

Does a clone possess a soul? A psychoanalytical analysis of the movie “never let me go”

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Abstract: The present study highlights the issue of self-identity, possession of the soul and what it means to be human. This study is based on the Psychoanalysis of three characters of the movie ‘Never Let Me Go’ namely Tommy, Ruth, and Kathy. These characters are analyzed through Freudian Id, Ego, and Super-Ego. Kazuo Ishiguro’s, “Never Let Me Go” is a thought-provoking literary creation, which makes us ponder over the meaning and the existence of the soul. This very question is taken from the movie NLMG, when Miss Emily tells Tommy and Kathy that the purpose of examining their art was not to look into their souls, but it was to find out whether they had souls at all. Along with this question, there were many other pressing issues put forward like what is it meant to be human. The paper aims at finding out the presence, development, and expression of Id, Ego, and Superego in these characters who are shown as clones in the movie. The interpretive analysis within the Freudian framework found that these characters expressed all emotions. The denial of the rights of deferral led Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy to express their despair accordingly. Psychoanalysis of Kathy, Ruth and Tommy’s narrations showed that clones undergo normal developmental stages of Id, Ego, and Superego with internal conflicts. They possess a soul like any other human. The study will help the readers to understand and interpret the movie from the perspective of clones who strive for concreteness in life, detesting the concept of copying.

Key words: *Id; Ego; Super ego; Clones; Psychoanalysis*

1. Introduction

A British dystopian drama film “Never Let Me Go” is based on Kazuo Ishiguro’s 2005 novel with the same title, directed by Mark Romanek. The movie revolves around three characters Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy, who are clones and get entangled in a love triangle. NLMG is based on the concept of regenerative medicine, where clones were scientifically engineered to produce healthy human clones and then being used for organ transplant later in life. In the movie, Kathy, Ruth, Tommy and all the other clones are a part of society in England where they are not considered human enough to be granted same rights as non-cloned humans have.

In the movie NLMG, it is the protagonist, Kathy, who narrates her life story and it is via her reflections, we as viewers come to know the pressing issue in their lives. In the opening scene of the movie, Kathy flashes back to Hailsham School, built for parentless cloned children brought up for organ donation program. She tells us about the mysterious existence of that school and her cloned mates governed by humans, for example, Madame, a mysterious French woman, who visits Hailsham periodically to collect artwork of cloned children to present in an art gallery so that they may tell other humans that clones possess a soul. She supports clone treatments actively, Miss Lucy, who is loved by all clones, believes that all organ donors shall be informed about their role as organ donors and Miss

Emily, the head guardian and leader of Hailsham also advocate human cloning.

Kathy tells us about the love triangle between Ruth, Tommy and hers. The interesting part of the movie is that how Kathy as a clone directs her life till her donation time. Actualizing the potential in herself and directing her life preferences and interests by accepting and affirming to the lifestyle she has got, makes her autonomous in her actions but the problem arises when she reflects about the existence of clones and humans at the end of the movie.

Genetic manipulation and concept of cloning have been problematic. Humans are progressing in the field of science, technology, and bioengineering and the process of cloning has provided lots of benefits in the field of healthcare, but the application of cloning in human life is ethically questionable and till date debatable. The perturbing question that obstruct the process of cloning is that, to what extent the process of cloning can be used as a tool to benefit life on earth

The concern of the movie is not to tell viewers about cloning process or the existence of clones but the main focus of this literary work is Ishiguro’s argument that clones are like humans with proper emotions who undergo normal developmental stages except the ability to have a progeny. They possess a soul that can feel, wish, strive and direct their life. This is the point, which is perceived in this movie and by applying Freudian Psychoanalysis of Id, Ego, and Superego; the character of Kathy, Ruth, and

Tommy are analysed through their narrations to determine if clones like any other human beings possess soul and does this soul reflect Id, Ego and Superego and the internal conflicts.

2. Literature review

Piet (2015), in her Master's thesis, examined the element of care in the form of creating self-identity. Care, depicted in Kathy's character, is one of the concepts of humanity. Ishiguro's gave the vocation of 'carer' to Kathy in NLMG, in which she was supposed to keep 'donors' calm so that they may not get agitated. Kathy ward off death temporarily to take care of donors who were in the process of their organ donations.

Piet stated in her thesis that, the inherently human concept of care has the power to make the horrifying system of organ donation little easy for donors. It was not only Kathy, who performed the job of 'carer' but some of the clones went voluntarily for this profession and it highlighted the level of humanity in those genetically engineered clones. Another important tool in NLMG used was the tool of 'art' or 'creativity'. It was used to find out whether clones possess a soul or not, whether they can express the feelings of hope, love, despair and fear or not. They were encouraged to produce artwork so that they may depict their creativity and prove that they possess human-like qualities.

