

# **Stony Brook University**



OFFICIAL COPY

**The official electronic file of this thesis or dissertation is maintained by the University Libraries on behalf of The Graduate School at Stony Brook University.**

**© All Rights Reserved by Author.**

***A Figura of Authenticity: Redefining Authentic Living in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go****

A Thesis Presented

by

**Stacy Marie McKelvey**

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Arts**

in

**English**

Stony Brook University

**December 2011**

Copyright by  
Stacy Marie McKelvey  
2011

**Stony Brook University**

The Graduate School

**Stacy Marie McKelvey**

We, the thesis committee for the above candidate for the  
Master of Arts degree, hereby recommend  
acceptance of this thesis.

**Celia Marshik – Thesis Advisor  
Associate Professor / English Department**

**Stacey Olster – Second Reader  
Professor / English Department**

This thesis is accepted by the Graduate School

Lawrence Martin

Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Thesis

***A Figura of Authenticity: Redefining Authentic Living in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me***

***Go***

by

**Stacy Marie McKelvey**

**Master of Arts**

in

**English**

Stony Brook University

**2011**

This essay explores the concept of authenticity in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* in relation to the ontologies presented in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Through a comparison of the three central characters, I argue that Kathy H. reveals an image of authentic living that reflects Heidegger's and Sartre's philosophies, yet also transcends them. Ishiguro, I argue, reconceives the exigencies of authentic self-creation by creating a protagonist who is able to establish her own existential projects, recognize the relationship between the factual and transcendental aspects of her identity, and accept her death as her own-most possibility despite the limiting circumstances of her environment. I argue that Ishiguro reveals authenticity as a viable possibility by creating a protagonist who is able to be both authentic and ethical.

## Table of Contents

### *A Figura of Authenticity: Redefining Authentic Living in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me*

I: The Critical Landscape	1
II: Authenticity in Philosophy	5
III: Ruth, Tommy, and Inauthenticity	12
IV: Kathy H. and Authenticity	25
References	41

## I: The Critical Landscape

It is difficult to classify Kazuo Ishiguro's sixth novel *Never Let Me Go* as science fiction. The technological devices or fantastical settings that typically populate the futuristic worlds of the science fiction genre are absent. The novel is set in an alternate Britain of the 1990's that is remarkably similar to our own world with the one exception of the regulative practice of organ harvesting. Even with this profound development in the field of genetics, there are no other scientific or technological differences between Ishiguro's world and our own. This novel—chronicling the abbreviated lives of a group of clones—is not actually *about* clones, but about human beings. While some literary scholars and scientists use Ishiguro's imaginative reality to investigate the ethical implications of artificially creating life, the majority of critics have chosen to view the text as an ontological investigation of human existence. As Lev Grossman argued in his review of the work, "It could easily be mistaken for a work of bioethics, or a genre thriller, but it's more than either of these: *Never Let Me Go* is an existential waltz, set to the music of hopelessness, about ordinary people trying to wring some joy out of life before it ends, and trying not to flinch as the axe falls" (*Time*). Ishiguro himself, in an interview with Cynthia Wong, described his novel as "a metaphor for the human condition, and for coming to terms with the fact that we're not immortal, that we're here for a limited time" ("Life and Art" 215).

As Grossman and Ishiguro suggest, the novel's exploration of human existence and life is largely concerned with death. Even while recounting her childhood and adolescent memories, the narrator Kathy H. continually reminds the reader of her encroaching "donations," creating a moribund tone that penetrates even vibrant descriptions of friendship and love. This

preoccupation with death has led many critics to characterize the novel as absurdist: “As in Beckett, Ishiguro's characters, in their detached world, show us a version of our own minute preoccupations and piddling distractions, and raise life's largest questions for us all. Is this all there is? Must it end so soon? Why strive? Why persist? What is it all for?” (Messud). John Harrison expands on Claire Messud’s observation by describing the novel’s pervasive tone of hopelessness: “So what is *Never Let Me Go* really about? It's about the steady erosion of hope. It's about repressing what you know, which is that in this life people fail one another, grow old and fall to pieces” (*Guardian*). Critics overwhelmingly agree that human existence seems bleak by the conclusion of the novel.<sup>1</sup>

And there *is* something so defeating, so futile, so melancholy, so hopeless about the end of the novel. Everything that the characters build, however trivial (as some critics have noted), is in dissolution with the approach of the characters’ “completion”. Love doesn’t defeat death as Kathy and Tommy discover during their visit to Madame’s house. Art and culture fail to immortalize them. The memories that have been recounted will evaporate. Every word, thought, memory is pregnant with death. While readers want Kathy H., as in Dylan Thomas’s poem, to “not go gentle into that good night,” to “Rage, rage against the dying of the light” (18-19), she does not resist her morbid fate. It is the calmness and acceptance with which she approaches her premature demise that has led some critics, exasperated, to wonder “why Kathy, Ruth and Tommy—or, for that matter, any of their cloned peers or acquaintances—don't contemplate escape, don't consider fleeing into the wider world” (Messud).<sup>2</sup> But what would escape really mean? A few more years before a natural death? Rebellion against the donation system would

---

<sup>1</sup> On hopelessness in the novel, see also James Wood’s “The Human Difference”, Margaret Attwood’s “Brave New World”, and Leona Toker and Daniel Chertoff’s “Reader Response and the Recycling of Topoi in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*.”

<sup>2</sup> See also Margaret Attwood’s “Brave New World.”

only be a temporary solution, as nothing can change their inescapable fate, the same fate that awaits all human beings: to die. The chagrin readers experience in response to the abridged life of the clones is really resentment against the brevity of life at all, as James Wood observes: “Why do we persist in the idea that to be assured of death at seventy or eighty or ninety returns to life all its savor and purpose? Why is sheer longevity, if it most certainly ends in the same way as sheer brevity, accorded meaning, while sheer brevity is thought to lack it?” (*New Republic*).

And yet, even though this harrowing vision of destruction invites the reader to ask the nihilistic questions Messud poses—“Is this all there is? Must it end so soon? Why strive? Why persist? What is it all for?”—there is also something redeeming that hovers on the edges of this nihilism. Kathy H.’s celebration of her life, her steadfast devotedness to its memory (“the memories I value most, I don’t see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won’t lose my memories of them” [Ishiguro, *NLMG* 286]), her acceptance of her death (“it feels just about right to be finishing at last come the end of the year” [4]) all resist an interpretation of the novel as an affirmation of the absurdity of existence. Kathy challenges Macbeth’s pronouncement, “Life’s but a walking shadow...That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more. It is a tale...Signifying nothing” (Shakespeare 5. 19-28), by asserting that her life did signify *something*. The despondency the reader experiences is necessary, but it should not turn us into nihilists, should not nullify the positive aspects of being human. What is redemptive about the novel is Kathy H.’s affirmation of life in the face of her own death. She suggests there is something redeeming in life despite the fact that it ends so abruptly, that existence is eventually nullified. Ishiguro affirms the redemptive tone of his novel in his comment, “For me, this is a rather cheerful tale...Apart from the bad news—which is the news we already know about how we will all die someday—the book really stresses the positive side

of human nature...It was a kind of celebration, which could be seen in this bleak backdrop” (“Life and Art” 220). It is this mixture of “bleakness” with “celebration” that makes *Never Let Me Go* so potent.

But what is so redemptive about a novel that makes a point to remind its reader that what is created will ultimately be destroyed? Ishiguro says it is that “Humans are capable of caring deeply for one another, even though they make mistakes, because they are prey to human emotions such as jealousy, possessiveness, or anger” (220). Ishiguro’s statement captures part of the answer to this question. To expand on Ishiguro’s interpretation, what is redemptive about the novel is that it offers in the figure of Kathy H. a vision of *authentic existence*. What is so powerful about this particular vision of authenticity is that Kathy is able to become authentic in radically limiting circumstances—an abbreviated life, a predefined career, a regulated existence. Despite the external constraints imposed upon her choices, Kathy H. transcends these conditions and is able to authentically create and appropriate her own life *for herself*. It is this glimpse of actualized authenticity despite dire circumstances that salvages the novel from its potential absurdity: we may not be able to escape death, but we can make an authentic self with what little we are given.

