel being an *Ecobildungsroman* because even though she is, in a way, challenging the system, it is still through the ruse of the system. Essentially, she may be extending her life, but she is only deferring the eventual outcome of her stasis as a clone.

However, there is one way that her narrative can be read while she is a carer that lends more agency on Kathy's part: she enjoys being a carer, or at least the benefits that a carer receives. Through this frame, it could be argued that her extending her time as a carer is a way in which she is exerting agency and claiming more time for herself and doing things that she

enjoys. She states, “For the most part being a carer’s suited me just fine. You could even say it’s brought out the best in me. But some people just aren’t cut out for it, and for them the whole thing becomes a real struggle...and then there’s the solitude. You grow up surrounded by crowds of people, that’s all you’ve ever known, and suddenly you’re a carer” (207). No other clones in *Never Let Me Go* depict being a carer in this light: all of the other carers dislike the occupation, and transfer into being organ donors within a couple years.

Kathy, though, seems to think that being a carer brings out the best in her, and it suits her, particularly the solitude. She states, “Even the solitude, I’ve actually grown to quite like...I do like the feeling of getting into my little car, knowing for the next couple hours I’ll have only the roads, the big grey sky and my daydreams for company” (208). This passage not only depicts how she enjoys the solitude—something most other clones appear not to like—but also depicts how being a carer gives her a sense of ownership: she has her own car, and, while traveling to different donation centers, she can use her time as she likes. Being a carer gives her a sense of control that she otherwise would not have, particularly when it comes to the clone donors that she has to care for. Unlike the other carers, who are just assigned a clone at random, Kathy gets to choose which clones she cares for. This is an added sense of control, but it is also important to note because she only ever chooses Hailsham donors—thus she can feel connected to Hailsham and her memories there. So, in a sense, *Never Let Me Go* functions as an *Ecobildungsroman* in that Kathy is able to take the developmental elements of the narrative to the extreme.

CONCLUSION

Near the end of the novel, Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth embark on one last adventure together to visit a boat that is breached in the marshes. At this point in the novel, Kathy is Ruth's carer, and Tommy is in the process of donating his organs as well. Perhaps one of Ishiguro's most pointed allusions as to how the human world is negatively impacting the nonhuman world, the scene that occurs when they reach the boat describes not only how the clones feel about their upbringing, but also how Hailsham continues to sit within them even though it is closed. Kathy states,

The pale sky looked vast and you could see it reflected ever so often in the patches of water breaking up the land. Not so long ago, the woods must have extended further, because you could see here and there ghostly dead trunks poking out of the soil, most of them broken off only a few feet up. And beyond the dead trunks, maybe sixty yards away, was the boat, sitting breached in the marshes under the weak sun. (224)

What this passage describes is the obvious state of decay that the nonhuman world is progressively in, and it is particularly telling that the tree trunks are described as "ghostly" and "dead," the sky is "pale," and even the sun is "weak." This scene also explicates that the current condition of the marshes is not what it was previously, as the woods "must have extended further." This is significant because similar to Hailsham, this area has a history of nonhuman life and vibrancy that has been stripped away by the human world.

Even the clones themselves relate the scene to Hailsham, particularly the boat. Kathy states, "I could see how [the boat's] paint was cracking, and how the timber frames of the little cabin were crumbling away. It had once been painted a sky blue, but now looked almost white under the sky... 'maybe this is what Hailsham looks like now. Do you think?'" (224). The fact that the clones are making this conjecture is indicative of the importance of this scene and the

boat. This boat symbolizes and alludes to what Foucault would consider a heterotopia, which is, “a real space that represents, contests, and inverts spaces produced by established relations of power and knowledge...Foucault conceives of heterotopia as a property of fixed language that can detach cultural codes from their relations of power by making visible the contingency and variability of their accepted truths” (Higgins and Christine-Leps, 384). What is interesting about this boat, though, is that it is breached on the land, and thus separated from the water. So, in this vein, and along the lines of the façade of an *Ecobildungsroman*, it represents a kind of façade of a heterotopia. Development cannot happen, power relations cannot be changed or challenged, and “accepted truths” cannot be questioned. The boat represents how *Never Let Me Go* functions as an *Ecobildungsroman*.

In closing, there is one last scene I would like to leave with this chapter. While at the marshes, Ruth describes a dream she had recently, one that revolved around Hailsham, stating: “I was having this dream the other morning...everything outside was flooded. Just like a giant lake. And I could see rubbish floating under my window, empty drink cartons, everything. But there wasn’t any sense of panic or anything like that. It was nice and tranquil, just like it is here. I knew I wasn’t in any danger, that it was only like that because [Hailsham] had closed down” (225). Similar to Kathy, Ruth’s adult fantasies portray a Hailsham surrounded by garbage and in disarray. In this scene Hailsham itself acts like a boat in a lake, but it seems to be stranded in the water, rather than the breached boat in the marshes. In both cases, development and even movement are stifled. These moments seem to be indicative of the state of the clones and their ability to develop.