The clones of dystopian society of 20th century England struggled to comprehend the significance of their self, identity, and personhood. The pressing question of what it meant to be human was the central theme of Ishiguro's NLMG. Ishiguro highlighted the issue that in an age of multiculturalism and globalization, how the concept of clones and their rights when the world is already engulfed in matters like global inequality and inequity. In such circumstances how and where do clones stand? (Black, 2009).

The critique of Ishiguro's takes a different stance. It emphasizes the recognition of inhuman style. It highlights the barbarities in the name of preserving human life. Agamben's (1998) theory of homo sacer can be applied in NLMG because clones were killed and not sacrificed. Their killing brought no harm to the members of their community and they were nourished and nurtured for this very purpose of organ donation. So they were stripped of every right of personhood, citizenship, political identity and culture. Their sole purpose was to serve humanity but what kind of humans they were and for what purpose they were produced is explained by Petrillo, in her paper in which she preferred to adopt a version of Kant's categorical imperative, which states that the definition of personhood applies to any living entity if it possess self-awareness and self-actualization power. According to this doctrine, Kathy and other clones are persons. Petrillo (2014), believes that clones deserve every right of personhood and identification. Donating their body

organs to someone, who are considered superior, is morally impermissible.

Freud (1923), explained identity matters to a living entity. He claimed that any lost object in one's life lead to the formation of self-development because it is this melancholic process of ego formation which is one of the features of individual's development. Freud says that individual's self-identity and development is appropriated by others in different ways. Similarly, the clones did undergo such phase of ego formation but the repressive regime of Britain's political force denied them any recognition and political identity. Jantini (2014) discussed the emotional side of Kathy and she found that Kathy completely lost her emotional side or it was suppressed due to the situation of her life. Her id and ego were suppressed by her superego. Hence she did not express any rage or rebellion in the face of her destiny. As far as Tommy's rage was concerned, Vinduska (2009) in his thesis with the title "*Points of Perception: Possible Readings of Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*" elaborated the jokes used in NLMG by applying the Psychoanalytical approach of Freud. He found that even the jokes referred to the destined fate those clones had. Once Tommy was teased by the boys of the football team for leaving him as the last pick which made him express his rage by throwing tantrums shouting and screaming. Ruth hinted that the tease was pre-arranged but Tommy could not suspect this joke. Vinduska stated that Tommy did know about the joke of his life being played upon him by fate and guardians. Ruth was not right about Tommy because it was only Tommy who understood the joke of their fate.

Other literary works which have used the concept of clones and cloning are the 'Brave New World' of Huxley 1923, in which he introduced the idea of splitting up an embryo into gamma and delta where they will be engineered to serve the superiors that are alpha and beta. Levin (1976), in 'The Boys from Brazil' discussed a process of producing carbon copies of humans. Similarly, Ishiguro's 'Never Let Me Go' which is quite recent, portrayed a dystopian society where a group of children was genetically engineered for the purpose of organ donation to the original humans in future. Ishiguro's NLMG, raised several questions from spiritual, ethical and psychological perspective.

According to Rizq (2014), NLMG of Ishiguro, was not the artwork which established their souls but it was their persistent and continuous attempts of establishing the life story of their lives by redeeming the power of art and love in their life. Rizq stated that Kathy's listening of the song 'Never Let Me Go, Oh, baby, baby, Never Let Me Go', suggest that clones refuted their status as copies, without souls because Kathy like any other normal human being repressed her thoughts Similarly Cappel (2009) work showed that, British government of Kathy's world was clever enough to encourage psychological repression in their behavior so that they may not question about their life and self-hood. Repression was not only present at the individual level but also exercised at

the societal level by the government so that they may not face any issue of political recognition and identities from the clones.