To understand Kathy’s authenticity, it is necessary to triangulate her approach to life with Ruth and Tommy, two other central characters struggling with their identity. By juxtaposing Ruth’s and Tommy’s inauthentic relationship with themselves with Kathy’s authenticity, Ishiguro’s figuration of the specific nature of authenticity is exposed. Kathy not only exhibits the typical characteristics of the authentic person depicted in other novels about authenticity—self-creation through a recognition of human freedom—but also makes authenticity a real possibility, one that does not require estrangement from society or extremism. Ishiguro’s

authenticity returns to the fundamental notions detailed in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* of authenticity as a mode of being in which a person creates her identity by recognizing both the factual and transcendental aspects of herself. In Ishiguro, the emphasis shifts from tearing the world apart to establishing a genuine relationship with oneself. Ishiguro also reformulates Heidegger's and Sartre's theories by emphasizing that authenticity requires an understanding of the past (in addition to futural self-creation) through self-reflection and self-evaluation. Most importantly, Kathy is able to become authentic while remaining ethical, creating a unique ethics of authenticity that most philosophers writing on the subject failed to formulate.

## **II: Authenticity in Philosophy**

Before beginning an exegesis of the text, it is necessary to first lay a preliminary foundation of what authenticity is. I will use prevailing philosophical theories about authenticity to ground this exploration and later explore how Kazuo Ishiguro reinterprets and redefines this concept. However, my aim is not to show Ishiguro's fulfillment of the any one theorist's definition of the authentic, but only to use these theories and their vocabularies as tools to make comprehensible Ishiguro's own image of authentic modes of living.

What is commonly referred to as the self is replaced in Heidegger<sup>3</sup> by the term Dasein. Dasein is defined as that Being which “in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it” (Heidegger 32). With the usage of this term, Heidegger brackets humans’ biological, sociological, or historical dimensions. For Heidegger, these frameworks are secondary and are grounded upon Dasein’s more primordial relationship with Being. This concept is useful for this conversation about Ishiguro’s text because Dasein is a term that includes both human beings and clones in so far as a clone “comports itself towards its Being as its own most possibility” (68). This defines Dasein not as an essence, but as a way of being. What Heidegger is juxtaposing here is the difference between conscious beings and objects. Objects do not relate themselves to Being; Dasein, on the other hand, struggles with its own meaning. Any self-conscious being that struggles with the meaning of Being is a Dasein. This is Heidegger laying the ground for the possibility of Dasein being authentic at all. A cup cannot be authentic. Dasein is the entity whose possibilities must be in relation to authenticity or inauthenticity.

Grasping the nature of Dasein’s Being, however, is complicated by its temporality. Dasein is an entity which has an internal relationship with its temporal dimensions that makes wholeness possible. Dasein is an entity which has a past, present, and future, but these are not merely additive aspects of its existence. At any given moment, Dasein is fragmented because its future is not-yet. However, those futural possibilities are as equally a part of Dasein’s being as the present self: the futural self already belongs to Dasein and therefore Dasein is always in a state of lack in which it is not-yet itself. Dasein lacks an aspect of its being in any present situation. A cup also has a past, present, and future, but it has these in a purely additive mode. The cup is in time, but it does not have temporality. In contrast, as a being that is always not-

---

<sup>3</sup> For this analysis, I will only be looking at Heidegger’s early works. Therefore, all reinterpretations of the concepts discussed in this essay in Heidegger’s Nazi writings will not be discussed.

yet, that is not yet complete, Dasein confronts itself in an incomplete state. This fact reveals why Dasein's lack of totality is what makes its being an issue for it. As Heidegger articulates, "The Being of Dasein means ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)" (237). This formulation captures the totality of Dasein's existence as a temporal being. Here, Heidegger makes clear that Dasein is 1) "ahead" of itself which means an essential aspect of its being is a futural projection of its possibilities, 2) always emerging from a past (Being-already-in), and 3) always in a present situation that binds its past self to its futural projects.

This temporal structure exposes Dasein's essential freedom. Dasein is the entity that has choices that pertain to its Being. These possibilities are not inert expressions of one choice among many. Instead, these possibilities determine Dasein's identity. The freedom that Dasein possesses is most clearly recognized in the mood of anxiety<sup>4</sup>. Both Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre diagnose these symptoms of anxiety in the same way, but their responses to anxiety in so far as it relates to authenticity are different. Sartre makes a critical distinction between anxiety and fear using an example of a man standing on the edge of a precipice. This man may fear the edge of the rocks falling out beneath him, but this sensation does not explain the feeling of vertigo: "Vertigo is anguish to the extent that I am afraid not of falling over the precipice, but of throwing myself over...my being provokes anguish to the extent that I distrust myself in my own reactions in that situation" (Sartre, *BN* 65). In this example, the man's anxiety reveals his freedom. Even though this man has already decided resolutely that he wants to live, the cliff conundrum reveals that he can at any time make choices that go against the projects he has committed himself to: "freedom...reveals itself to us in anguish" (71). This freedom is a double-

---

<sup>4</sup> Due to differences in translation, the term "anxiety" is also referred to as "angst" or "anguish." All three of these terms refer to the same phenomenon.

edged sword. On the one hand, it affirms the integrity of the human being to determine itself autonomously. On the other hand, it transforms this freedom into a demand that condemns us to always having to make a choice: “We are condemned to be free” (70).

For Heidegger as well, freedom has a dual significance. Anxiety opens Dasein up to the possibility of being authentic or inauthentic. The reason that Dasein needs this opening, however, is that Dasein in its average everydayness is caught up in a historical situation with established norms. Dasein becomes concerned with possibilities that are not its own most possibilities, but merely possibilities of anyone. In other words, Dasein is confronted with the task of creating an identity that distinguishes it from other Daseins in an environment that makes this task almost impossible.<sup>5</sup> For Heidegger, the only way to escape this issue is through an awareness of death.

The visceral realization of death that creeps upon Dasein is what awakens Dasein to its own most possibilities as an individuated entity. This is the essence of anxiety for Heidegger. Death is the limit of Dasein’s futural possibilities. It is that moment which Dasein becomes whole, when it is no longer an issue for itself. This becoming whole in death cannot happen while Dasein is still existing or present. Thus, as a theory of authenticity, it must be that Dasein projects itself towards its death not as a fulfillment of its Being at that moment, but as a tying together of its totality before it is there. As Heidegger states, “The coming-to-its-end of what-is-not-yet-at-an-end (in which what is still outstanding is liquidated as regards its Being) has the character of no-longer-Dasein” (286). Death is the end of Dasein, both in the sense of finality and in the sense of goal or *telos*. Dasein is not complete because it possesses a future that is not-yet, but in death Dasein is no longer lacking anything in its being. That is, in death, Dasein finds

---

<sup>5</sup> This is an ontic reading of the ontological problem of the *das man* (the they). Because of the complexity of the vicissitudes of this concept, this essay will not go into detail on the topic. Consult *Being and Time* chapter 4 for a more in-depth explanation of this concept.

its totality. Thus the propulsion that determines Dasein's ontological temporality finds its goal in Dasein's catching up to its possibility. Death is literally Dasein's past catching up with it; it is the moment when Dasein becomes itself as an individuated Dasein.

While it is now clear that anxiety is anxiety in the face of Dasein's own freedom and that death is the ultimate end of Dasein's possibilities, the reason Dasein's death contributes to its authenticity needs to be discussed. Death as an event is the end of Dasein's possibilities, and authenticity is about the proper relation to its possibilities. Thus the event of death is not the starting place for authenticity. Instead Heidegger introduces the term "being-towards-death". Being-towards-death is not a description of Dasein's authenticity, for Dasein can be inauthentic towards death (304). Being-towards-death is an ontological notion of the type of relationship Dasein has to its end. To be an authentic Dasein means to be in the proper attitude towards-death. Being-towards-death, as an ontological term, is not brooding over one's death nor is it actively seeking out one's own death. As death is Dasein's *telos* and it is that possibility which is most Dasein's, *being-towards-death is a way of comporting oneself towards possibilities that grasps one's being as a totality by determining the limits of one's open possibilities*. I shall term this totality the existential arc which unifies Dasein's possibilities as directed toward Dasein's finitude. The mode of comportment towards-death that is authentic is a resolute being-toward-death. Dasein's inauthenticity comes from its inability to cope with the threatening anxiety of not-being-a-whole and of being-towards-death. Thus resoluteness-towards-death is an acceptance of the anxiety of death that restructures Dasein's relationship to its entire being-in-the-world. When Dasein is resolute-towards-death, it does not escape the anxiety of its finitude, but instead opens itself up to the disclosure (truth) of its being as that being which is an issue for it.

In terms of a pragmatic theory of being-in-the-world, Heidegger's notion of authenticity does not leave many directives. Heidegger represents a sort of passive edge of the theory of authenticity. Resolute-being-towards-death is a way of disclosing the world that recognizes individual responsibility to possibilities, but fails to provide any *active* directives as to what these possibilities might entail. Authentic Dasein is open to the call of conscience, which comes through the medium of anxiety and merely says "guilty." Thus while his theory of authenticity is indispensable in terms of the generative passivity towards our particular possibilities, it is incomplete insofar as it does not directly comment upon an active grasping of individual freedom.