Steeped in nostalgia and adolescence, *Never Let Me Go* functions as an *Ecobildungsroman* in that the clone characters are only ever able to develop within the constructs provided for them by the larger human society. Without the ability to develop out of their use-identity as organ donors, their developmental narrative is framed as a kind of arrested development, and, although they are able to exercise certain amounts of control over their actions while at Hailsham and beyond, their attempts to flourish as anything other than clones are futile. What this novel provides, though, is a lens through which to see how nonhuman agents deserve a narrative over which they have control, and in order for this to take place the humanist ideals of the *Bildungsroman* need to be questioned.

CONCLUSION: “THERE WASN’T TIME TO TAKE STOCK, TO ASK THE SENSIBLE QUESTIONS”

This project has focused on two narratives in which clones are the subject in order to explore how the term *Ecobildungsroman* enables readers to question the role of the nonhuman in regards to development. The reason I chose this term for my project is that it puts the nonhuman subject at the center of analysis, rather than human subjects, and the rubric it presents challenges the normative ideals of the *Bildungsroman*. *Cloud Atlas* and *Never Let Me Go* are strikingly different novels, even though they share similar ethical dilemmas, and both function as *Ecobildungsromane* in different capacities. At the beginning of this project I explicated that an *Ecobildungsroman* functions as a loose set of generic features—that is, the subject of the novel being nonhuman and place playing an active role in development—and, as has been presented in this thesis, there are a variety of ways these conventions can be followed. More importantly, though, an *Ecobildungsroman* follows Frow’s definition of genre, that is, it acts as a way we understand the world—particularly the nonhuman world.

Cloud Atlas functions as an *Ecobildungsroman* in that the clone subject, Sonmi-451, successfully develops out of the use-identity prescribed for her by her creators and is able to follow what would appear to be the normal conventions of a *Bildungsroman* in order to develop an environmental consciousness. Her narrative differs quite widely from *Never Let Me Go*, as that novel functions as more of an *Ecobildungsroman* in that the primary clone subject, Kathy, is not only unable to develop out of her use-identity, but is also subject to a pre-written developmental narrative that is impossible to fissure. Ishiguro’s narrative exemplifies the issues with the traditional *Bildungsroman* format more clearly, as the novel subverts the normal trajectory of the novel form.

Other ways that these novels differ is that both authors provide the reader with two completely different types of clones. Kathy and her peers live their adolescent lives learning how to produce art in order to prove they have souls, whereas the clones of *Cloud Atlas* are much more mechanical and are prevented sentience. But even sentience plays a different role in each novel: in *Cloud Atlas*, the clones are physically prevented sentience through the distribution of soap; in *Never Let Me Go*, the clones appear somewhat sentient but are unable to exert agency as actants, and so their sentient qualities are questionable. Perhaps one of the most exaggerated differences between the two types of clones in these narratives is that Sonmi, being able to access her own use-identity, is able to create change; Kathy and her peers are not.

What both of these narratives have in common, though, is that they both pose ethical questions regarding the cloning of human subjects, and what the speculative ends of these practices might look like. In both novels it is stressed that humans' desire to master the nonhuman world to the brink of extinction, their disregard for nonhuman life, and their inability (and lack of desire) to be accountable for their actions towards the nonhuman world are definitive characteristics of the human world. In *Cloud Atlas*, the clones are despised because they act as a mirror to human consciences, and the humans will not allow themselves to be accountable for their actions in both creating the clones and treating them poorly "until they are made to" (222). In *Never Let Me Go*, it is stressed that the larger human society wants to keep clones in the "shadows" because

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... However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neuron disease, heart disease. So for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. *And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you*

weren't really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn't matter. (263, emphasis mine)

In both novels, humans have an apparent disregard for nonhuman life, especially when nonhumans benefit humans in direct ways. What is more, though, is that in both of these narratives the clones look, think, and act like humans, so it shows just how far removed humans are from their actions. This passage, which is spoken by Miss Emily to Kathy and Tommy at the end of the novel, shows that at least she thinks the clones are just as human as she is, but even she notes that they repulse her. What is key here, though, is that her phrasing that the humans have to *convince* themselves that the clones are not human, showing that in *Never Let Me Go* the clones also function as a mirror to humans and their consciences.

One of the takeaways from both of these novels is that humans need to stop, think, and question their actions before they are implemented. Miss Emily goes on to state, "...when the great breakthroughs in science followed one after the other so rapidly, there wasn't time to take stock, to ask the sensible questions...by the time they came to consider just how you were reared, whether you should have been brought into existence at all, well by then it was too late" (263). We should be asking the questions that human society failed to ask in *Never Let Me Go*, so that the speculative ends of these novels do not become our actualized future.

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