Denial of political identity and other rights was a problem indeed in NLMG, as analyzed by Mathew Eatough (2011). He started his paper with the ending paragraph from novel NLMG, in which Kathy is recalling her past, her childhood and her members of her community and that cherished time they spent together and finally their organ donation, which ultimately led to the completion of their purpose of existence. These privileged reminiscences brought tears in Kathy's eyes. She cleans her tears, turned back to her car and drive off to where she was supposed to be. Eatough pointed out a thought provoking question that when these clones know their predetermined destiny then what made Kathy sad? Why on earth, tears rolled down her cheeks? And, when organ donation process of clones was not sacrificed but the purpose of their existence then what saddened her? The answer to these question has been given more appropriately by Carroll, (2010) who stated that when as a reader one starts reading a novel, something strange is felt about the protagonist and her mates. Later on, it becomes clear that they do not share the same community as normal human beings do because they were the copies of the 'originals'. Kathy and her community members had no kinship or family structure but the thing which was to ponder over was that they did share a collective identity and that is why tears rolled down Kathy's cheeks when she was recalling the past time period spent with her community members. Her pathos showed her sense of belongingness to her community and it is this 'in-group' structural aspect of any community, which gives one a sense of self-identity. Their ties were not consanguineous but they did have a sense of belongingness to one another.

Kathy in her lifetime established as an authentic subject by depicting the elements of care and self-will in her behavior and personality. The desire to change their fate and increase their life span or apply for deferrals depicted that these clones really wished and strived to change their destiny. Such struggles enabled them to establish themselves as authentic subjects rather than mere copies of their originals (Piet, 2015).

3. Data analysis

The movie 'Never Let Me Go' starts with an optimistic note that humans can live up to 100 years and now can live a healthy life. Well, it was eye catching and a positive note which made viewers inquisitive about the reason of that scientific breakthrough. Kathy, the protagonist, appears on the scene watching Tommy for a medical operation and what strikes us as viewers was the introduction she gave about herself and Hailsham. She as a 'carer' by vocation has been an exceptional one for her 'donors', because her donors were hardly classified as 'agitated'. At first, the terms 'carer' and 'donor'

were not clear and the thing, which was a bit disturbing, was that, why donors get agitated at all? Were they donating without their consent? What is happening that is illegal, but so smoothly going on without any protest? Kathy as a 'carer' felt pride in doing her job but instead of looking forward or thinking about her future she felt great pleasure in looking back into her past. While recalling her past memories, it becomes clear that Kathy and her friends Tommy and Ruth are actually clones, genetically engineered to donate their vital body organs when they reached a certain age and get their notice of becoming a donor. Kathy's choice of living in her past memories gets clear when one comes to know that they are being engineered for the service of 'originals', the term used by clones for human beings.

These clones lived almost half of their lives at Hailsham school, a community or one can call it as their planet because once they left Hailsham and started residing in 'the cottages' and meeting up with human beings, they felt really different about everything happening around them. That different feeling arose from the fact that they could feel and sense in the same way like any other normal human being would do, then "why their lives been so different from the lives of the people to whom they donated their organs and saved their lives", this was the question Kathy asks at the end of the movie which narrates the central theme of the movie as well.

They have been told and not told

At Hailsham or even at 'the cottages', the expressions of Madame and the deliverymen were never comfortable towards them. It always surprised Kathy and her mates but along with this behavior there were many other things which were not clear to them because "*they have been told and not told*" about the truth of their existence (Macdonald & Romanek, 2010). This is what Miss Lucy revealed to Hailsham students when Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy were in grade four. Miss Lucy actually becomes the mouthpiece of the author, Kazuo Ishiguro and she tells her students that, they were not being informed about several truths regarding their existence, which according to her, shall be known to them if they want to lead a decent life in future. Miss Lucy couldn't be a silent observer and that is because she was the one who observed the development of emotions and feelings among those clones, like for example, she got really touched when Kathy asked Miss Lucy about Tommy's rage.

She was taken aback when she came to know the reason of Tommy, not bringing the ball from across the boundary of Hailsham. Students believed that whoever crosses Hailsham fence would get lost in the woods with their hands and feet cut and eventually they would be killed. Ironically all students of Hailsham were being nourished for this very reason. They were grown up healthy so they could donate their vital organs and eventually get 'complete'. They were scared of being killed in the

woods but they were not clear about their fate and future which was all about donating their organs and after third or fourth donation they will get complete or in simple terms, they would die. The term of killing and dying was not used by the author, their birth and their death were dealt with technical terms so that the life cycle of clones is explained with a scientific motive. Such technical jargons replaced or hid the truth of horrible organ donation system of the clones but it could not euphemize the feelings and emotions of those genetically engineered beings, who were destined to be used for the precious lives of other who were non-cloned. The truth of their existence as told by Miss Lucy to Kathy and her mates was that they all 'have to' donate and eventually complete, they could not escape their destined fate. So the emotions and feelings which were developing among those mates were the issues that made Miss Lucy tell them the truth of their existence.