If Heidegger represents the passive receptivity of freedom, Sartre's theory of authenticity takes up particular and active responsibility towards freedom in average everydayness. The architecture of Sartre's ontology is explicitly influenced by Heidegger, but he makes some important additions as to its content and overall arc. Sartre begins with the individual consciousness that always finds itself in a situation. As Sartre's starting place is an already individuated consciousness, his theory of authenticity does not need the recognition of the subject's finitude.

Inauthenticity for Sartre is called bad faith. Bad faith is an attempt to flee from anxiety in order that we are no longer burdened with the demand to choose. As Sartre says, "This nihilating power nihilates anguish in so far as I flee it and nihilates itself in so far as I am anguish in order to flee it. This attitude is what we call bad faith. There is no question of expelling anguish from consciousness" (BN 83). Insofar as we are condemned to be free, we are condemned to anxiety. Bad faith is an attempt to escape either being of the past or futural possibilities. Sartre clarifies this point with his statement, "consciousness is what it is not and is not what it is" (10). This is

his formulation of the temporality of consciousness. The form of the flight from freedom takes on two primary forms: an escape from transcendence or an escape from facticity. When we escape from our transcendence we attempt to convince ourselves that we are what we are. Sartre exemplifies this mode of bad faith through the example of a waiter that takes on the role of a waiter absolutely and does not admit of any other possible profession. The waiter is in bad faith because he attempts to define his existence in terms of his facticity: he is a waiter just like this cup is a cup. We escape our facticity by attempting to wish away our situation by relying on our transcendence. Thus the individual that is imprisoned for a life sentence pretends that he is not imprisoned but able to leave at any time. Consciousness is always coming from a situation and its freedom is not the capacity to wish this situation away gratuitously. For Sartre the situation is not per se a limit on human freedom, but a condition of that very freedom. Sartre has a radical theory of freedom, such that even the man who has stepped on a landmine and felt the landmine depress, knowing that when he lifts his foot he will be killed, is free. He is not, however, free to wish the landmine away, but he is free to determine his attitude in the face of the landmine.

What all of this is intended to expose is that for Sartre freedom is something that is not merely an acceptance of our fate in death, but an active choosing of our possibilities in the face of a situation that conditions these possibilities. Heidegger gives a notion of authenticity which unifies Dasein as a whole, individuates a Dasein as that particular Dasein, and determines Dasein's end as finality and goal. Sartre develops the notion of authenticity to include the events that occur between any given moment and our finality. Good faith is an active relating to ourselves as entities which are condemned to be free, condemned to choose our life-projects. Both of these theories share a notion of authenticity which eschews the classical categories of normative ethics which demand a series of rules that determine proper conduct. In its place,

authenticity determines as its goal the individual relating to its freedom from the place of its ultimate possibilities. Heidegger views the impediments to our authenticity as being our fragmented nature and our not being ourselves. For Sartre, on the other hand, it is not so much that we are not ourselves that it is that we have a proclivity to escape from the responsibilities imbued to us by our ontological freedom.

### **III: Ruth, Tommy, and Inauthenticity**

Ishiguro constructs his novel through a contrast between authentic and inauthentic modes of being. Ruth, Tommy, and Kathy each have a different relationship to the factual and transcendental aspects of their identity and it is in these manners of relating to themselves that the novel reveals their authentic or inauthentic character. Through this contrast, a clear vision of authenticity arises. Therefore, before examining the specific contours of Kathy's authentic mode of being, I will first analyze Ruth and Tommy who, when confronting their own existential freedom, turn away.

Underlying all of Ruth's actions is an element of performance. The self she reveals to the world is premeditated, calculated, engineered. Her thoughts, words, and action are scripted and she is the master playwright. It is through performance that Ruth seeks to control her identity by controlling the perception others have of her. Her actions are not a reflection of her inner

identity, but are a strategic plan created to elicit certain reactions from others. In other words, Ruth's locus of identity is not internal, but *external*.

Although Ruth's performance requires creation, it is not a genuine form of self-creation. Her disingenuousness is a product of the troublesome relationship between her transcendence and her facticity. What these performative acts belie is her reluctance to accept the factual aspects of her being. While a person is not completely determined by her past, the project of futural self-creation first requires, as both Heidegger and Sartre indicate, an acceptance of that past. As Sartre explains, we have to be our past, but that "having to be" does not mean the same things as being identical with that past. In other words, the past constitutes a piece of Ruth's identity, but is not the entirety of her identity. Any attempt to deny the past, the piece of the self that "Is" and cannot be changed, is to enter into a false relationship with the self.

Ruth denies her past in two ways: first, she reduces its meaning by treating life as a stage on which she performs and second she denies the existence of her facticity at all. Ultimately, Ruth's denial of her past is precipitated by her desire to be superior to others. Because her past does not confirm her superiority, she repudiates it in order to eradicate any claims about herself that conflict with the identity of superiority she desires. This desire for superiority finds its foundation in her pathological externalization of her identity. Through this externalization, Ruth is able to escape the demands of making real choices about her future by living in a fantasy world. Superiority also allows Ruth to ignore the imminent fate of any ordinary human being: death.

Ruth's desire to be special, to be extraordinary, pervades all of her performative acts, beginning in her childhood. An early instance of this is when Ruth subtly indicates to her friends that Miss Geraldine, one of the guardians who "weren't supposed to show favouritism"

(Ishiguro, *NLMG* 57), “allowed Ruth to play a music tape in the billiards room before four o’clock on a weekday...had ordered silence on a field walk, but when Ruth had drawn up beside her, she’d started to talk to her” (57), and most importantly, had presented Ruth with a fashionable pencil case as a gift. Kathy keenly observes Ruth’s dramatic behavior when disclosing these events to her friends: “There was a certain smile, a certain voice Ruth would use—sometimes accompanied by a finger to the lips or a hand raised stage-whisper style—whenever she wanted to hint about some little mark of favour Miss Geraldine had shown her” (57). The theatricality of Ruth’s story—the change of voice, the exaggerated hand gestures, the “stage-whisper”—reveal her deliberate attempt to draw the attention of her classmates, to make public these proofs of her supremacy. But Ruth’s story, as Kathy exposes, is mendacious. What this reveals about Ruth is that she is willing to deny her true self in exchange for a fictitious self if the factuality of her life contradicts the identity she desires. Because Ruth’s identity has no factual basis, the only way Ruth can cement her idealized identity is through the external validation of others. However, even if Ruth can convince others to view her in this desired manner, she must suffer from the awareness that this self is an illusion.

Upon arriving at the Cottages, Ruth’s established identity is jeopardized by her new peer group, the veterans. In order to reestablish her identity of superiority, Ruth begins her performative routine: “For the first weeks after we arrived, [Ruth] made a big deal of [her relationship with Tommy], always putting her arm around Tommy, sometimes snogging him in the corner of a room while other people were still about” (120). Just as at Hailsham, Ruth performs these actions publically to elicit a specific impression. But she soon “realized the way she’d been carrying on with Tommy was all wrong for the Cottages, and she set about changing how they did things in front of people” (121). This passage emphasizes that Ruth does not act

based on an inner compulsion, but in order to project a controlled image of herself. Ruth's external behavior does not coincide with any internal self.

Recognizing this problem, Ruth appropriates the set of normative behaviors that will establish her superiority in the eyes of her new peer group. She, like the veterans, adopts habits and gestures from popular television shows, such as "when a couple was saying goodbye to each other...you slapped your partner's arm near the elbow, lightly with the back of your knuckles" (121). The artificiality of Ruth's behavior is highlighted by the fact that she acquires these habits from the veterans, who in turn acquired them from the television, which one presumes are mimetic of reality. Ruth also adapts her behavior according to the cottage norm that self-worth is tied to the number of novels with which a person is familiar, feigning to have read a great deal of books to augment her reputation. As at Hailsham, she must make public her erudition: "she was the only one with this notion that the way to demonstrate your superior reading was to go around telling people the plots of novels they were in the middle of" (123). What is interesting about Ruth's behavior is that if she wanted to be knowledgeable about novels, she could devote herself to study; instead, she focuses her energies on convincing others of this identity without actually working to sincerely create it.