What it meant to be

That truth did not clarify lots of things to them, in fact during the entire course of the movie; we find that these clones were not clear about many things and many happenings in their life. And many a time they expressed their unintelligibility towards notions like the following

- What it meant to be creative and produce a creative artwork.
- Kathy did not understand that why on earth Ruth found Tommy to be the only guy she will pair up with.
- They were not sure and clear about the truth of the deferrals when they were asked by another clone couple.
- At the end, Kathy asked that what it meant to be human and how their lives were so different from the lives of those to whom they donated their body organs.

So, NLMG, revolves around keywords like 'deferral', 'carer', 'donor', 'possible', 'originals', 'Hailsham', 'the gallery', 'the cottages' and 'copies'. The binding force of these keywords was the feeling of love and belongingness which developed among them. This sense of love and belongingness feared Miss Lucy and she foresighted what Kathy and her mates couldn't.

Here it is important to notice that emotions of Kathy spoke louder to her than what was happening around her. In the opening scene of the movie, we find that Kathy was more involved in recalling her past than the happenings taking place in front of her. Similarly, at another instance Kathy got emotionally broken and couldn't concentrate on the announcement of Miss Lucy's replacement from the school when she found Ruth holding Tommy's hand. Kathy gave preference to her emotions and volunteered as 'carer', so that she may not dwell on Ruth and Tommy. All of these incidents clarified that Kathy controlled her emotions as much as she could. Her superego was strong enough to silence the Id, and Ego of her personality. Kathy's emotional side

was not pressed but rather she managed her emotional side in a better possible way. She was much satisfied with her job and she enjoyed traveling from one hospital to another.

What meant the world to them meant nothing to originals. For Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth, their past life meant everything to them because time spent in Hailsham was the only place of their origin and belongingness. Kathy expressed her defensive views the asunder that took place among Ruth, Tommy and her. In the movie, we find that Kathy regrets the incognizance of the situation that pulled them apart. She wished that if things had been known to her that how tides of life will pull them apart, so she would have done something to keep all of them close together. The unfathomable situation of her existence snatched away the ability from her to go for any defensive strategy; otherwise, if things had been clear to her then she would definitely have tried.

Copies did not approve of copying

The emotions that developed in them were true and portrayed their self-identity. Kathy's listening of the song 'Never Let Me Go' while holding a pillow to herself depicted her fear of being left alone which was quite ironic to their situation because in any case they were supposed to end up without any belongingness. They were supposed to end up with no one protesting for them because in their situation protest was useless. Kathy's attitude towards the song explained the rebel in her personality, a rebel who refused to accept the truth being assigned to them by the originals, and that they were just mere copies who could not feel or be creative at all.

In another instance, Kathy did not approve of Ruth's pressing shoulders of Tommy during breakfast, because it was something Ruth copied from the television program and deliberately did in front of Kathy so that she may make her feel low and alone. Kathy believed that things should not be copied like that because in real life this was not something they were supposed to do. Now, these views of Kathy makes one really ponder that what kind of a clone she was. Though they themselves were copies of the originals yet Kathy approved of being true, original and real in feelings and relationships.

Once Tommy found Kathy looking at Porn magazines, of which she was turning pages quite rapidly. At first, it seemed that she was trying to figure out about sex but later on it becomes clear when Tommy tells her that he knew the reason and that was, she was actually looking for the 'original'. This time Ishiguro used the term originally from another perspective. And if seen from a psychoanalytical perspective so one can say that Kathy preferred true, real and original relation among people rather than just having a physical relation. Here it can be said that Kathy gave priority to true love and she believed that any physical relation could never be a substitute for true love. Here Kathy's superego is in conflict with her Id. She did not approve of fulfilling libidinal drives by any

other material. She believed in acting in a socially appropriate manner. For her the instincts of Id never suppressed her superego.

The scene of finding the 'original' or the 'possible' of Ruth, at first appeared quite fascinating to them but after seeing the original, all their fascination evaporated because the reality of being created as mere copies enraged Ruth, it was time when all of them confronted harsh reality of their existence in concrete and Ruth could not take hold of that reality.

Confession

Thoughts, actions, and behavior of Ruth could be better explained by applying Freudian psychological developmental stage of Id. The only unorganized part of the psyche, Id constitutes the instinctual drives of the human body. It demands instant fulfillment of the desires and needs of the human body without taking care of reality (Siegfried, 2014). In the case of Ruth as Freud stated that pleasure principle reigned and the reality of the external world was excluded (1911). Libidinal drives and aggressiveness are the particular ones of Id and both of them were part of Ruth's personality. Ruth kept Tommy away from Kathy because she was jealous and afraid of being left alone in the end. Ruth's jealousy made her pleasure principle rise high and she did not realize what harm she was giving to Kathy, Tommy and to herself. She kept a physical relationship with Tommy because she thought that physical relation with Tommy will make a strong bond between them but Tommy and Ruth somehow in the course of their life realized and admitted that physical relationship could never be the substitute for true love, which existed between Tommy and Kathy.