As previously stated, Ruth is always aware that her projected identity is inauthentic. Her anxiety about the disparity between her factual being and the false image she presents to the world is evident in her fervent need to destroy any material evidence of that facticity. Upon arriving at the Cottages, she disposes of all her childhood relics: "My things all stayed in the holdall bag for months, then in the end I threw them away" (131). By shedding these material objects, Ruth is attempting to dispose of her facticity. It is this action that reveals Ruth is aware that the past lays claims on her identity, but she, through this symbolic act, attempts to deny the

power of her facticity by transforming the past into no more than “rubbish.” When conversing with Kathy, she frequently denies remembering events and details of Hailsham life in a similar attempt to destroy her factual being. During one discussion of a Hailsham student that was punished for walking through the out-of-bounds rhubarb patch, Kathy, exasperated by Ruth’s pretended forgetfulness, charges, “Ruth, don’t give me that. There’s no way you’ve forgotten. You know that route was out of bounds” (202). Ruth does not relent, continuing “pretending to remember nothing,” and exclaiming “What does it matter anyway? What’s the rhubarb patch got to do with anything? Just get on with what you were saying” (202). The rhubarb patch takes on symbolic meaning here. Ruth’s denial of its significance serves as an attempt to prove the past has no bearing on the present, that it has “nothing to do with anything.” This claim allows her to continue existing under the delusion that she has control over her identity by making her factual existence meaningless.

Ruth can only continue to live in her delusions of grandeur if she is supported by others. As Kathy observes, “my role, as [Ruth’s] closest friend, was to give her silent support, as if I was in the front row of the audience when she was performing on stage” (130). And it is this silent support and admiration that Ruth demands. Ruth does not want to be an actress, *but to be what she acts*. Because her identity is an externally motivated, it requires external validation. This is why Ruth becomes vicious when the artificiality of her actions is unveiled. For example, whenever Tommy acts confused at one of Ruth’s gestures borrowed from the veterans and questions her motives, “she’d have to glare furiously at him, like they were in a play and he’d forgotten his lines” (121). Ruth’s performance requires the participation of others and these moments exhibit the fragility of Ruth’s contrived identity. Such moments also force Ruth to become aware of her own inauthenticity. If she is made aware of her artificiality, she must leave

the world of the stage and confront the horrifying reality that she is not extraordinary, that her transcendental projects are undermined by the factual reality of her existence. Ruth must stay the actress, must not break character, must not be genuinely self-reflective. It is self-reflection that destroys the illusion she has created for herself. It is Heidegger's call of conscience that says "guilty." What Ruth is guilty of is giving herself away. By denying her factual identity and existing in a performative realm in which actions are not genuine products of her internal relationship to herself, Ruth rejects her capacity to freely choose who she *is*. By developing herself as an actress, she does not develop herself as a person.

Ruth's inauthentic relationship with her factual self has ramifications on her relationship with her transcendence as well. As Heidegger and Sartre assert, facticity and transcendence are equiprimordial: pathologies in one create pathologies in the other. As a clone, Ruth has a given *telos*: to die donating her organs. In response to this predetermined purpose, Ruth fantasizes about the type of life she would have lived if she were not a clone. However, these futural projections remain in the realm of fantasy because she believes any future outside her role as donor is foreclosed *to her*. Because Ruth views her possibilities as completely circumscribed to an end that is not of her own making, she fantasizes about a life that is not her own. These fantasies, however, are not about an actual possible future as she believes she does not have agency to change the trajectory of her life, but are fantasies in which she is not herself. In place of genuine and generative transcendence, Ruth lives out a fantasy that denies her freedom of self-creation. This is most clearly seen in her search for her possibles.

The search for the possibles is important to all of the clones at the Cottages, but it is only with Ruth that it becomes an obsession. Kathy illuminates the clones' fascination with their possibles: "One big idea behind finding your model was that when you did, you'd glimpse your

future...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" (140). This sentiment reveals an underlying belief that, as clones, they are predetermined (perhaps genetically). Ruth's search for her possible exposes her belief that she has no possibilities of her own. The comfort of recognizing oneself in another is that one can freely fantasize about the life of the other without taking up the responsibilities of that life. What Ruth seeks in the other is a determinant fantasy, a fantasy that rings true within her inner being, a fantasy that is not determined by her facticity, but by that of another. The point of crises for Ruth is not that she doesn't have possibilities of her own, but that her possibles are very likely rubbish: "We're modeled from trash. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos...If you want to look for possibles, if you want to do it properly, then you look in the gutter. You look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that's where you'll find where we all came from" (166). What perturbs Ruth is not that she exports her identity, but the possibility that this identity is garbage. Jacob Golomb, in his book on the history of the concept of authenticity in philosophic discourse, relates the renunciation of one's futural possibilities with the fear of death: "To escape my Being-towards-death, I try, by being inauthentic, not to live my own life. Suppressing awareness of my imminent death, I also hide from the significance of my life, and refrain from taking chances, from realizing my possibilities" (107). The possibles provide Ruth the opportunity to avoid recognizing death by transposing her identity onto another. As Golomb again notes, "One cannot die one's death when one's life is not one's own. One tends to inauthenticity not only because authenticity makes one anxious about one's responsibility for one's self-in-the-world, but also because it appears an easy escape from anxiety in the face of death" (107).

What complicates this reading of Ruth is her final moment of self-reflective lucidity. During the return to their respective centers after the expedition to the beached boat, Ruth confesses to both her friends that she purposefully deceived Kathy into believing her sexual urges were abnormal even though she experienced similar impulses and, more importantly, that she “kept [Kathy] and Tommy apart” (Ishiguro, *NLMG* 232). In this moment of sincerity concerning her past, Ruth desires to “put it right. Put right what I messed up for you” by not only making explicit her deceptiveness, but also by offering Kathy and Tommy the chance to “make up for lost time” by requesting a deferral. Ruth, unable to create her own self projects, does not take up the option of seeking a deferral for herself, but transposes this fantasy, as she does with the possibles, onto someone else. She gives them Madame’s address with the command, “Now it’s up to you to find her and try” (233). This moment of apparent sincerity is in actuality motivated by her desire to continue exerting control over her identity after death. Through performing the role of savior she will transcend her death in her effects. She fantasizes about the type of life Tommy and Kathy will lead; their potential escape represents, for her, her own escape. In the face of her own most possibility Ruth reveals she lacks an authentic self. In life, she could only grasp her possibilities as fantasies; thus, in facing her death, she can only imagine her life’s fulfillment in the fantasy that she effectuates with Kathy and Tommy.

Tommy, like Ruth, is caught in inauthenticity, but in an obverse manner. What they both share is a certain proclivity towards denying their own most being. However, where Ruth denies her facticity in order to fantasize about futural possibilities, Tommy embraces the factual modes of his existence as the totality of his identity: he is to himself his past. Because Tommy views his identity as an already finished product, he does not recognize his freedom to self-create his identity in the future. He refuses himself fantasy, but in the process, he refuses his self-creative

faculty. Because Tommy does not establish his own futural projects, he lacks normative criteria to evaluate his identity. Therefore, Tommy internalizes external norms and judges himself based on his position in relation to these preexisting standards. He, like Ruth, relies on external validation, but this validation is based on institutional standards. What determines Tommy's being is always external, but it is not externalized. Tommy internalizes the external.

Tommy is plagued by a fear of being judged inferior when measured by societal standards of worth. In the Hailsham system, creativity is the scale of valuation both materially in the form of currency and conceptually in the form of esteem. Tommy wants to live up to Hailsham's normative value of artistic creativity, but he inchoately recognizes his artistic performance as sophomoric for his age. In an attempt to conceal his poor artistic ability, Tommy paints "deliberately childish pictures" (19). By making his artwork into an intentional joke, Tommy avoids a serious judgment of his creativity, and by extension, his character. This strategy is destroyed when, one day in art class after painting an "elephant which was exactly the sort of picture a kid three years younger might have done" (19), his teacher fails to recognize the painting as a comedic parody and judges the painting as the fullest expression of his creative ability. As Kathy recounts, "after the elephant painting, the whole thing had been brought into the open, and now everyone was watching to see what he did next" (20). Although, as Kathy articulates, Tommy is aware of his waning artistic ability prior to this incident, it is not until it is exposed, until it is externally confirmed, until *he is judged*, that it becomes a definitive explanation of his identity to himself. For Tommy, this judgment is not an evaluation of his artistic ability at one point in time, but an evaluation of his very essence. Because self-worth is tied to creative aptitude, Tommy's realization that he is not creative becomes a statement not just about an aspect of himself, but a statement condemning him as entirely unworthy.

Rather than work towards cultivating the artistic skills he lacks, Tommy takes the pronouncement of his uncreativity as transcendentally true: “Before long, Tommy had gone back to his original defense, producing work that seemed deliberately childish, work that said he couldn’t care less” (20). Not only does he fully accept the norms of his society, but he also takes the condemnation of himself under those norms as being his own. Tommy could choose to evaluate his worth in terms of his athletic ability at which he excels, but he does not engage in this self-creative project and can only see his value in relation to established external norms. The only semblance of Tommy’s rebellion against such norms is during his momentary explosions of rage. These outbursts are in some way a revolt against these conceptions of his being as uncreative, but fundamentally bespeak his impotence in the face of these norms. Tommy views his unworthiness as an essential aspect of his identity from which he cannot break free. His rage is directed towards his inability to possess the identity he desires; it is Tommy coming up against the resistance of the world. As Sartre explains, anger “is a transformation of the world. When the paths before us become too difficult, or when we cannot see our way, we can no longer put up with such an exacting and difficult world. All ways are barred and nevertheless we must act. So then we try to change the world” (*Emotions* 63). Self-creative power is replaced by anger; Tommy’s desire to destroy normative criteria and the judgments they produce is replaced by a purely impotent destructive outburst. What is important, though, in Tommy’s approach to his situation is that he does not effect change: the normative criteria remain and his kicking and screaming only provide a momentary relief.

The abatement of Tommy’s outbursts in his later years at Hailsham is precipitated by a new—yet still authorized—change of normative standards. As Kathy observes, “I was pleased about all these developments, but also mystified. There’d been no real change in Tommy’s

work—his reputation for ‘creativity’ was as low as ever” (Ishiguro, *NLMG* 22). What Kathy is mystified by is that Tommy has not fundamentally changed his situation, only his behavior towards it. When confronting Tommy about this change, he reports that Ms. Lucy said, “if I didn’t want to be creative, if I really didn’t feel like it, that was perfectly all right. Nothing wrong with that, she said” (23). This figure of authority changes the “rules” for Tommy by authorizing his self-evaluation outside of the realm of creativity. Tommy explains, “‘I realised she was right, that it wasn’t my fault. Okay, I hadn’t handled it well. But deep down, it wasn’t my fault. That’s what made the difference’” (29). By stating it is not his “fault” he neutralizes his responsibility towards his identity. Because he no longer has to be the foundation for this uncreativity, he is able to accept it as a “fact” of his existence, not a choice. He treats himself as a being with an essence, not as a being who creates its essence. Tommy rejects his possibilities as *his* possibilities. Golomb captures this type of inauthenticity Tommy adapts when he explains, “I grasp it not as an indefinite existence but as an entity among other entities, as sheer facticity. I let my existence be determined and defined by others, thereby changing its meaning from existence to essence. My ownness becomes otherness and I lose myself by my own actions” (94). Tommy, like Ruth, loses his identity because of his inauthentic relationship with his past.

Tommy’s belief in his inability to self-create is also apparent in his attitude towards the possibles. Unlike the other clones, Tommy is not interested in discovering his human counterpart, telling Kathy “‘Our models, what they were like, that’s nothing to do with us, Kath’” (Ishiguro, *NLMG* 168). Unlike Ruth who escapes her facticity through fantasies about possibilities that are not her own, Tommy escapes his transcendence by denying himself any existence other than the prescribed existence given to him at Hailsham. Because Tommy believes he has no *possibilities*, he does not believe in his possibles. Tommy wants to escape the

demands of his facticity, but in order to accomplish this goal, he must make himself this facticity such that he has no freedom in the matter.

As with Ruth, it is Tommy's confrontation with his own death that opens him up to his pathologies. The question of creativity, abandoned for so much of Tommy's post-Hailsham life, is reopened as a question of his essential being during the last years at the Cottages. What renews his interest in creativity is rumors he hears that "things like pictures, poetry, all that kind of stuff...they *revealed what you were like inside...they revealed your soul*" (175). This rumor reestablishes (and heightens) the importance of creativity as a measurement of self-worth. Tommy's reacceptance of the norm of creativity is evidenced by his claim about the Hailsham children's art: "Don't forget, Kath, what she's got reveals our souls" (176). Tommy describes his soul here as premade object, not as an open possibility for him to mold. As Tommy explains, "Suppose two people say they're truly in love, and they want extra time to be together. Then you see, Kath, there has to be a way to judge if they're really telling the truth" (175). Tommy's belief that his identity is reducible to an essence impels him to seek his identity in the judgments made upon him; he needs to be told that he *is* worthy. Tommy is seeking to *uncover* his identity, not to create it, and sees in the myth that art captures a person's essence the chance to discover who he always-already has been and is.

It is not only the tangible reward of a deferral that inspires Tommy to reinvestigate the question of his creativity, but the promise of discovering that he is a fulfilled individual. He could authentically work towards recreating himself as a creative individual by establishing this as his futural project, but instead, he continues to approach creativity not as something he can attain, but something that he either already possess or lacks. Rather than project himself into the future, Tommy turns to the past. Tommy's renewed commitment to art is an attempt to discover

an essential piece of himself that has always been present, but not apparent. He turns to his facticity to find proof that he was always creative. He tells Kathy, “The thing is, I’m doing them really small. Tiny. I’d never thought of that at Hailsham. I think maybe that’s where I went wrong. If you make them tiny, and you have to because the pages are only so big, then everything changes. It’s like they come to life by themselves” (178). To Tommy, his drawings are not new, but a reinvented form of the old. He describes his creative deficiencies as a failure in approach—a mistake—which allows him to believe that he has always been essentially creative, but was unable to express or prove this fact in the material world.

Tommy’s reliance on an externally imposed value system requires external validation. Madame represents the authorial figure that can judge Tommy’s essence based upon what Tommy believes is the eternal truth of creativity. However, upon arriving at Madame’s house, Miss Emily reveals that, “We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to *prove you had souls at all*” (260). This pronouncement exposes the ethic of creativity as fraudulent, or more precisely, arbitrary. It cannot bestow upon Tommy the judgment he desires. It is at this moment Tommy must confront the fact that he has dedicated his life to a false idol that proves ineffectual in measuring his worth: he must confront his own inauthenticity. As Jacob Golomb observes, “By evaluating one’s own achievements in terms of those of others, one lets the world intrude and destroy one’s sense of self” (103). Tommy, after this confrontation, is destroyed, his identity crumbles. On the drive back to the center, Tommy demands Kathy pull over and he runs “raging, shouting, flinging his fists and kicking out” (Ishiguro, *NLMG* 274) into the forest. Tommy’s violent outburst, just as in his early years, represents an outcry against the unchangeable. However, while in his childhood these fits

were occasioned by a feeling of inadequacy in himself, this final outburst is precipitated by the disintegration of his worldview.

#### **IV: Kathy H. and Authenticity**

Ruth and Tommy are both Daseins facing the anxiety of existence and coping with this anxiety inauthentically. Their approaches to their identity, facticity, and death are antithetical, yet both are inauthentic. In the spaces between these two approaches lies the realm of the authentic, the space in which Kathy H. dwells.

Reading Kathy H. as authentic appears problematic at first. As Golomb observes, “Only when we successfully shed these values that we have been conditioned to uphold by various institutions—our families, schools, and universities—will we be able to reach beyond them to the genuine roots of our selves and ultimately attain authenticity” (8). The authentic protagonist is typically envisioned as the individual who positions herself against society, upholding norms and values adversarial to those of the larger culture. She is the rebellious outcast akin to the anti-heroes of Camus’s *The Stranger*, Ralph Ellison’s *The Invisible Man*, or Andre Gide’s *The Immoralist*. Kathy, on the other hand, appears compliant. She seems to internalize those Hailsham values that condemn her to a premature death; instead of protest, she willingly marches towards the gallows. It is this apparent compliance that may entice readers to reiterate Sartre’s declaration, “I hate a man who respects his executioner.” Many critics condemn Kathy along

with the other clones because of this complacency. Keith MacDonald observes, “The students of Hailsham remain trapped in a state of adolescence during their maturation into biological adulthood, unable, unschooled, and unprepared for any semblance of an adult or free existence” (79). These critics see rebellion as the only salvation available to these characters, the only proof of their authenticity or “free existence,” a course of action they fail to take. The more sympathetic critics, such as MacDonald, place responsibility on societal institutions and not on the characters themselves. But it is precisely Kathy’s ordinariness that allows Ishiguro to expose a new vision of how the authenticity Heidegger and Sartre discuss can actually be achieved, a model that seems more attainable than the extreme social pariah presented by other literary authors.