Ruth confessed her misdeed and asked forgiveness from Tommy and Kathy for keeping them apart. Ruth's confession, her jealousy, her Ego, her rage, her libidinal desires and all her behavioral conducts make her no less than a human. In the end her conscience i.e. her superego made her ego for the atonement. She depicted all such emotions which any normal human would depict and she did admit her wrong doings in the end which shows that her conscience made her prick every time for the misdeed she did by keeping Tommy and Ruth apart.

We should go back

After having an unpleasant experience of seeing the "possible" of Ruth, Kathy told Tommy that they should go back. This going back referred not only to the cottages but to the place from where they come from, it referred to Hailsham, their planet, their world, because they found the planet of humans or the 'originals' not welcoming.

The reason of breakthrough in science, which improved health and increased the life span of thousands, was none other than the creations of creatures like Tommy, Kathy, and Ruth, who had a normal body function like the originals but were denied any self-identity who could decide for their future. Miss Emily, the strong advocate of human treatment of clones, and Madame, who progressively

supported the treatment of clones, failed to do anything for the deferrals or the 'poor creatures' they created.

At the end of the movie, both of them were sorry and explained the purpose of 'the gallery' that their art was presented there to find out whether clones have souls at all or not. It never meant to look into their souls because clones were considered having any soul whose completion would not mean the killing of the innocent souls.

Denial of the right of deferral moved Tommy into the rage, which he couldn't suppress. Once again he threw himself into the terrible rage by shouting and crying. Tommy's instant aggressiveness and physical relation with Ruth, which he could not control, constitute his Id. Though his ego represented reason and sense to the relationship he had with Ruth still, he preferred his Id. Later in life, he like Ruth confessed that his physical relation with her was nothing but the fulfillment of his libidinal drives. There never was any true love between them. His ego was driven by Id but it was strictly confined by Superego, hence Ruth and Tommy both knew that a real and natural couple was Tommy and Kathy.

On the other hand, Kathy never let the outer world and its happenings affect her superego. She never planned or hoped for anything, which was against the law of the world designed for them. Keeping her super ego in balance enabled her to ward off rage and rebellion. Freud stated that superego is the conscience of the personality, which holds out to the ego ideals and moralistic goals. It reacts against the imperfections of ego by inducing guilt in personality (2011). Kathy internalized the rules of her master and she never directed towards imperfections. She can be called a successful representation of superego because in the entire movie she was portrayed as the most organized and balanced personality. She never kept any hopes because; things about their lives were pre-destined. And she silenced all kinds of anxieties by attaining the highest level of maturity. She was able to gain it by accepting and functioning properly in the world created for her. Therefore she enjoyed doing her job. Once while reflecting upon her job as a 'carer' she says that "*I am not immune to completions but they are something I am able to live with*", (Macdonald & Romanek, 2010). It was the most civilized form of a statement she made about her behavior with the situation given to her by the creators.

The only fascinating and comfort zone for Kathy was her past memories, Hailsham and her belongingness to Tommy and Ruth. The movie ends with Kathy's putting a question about her existence and its difference from the originals. She tried to make us realize that though they were genetically engineered, they were not machines. What mattered for them was the smile and true love relations but they all 'completed' in tears without understanding that how they were different from those to whom they donated their organs. Kathy, in the last scene, being a mouthpiece of Ishiguro, claimed that none of

them would understand what they (clones), have lived through.

4. Conclusion

Technically speaking, they had no parents or any consanguine relations to whom they could claim any relation but all they had was the sense of belongingness to their community members. Hailsham was the place of their origin where their life story started. Their eyes always searched for Hailsham and their childhood. They did make such strong bonds and relations with one another that they all ended up with tears in their eyes. Those innocent clones gave their body organs to humankind and proved to be the most generous among all.

Hailsham was an attempt to tell the world that clones were as dignified as humans and they possessed a soul but the society was only interested in collecting the benefits from the clones that is snatching away the life of clones and adding into their own. After analyzing the novel from the psychoanalytical perspective it may be concluded it was not blood that mattered but it was the bond of love that mattered. Blood did not make their soul but it was love, which gave them soul.

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