Describing Kathy’s authenticity is difficult because pinning her down by labels would be an act of bad faith and erecting a normative standard would undermine the nonprescriptive nature of the authentic. As Kierkegaard points out, “Authentic life has less to do with a specific concrete content, a ‘what’, than with some particular path, with a ‘how’” (Golomb 33). To understand Kathy’s authenticity, then, it is necessary to look at her approach to the world rather than to dissect the specific facets of her identity. It is also important to note that authenticity is not a static phenomenon; it is not like the state of nirvana which is maintained after it is achieved. It, as Golomb notes, “is not a permanent mode of Dasein: it is a fluctuating stage of mind, arrived at through an ongoing struggle against the pull of the public world” (112). Therefore, Kathy’s authenticity does not necessarily pervade every moment of her existence, but rather, is the general attitude in which she approaches herself. Kathy offers a vision of Dasein struggling with existence and moving towards authenticity. Rather than examine Kathy’s authentic struggle chronologically, I will look at the major components of her authenticity thematically. Kathy’s

reinvention of authenticity is discovered in her self-created project of care, her ethical care for others, her reflectiveness and interpretation of her past, and finally her acceptance of her death as her own-most-possibility.

If Ruth can be defined through her performance and Tommy through his preoccupation with prescriptive normativity, Kathy can be characterized by care<sup>6</sup>. Kathy first introduces herself to the readers in the opening lines as a “carer,” her occupational title. But the first memory Kathy communicates reveals that “carer” is not just her profession, but her mode of being. This memory is of one of Tommy’s fits and the reaction of the group of onlooking girls of which Kathy is a part. Unlike her schoolmates who were “mimicking one after the other the expressions that appeared on Tommy’s face” (Ishiguro, *NLMG* 8) in ridicule, Kathy “noticed Tommy was wearing the light blue polo shirt he’d got in the Sales the previous month—the one he was so proud of” (8), and thought, “‘It’ll get ruined, then how’s he going to feel?’” (8). Kathy’s reaction to the situation reveals her perceptivity (recognizing Tommy’s pride in this polo shirt) and her genuine concern for the feelings of others (“how’s he going to feel”). Kathy not only expresses her care privately, but acts upon these feelings. As her “friends set off along the edge of the field”, she “started to drift over towards him...even when [she] heard Ruth’s urgent whisper to [her] to come back” (11). Kathy’s action is particularly audacious considering Tommy is, at this time, the outcast of the school. Rather than assume the accepted attitude towards Tommy, Kathy reacts based on her genuine feelings about the situation. Her lack of hesitation reveals she, unlike Ruth, is not concerned with the way her friends will react to this gesture. Her identity does not require this external validation because it is self-created.

---

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting that Heidegger uses the term “care” to describe the ontological status of Dasein. Golomb concisely summarizes Heidegger’s stance: “For man, to be is to care about one’s sense of authentic Being and self” (93). Heidegger asserts that the essential characteristic of Dasein is to care for its own being, to be concerned with it and to work towards developing it. Kathy’s position as carer is two-fold: she both cares for the world and, in return, “cares” for herself in the manner Heidegger describes.

Moreover, she does not perform this action because she expects to be praised, to be viewed as kind or generous. Kathy performs this action both for Tommy and *for herself*.

What this scene reveals is that Kathy formulates her own conceptions about the world and events and *acts* upon those judgments. Rather than assent to established norms, she creates her own norms. Moreover, she demonstrates the ability to create judgments about the world based on these self-created norms; she does not see Tommy as the other girls do, as a buffoon who deserves ridicule, but as a human being with passions and concerns. This scene also reveals Kathy's recognition of her transcendental possibilities. By choosing to act, Kathy is affirming her freedom. It is important to reiterate that Kathy does not *perform* this act, as Ruth might, but *does* this act. Her actions, therefore, are not to prove to the world who she is as Ruth wishes. Nor is she interested in being judged by her society for these actions, like Tommy. Unlike Ruth and Tommy, Kathy is not interested in her hierarchical status. The words inferior and superior that plague Ruth and Tommy have no bearing on Kathy or her understanding of herself. Inferiority and superiority are comparative structures; Kathy, on the other hand, is not interested in her comparative status, but in her own evaluation of her actions. It is only through action that a person can create themselves. Kathy's ability to make decisions based on her genuine convictions and act upon those decisions reveal she is authentically creating her identity.

Throughout the novel, Kathy continues to reveal her being as one of care, culminating in her years as an official carer, an occupation in which she is naturally successful. Kathy explains, "For the most part being a carer's suited me fine. You could even say it's brought the best out of me. But some people just aren't cut out for it, and for them the whole thing becomes a real struggle. They might start off positively enough, but then comes all that time spend so close to the pain and the worry" (207). As Kathy observes, the burden of being a carer is having to

endure and witness suffering. Caring for oneself (or having an authentic relationship with oneself) is equally challenging as it requires one to take up the responsibility of one's own limitations, failures, and weaknesses (facticity) and to take responsibility for continual futural creation (transcendence). Both of these aspects of authenticity, as Heidegger theorizes, also require recognition of death as the ultimate *telos* of that identity. Golomb summarizes Heidegger's argument by stating, "We are fundamentally anxious, given our responsibility for our own Being...Feeling the authenticity of my Being invokes the *Angst* which makes me 'flee' and lose my sense of self; my immediate response to responsibility is anxiety" (103). It is this anxiety that makes being a carer so difficult: it requires the direct confrontation with both Dasein's limits and responsibilities as a free being. Being a carer, of course, does not require that carer work towards an understanding of their own limits as a Dasein directly, but it raises awareness of these limitations which force the witness to self-reflect.

Kathy's success as a carer is the result of her ability to confront those aspects of existence that cause Dasein to be anxious. However, because Kathy has worked towards authentically relating to herself throughout her life, she is able to care for others without being overwhelmed by this anxiety. Being a carer is only troublesome for individuals who have not yet come to terms with themselves, which explains why Ruth and Tommy makes such poor carers. Kathy reveals her ability to authentically relate to herself even during her trying years as carer with her claim, "I try not to make a nuisance of myself, but I've figured out how to get my voice heard when I have to. And when things go badly, of course I'm upset, but at least I can feel I've done all I could and keep things in perspective" (Ishiguro, *NLMG* 208). As with the previous example of Kathy's reaction to Tommy's situation, she reveals a healthy relationship with both her facticity and her transcendence; she is able to "keep things in perspective". Even though her

patients are near death, Kathy takes action to improve their situation. She continues to act upon her convictions and advocates on her patient's behalf. But she also realizes the limitations of their factual situation: they are going to die. She is melancholy about their deaths, but also recognizes death as a fact she is unable to change: she accepts the facticity of the situation and the factual limitations of Dasein at all.

It is important to note that Kathy is a being of care from childhood and it is not something she develops only once she is told to be a carer by authorities. If Kathy only exhibited these behaviors after becoming an official "carer" it would be possible to interpret her behavior as an attempt to meet societal standards, not as an authentic self-project. But Kathy's project of care begins before this attribute is valued, at a time when creativity, academic success, and social acceptance are the prevailing norms. Her success as a carer is not attributable to her desire to conform, but to the fact that as a carer, she is engaged in an activity that aligns with her own projects.

As a carer, Kathy is not only able to create herself but also to act as shepherd towards the self-creation of others. Kathy is a carer and what she cares for is others. But this care is not just a superficial ambition to protect those she loves; instead, Kathy has a desire to help them in their own struggle towards authenticity. Simone de Beauvoir, in her perceptive book *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, defines the "genuinely free man" as that person who not only realizes his own freedom, but assists others in the quest for freedom as well. She asserts, "The freedom of other men must be respected and they must be helped to free themselves" (60). This argument adds a new dimension to the notion of authenticity: the ethics of being authentic. Most theorists, Heidegger and Sartre included, claim authenticity is not an ethics, but an ontology. Both Heidegger and Sartre planned on writing an ethics of authenticity which neither completed.

Likewise, literary novels about authenticity ignore issues of ethics. Andre Gide's *The Immoralist* posits the question of ethics at the conclusion of the novel when the authentic protagonist confronts the destruction his authentic projects caused, but a solution is never presented. De Beauvoir's assertion deepens the idea of the responsibility of human freedom and authenticity: people are responsible for their own self-creation and the self-creation of others as well. This concept transitions authenticity from the realm of ontology to the realm of ethics. Ishiguro takes up de Beauvoir's ethics and demonstrates the possibility of an ethical self-creation. Ishiguro's other characters, particularly Ruth and Tommy, frequently solicit tête-à-têtes with Kathy precisely because of her capacity and desire to help them "free themselves" as de Beauvoir describes. It is only when Ruth and Tommy are alone with Kathy that they demonstrate some semblance of an identity. This is especially manifest during Ruth's and Tommy's final days at the donation centers in which Kathy encourages their self-reflection. In moments such as these, Kathy nurtures Ruth's and Tommy's search for identity by guiding them through the process of authentically relating to themselves.

Many critics have also investigated the theme of care in the novel, framing it not in terms of the authentic/inauthentic nexus as I have, but in terms of the definition of humanity. Because these insights are particularly illuminating and parallel my own interpretations, I will briefly discuss the most prominent of these readings. For Mark Jerng, the importance of care "locates the grounds for a full realization of the human as properties within the individual. Whereas the moment of separation—from parents, from school, from immaturity—is often used to mark the individuality...this novel's resistance to an arc of separation...marks the clone's personhood as real and realized only through the relationships in which it is held" (386). Jerng's reconfiguration of the principle of individuality parallels what I am describing as Kathy's ethics

of authenticity in which the fully authentic being is that being which cares for others through relationships that nurture authenticity. Myra Seamon, in her essay on Ishiguro's investigation of the essence of being human, argues Kathy's compassion makes her more human than the "real humans" who are willing to murder others for personal gain: "The more 'real' and biologically enhanced humans are revealed to be lacking in the humanity expressed in so many ways by their scientific offspring. They, not the clones, are the nightmare posthumans here, not because of their bioenhancements but because through their attempt to extend their own lives, they have inhumanely destroyed the lives of others purely for their own benefit and in order to sustain that, they must refuse to risk an affectivity that would allow them to feel for the clones" (265-266). This highlights the fact that authentic existence—or in Seamon's terms, being human—has little to do with biological facts or longevity and more to do with the qualities one displays in life.

As I mentioned above, part of the process of becoming authentic is a confrontation with the anxiety of existence as well as the truth of facticity. This makes Kathy's task of nurturing the identity of others difficult and she, at times, must bear the burden of her friends' anxiety in the process of trying to help them. Becoming authentic, as Heidegger and Sartre argue, requires a sincere confrontation with one's facticity in addition to recognizing that this facticity is not the summation of one's identity. While Kathy's motives for forcing her friends to confront themselves are sincere, it is often difficult for them to undergo this process. For example, when Kathy asks Ruth "Why do you always hit Tommy on the arm like that when you're saying goodbye?", explaining, "It's not something worth copying" (Ishiguro, *NLMG* 123), Ruth resists this self-confrontation by diverting the conversation onto Kathy's weaknesses: "So that's it, that's what upsetting poor little Kathy. Ruth isn't paying enough attention to her. Ruth's got big new friends and baby sister isn't getting played with so often" (124). Ruth's attempt to make

Kathy look infantile and to make her motives appear selfish allows Ruth to evade self-confrontation. Bruce Robbins also mentions the connection between caring and, as he describes it, cruelty. Using the example of Kathy's silence when Ruth discloses to Tommy that Kathy privately mocked his drawing efforts, Robbins explains, "Cruelty is indistinguishable from caring. It's only by being cruel to Tommy that Kathy can lovingly hold open the possibility (however theoretical) of an aspiration that he would be allowed to enjoy. From this perspective, true caring, even love itself, would necessarily have cruelty in it" (300). For Robbins the possibility of freedom Kathy's cruelty opens up is an escape from premature death through rebellion; in this essay's context, this possibility can be seen as the opening up for Tommy an authentic relationship with himself. Although Kathy meets with such resistance, she continues to push her friends towards more authentic modes of being while she herself struggles with this same process.

Kathy's process of self-creation is symbolically reflected in the scene in which she sings to Judith Bridgewater's "Never Let Me Go." She imagines a woman who, after being told she could not bear children, conceives. Overcome with joy, she cherishes her unexpected child. The Hailsham children not only cannot have children in the literal sense, but are also viewed as incapable of making an authentic self. Just as the singer discovers, Kathy realizes she *is* able to conceive, to create life, or more specifically, to create her own life. Her coddling of the child mirrors the way she cherishes and nourishes her own identity, that self her ontological status as clone denies: "She holds this baby very close to her and walks around singing: 'Baby, never let me go...' partly because she's so happy, but also because she's so afraid something will happen, that the baby will get ill or be taken away from her" (Ishiguro, *NLMG* 70). The fear Kathy

describes is the anxiety of freedom. She confronts this anxiety and, rather than turn away from it as Ruth and Tommy, accepts it in order to keep her authentically created identity.

Kathy is not only a character who acts upon her own genuine principles, but she also reflects upon those acts. Because Dasein, as Heidegger indicates, is always becoming yet also already being, reflection is a crucial practice in the process of becoming authentic. Relating to one's identity authentically requires a recognition of the past (facticity) and a projection into the future (transcendence). Because the two are interconnected, it is impossible to project oneself into the future without first incorporating the past into that identity; future choices are always conditioned by the past. Moreover, understanding one's identity always requires an understanding and evaluation of the past. Even as a child, Kathy possesses this habit. After exposing Ruth's fraudulent story about the pencil case supposedly gifted by Miss Geraldine, Kathy observes "how upset Ruth was; how for once she was at a complete loss for words, and had turned away on the verge of tears" (60). Upon witnessing this reaction, Kathy thinks "suddenly my behavior seemed to me utterly baffling. All this effort, all this planning, just to upset my dearest friend? So what if she fibbed a little about her pencil case? Didn't we all dream from time to time about one guardian or other bending the rules and doing something special for us?" (60). In this reflection, Kathy, through an assessment of her behavior in relationship to her values, concludes she is unsatisfied with her approach to the situation. She redefines her attitude about her behavior, but at the same time, she does not attempt to negate the past; instead, she accepts responsibility. She realizes that there is "no way now to repair the damage I'd done" (60). Unlike Tommy, Kathy does not attempt to change her factual condition. Her reflections on her actions reveal that she acknowledges them as a part of her factual being, but also recognizes that they do not determine her absolutely. Through her evaluations of her

actions, Kathy is able to better understand herself, and more importantly, to use these new understandings to create her future actions. It is in these moments that Kathy's authentic approach is most clear; she revisits her past to find herself and uses her evaluative conclusions to create her future self. In Sartre's terms, Ruth "is not what she is" and Tommy "is what he is," but Kathy "is what she is not and is not what she is."

Kathy's reflective nature is also apparent in her approach towards understanding the world. As I previously argued, Kathy does not accept the pre-established norms of her society, but creates her own. This process begins with questioning. Early in the novel, Kathy recounts, "[Tommy and I] started off our whole thing of wondering and asking questions about ourselves that we kept going between us through the years" (72). Together, Kathy and Tommy pose and discuss questions about the practices and behaviors of Hailsham and its authorities. They want to understand the motives for particular practices and to understand their own relationship to this system. Their quest is partially about determining their place within society, but it also opens up the possibility of making choices about their relationship to this society. Through these questions Kathy can begin to authentically create herself by first understanding the society she is asked to participate in (Hailsham). This process of questioning escalates as they leave Hailsham for the Cottages: "That talk with Tommy beside the pond: I think of it now as a kind of marker between two eras. Not that anything significant started to happen immediately afterwards; but for me at least, that conversation was a turning point. I definitely started to look at everything differently. Where before I'd have backed away from awkward stuff, I began instead, more and more, to ask questions, if not out loud, at least within myself" (77). Kathy is a carer, but she is also a questioner, and it is the combination of these two practices that open her up to her own-most possibilities.

Kathy's reflectiveness is not only a method of immediate evaluation and impetus to self-reinvention, but also her method of understanding herself holistically. As Golomb notes in his summary of Heidegger's argument, "To find one's self, one must lose it in the world" (97). Many authors dedicated to depicting the authentic in literature focus their texts on their character's transcendental choices. This, of course, is appropriate when considering the heavy philosophical emphasis on authenticity as a genuine act of self-creation which is futurally directed. However, in the process, many of these writers ignore the importance of Dasein's facticity. I invoke Walter Benjamin here as his writings offer one of the most acute understandings of the relationship between identity and the past. While Benjamin's theories primarily focus on society's relationship to history, it is evident in his writings (especially *Berlin Childhood*) that this theory of the relationship between the past and present is applicable to the individual as well. To Benjamin, when something is "lost" it acquires a finished shape that can then be rediscovered and contemplated as a totality, much like the idea that "identity" is only possible once it is pure pastness. To Benjamin, society has an obligation to resurrect the ruins of history in order to make meaningful the suffering of the past. In this manner, Kathy plunges herself into her past in order to understand and care for the shape of her existence. The entire narrative of the novel represents Kathy's attempt to examine her facticity, to plunge herself into her past in order to discover who she is. As she explains, "There have been times over the years when I've tried to leave Hailsham behind, when I've told myself I shouldn't look back so much. But then there came a point when I just stopped resisting it" (Ishiguro, *NLMG* 5). Through her immersion in her past, Kathy is able to make meaning out of her past and through this meaning-making process, come to an understanding of herself.

Dasein's being, as Heidegger correctly deduces, is always not-yet. Death is a finalizing moment that transforms Dasein into a whole. As Jacob Golomb notes in his summary of Heidegger's argument, "Death enters life to conclude it, making possible its adequate explication. Hence, only Being-towards-death can be *fully* meaningful and authentic. Each time we entertain the possibility of dying we undertake an assessment of our Being. In our anticipation we define our existence" (107). It is the presence of death that causes Kathy to undertake her life-evaluating project and it is in this anticipation that she, through her reflection, is able to fully define her existence. Through this narrative, Kathy finds herself as the reader finds her: a carer. In this evaluation, Kathy recognizes herself as carer, as the carer of Hailsham and its students. Kathy realizes her identity in a powerful passage about a seemingly trivial image she encounters of a man holding balloons: "I kept worrying that one of the strings would come unraveled and a single balloon would sail off up into that cloudy sky...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" (Ishiguro, *NLMG* 213). As the carer for other's identities, Kathy is the fist that holds these balloons together. With her Hailsham friends' deaths, her life project is now at a natural close. The recognition that her existential arc, from birth to death, is complete allows her to accept her encroaching death: "Though I'll miss being a carer, it feels just about right to be finishing at last come the end of the year" (4). She accepts that her futural projects are at a close and what remains is her facticity, the self she has already made: "I won't be a carer any more come the end of the year, and though I've got a lot out of it, I have to admit I'll welcome the chance to rest—to stop and think and remember. I'm sure it's at least partly to do with that, to do with preparing for the change of

pace, that I've been getting this urge to order all these old memories" (37). Many critics have interpreted this pronouncement as proof of Kathy's inculcation into a system that conditions clones to resign to their fate. Mark Currie, for example, argues, "The very persistence of this euphemistic language supports the supposition that the truth of what happens for Kathy at the end of the year is not being honestly apprehended, and that the horror of realization is averted in cheerful optimism" (100). But this acceptance is not the result of her misapprehension, nor is it merely a coming to terms with the inevitable, but an *active* acceptance of her death as her own-most possibility. This is not a moment of passive acceptance, but a resoluteness-towards-death. Although Kathy expresses melancholy here and elsewhere towards her imminent end, this melancholy is not the rage of Tommy or the bitterness of Ruth, but a feeling of nostalgia mixed with an acceptance of its necessity.

Kathy exhibits many of the typical characteristics of authenticity characters in other novels about the subject also display: self-creation and an acceptance of death as her own-most possibility. But Ishiguro's vision of authenticity transforms the concept as well. This novel answers Golomb's question, "Can authenticity be a viable ethical norm? Can its 'heroes' find a place in a community? Or is it a romantic ideal, an immature protest against the leveling process of the unidimensional objectivity that dominates our modern, excessively technological civilization?"(4). Kathy is not the typical degenerate character of other novels of its kinds. Her authentic self-creation does not condemn her to isolation. Instead, she is able to achieve authenticity without becoming a social pariah. Furthermore, Kathy becomes the nurturer of other's authentic selves, instigating Ruth and Tommy at several points in the novel to examine their own lives and actions. This reveals that Kathy's self-created project is also an ethical self-created project, exposing the viability of an authentic self that is also ethical. In addition,

Ishiguro resurrects the importance of the factual in authentic self-creation, focusing on self-creation not only as a process of futural projection, but also a reassembling of the past. But most importantly, Ishiguro presents an authentic character who is ordinary. Rebecca L. Walkowitz explains Kathy's "narration, which encompasses the entire novel, seems to be a carrier of the unoriginal expression that Ishiguro wants us to value." (224). The "unoriginal expression" Walkowitz discusses is the ordinariness that I describe, but this does not make Kathy "unoriginal" as Walkowitz describes, but rather, a unique person. To live an authentic, fulfilled existence does not require a person do "great" things or be novel, but to have an authentic relationship with oneself.

The specific character of Ishiguro's authenticity makes his choice of clones as his principal characters intelligible. There are two fundamental differences between clones and nonclones. First, the life of clones is seriously condensed, spanning, if they're lucky, into their late twenties or early thirties. As Ishiguro explains, "I just compressed the time span through this device. A normal life span is between sixty to eighty-five years; these people [in *Never Let Me Go*] artificially have the period shortened. But basically they face the same questions we all face" ("NLMG" 197). This condensing of the clones' life span combats the notion that what defines a fully realized life is quantity. The fact that it doesn't matter is invigorating—to live a fulfilled life does not mean living as long as we can and doing as much as we can, but carving out our own individual existence. The nonclones' decision to harvest organs to expand their lives seems infantile when authenticity is shown in relationship to quality. The second fundamental difference is that clones are given a purpose for existence: to sacrifice their organs. But even with this externally predetermined purpose, Kathy is able to create her own purpose. Purpose is not something eternal that we need to discover, but something we all have the ability to create.

Kathy H. is authentic. But she is not the standard by which authenticity should be measured if by “standard” we mean a prescriptive set of rules. For the authentic self is the self that creates for itself its own project, its own existential arc, and any attempt at emulation would undermine its very definition. Jacob Golomb summarizes this complication in his assertion that “Arguing for authenticity is self-defeating in that it presupposes the authority of rationality and objectivity, which is called into question by this ideal” (18). What Kathy H. accomplishes in her self-presentation is a figure of authenticity. Her journey towards the authentic is, to use Auerbach’s terminology, a *figura* of our own journey, fulfilled only through the reader’s turning inward and beginning their own process of authentic self-creation.

## Bibliography

- Atwood, Margaret. "Brave New World." Rev. of *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *Slate*. 1 April 2005. Web. 25 August 2011.
- Beedham, Matthew. *The Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro: A Reader's Guide to Essential Critical Scholarship*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*. Trans. Howard Eiland. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2006. Print.
- Chertoff, Daniel and Leona Toker. "Reader Response and the Recycling of Topoi in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*." *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem* 6.1 (2008): 163-180. Web. 10 Oct. 2011.
- Currie, Mark. "Controlling Time: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*." *Kazuo Ishiguro*. Ed. Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes. New York: Continuum International, 2009. 91-103. Print.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: Kensington Publishing, 1976. Print.
- Golomb, Jacob. *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Grossman, Lev. "*Never Let Me Go*." Rev. of *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *Time Entertainment* 29 Dec. 2009. Web. 25 August 2011.
- Harrison, John. "Clone Alone." Rev. of *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The Guardian* 25 Feb. 2005. Web. 25 August 2011.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1962. Print.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. "A Conversation about Life and Art with Kazuo Ishiguro." Interview with Cynthia F. Wong and Grace Crummett. *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*. Ed. Brian W. Shaffer and Cynthia Wong. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008. 204-220. Print.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go*. New York: Vintage International, 2005. Print.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. "*Never Let Me Go*: A Profile of Kazuo Ishiguro." Interview with John Freeman. *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*. Ed. Brian W. Shaffer and Cynthia Wong. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008. 194-198. Print.
- Mark Jerng. "Giving Form to Life: Cloning and Narrative Expectations of the Human." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 6.2 (2008): 369-393. Web. 5 Oct.

2011.

McDonald, Keith. "Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as 'Speculative Memoir'." *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 30.1 (2007): 74-83. Web. 9 Oct. 2011.

Messud, Claire. "Love's Body." Rev. of *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The Nation* 28 April 2005. Web. 25 August 2011.

Robbins, Bruce. "Cruelty Is Bad: Banality and Proximity in *Never Let Me Go*." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 40.3 (2007): 289-302. Web. 9 Oct. 2011.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press, 1984. Print.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*. Trans. Philip Mairet. London: Methuen & Co, 1962. Print.

Seaman, Myra. "Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future." *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37.2 (2007): 246-275. Web. 4 Oct. 2011.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. Herschel Baker, et al. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997. 1355-1390. Print.

Thomas, Dylan. "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night." *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. Ed. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996. 1465. Print.

Walkowitz, Rebeca. "Unimaginable Largeness: Kazuo Ishiguro, Translation, and the New World Literature." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 40.3 (2007): 216-239. Web. 1 Oct. 2011.

Wood, James. "The Human Difference." Rev. of *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The New Republic*. 16 May 2005. Web. 25 August 2011.