



# Never letting go of the past : Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go as a dystopian story of recollection

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Mention 2<sup>nd</sup> degré, Professeur des Lycées et Collèges,

Never letting go of the past

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as a dystopian story of recollection

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# INTRODUCTION

The subject of my thesis revolves around two processes: one of memory and one of narration. In fact, the novel under study, *Never Let Me Go*, written by Kazuo Ishiguro in 2005, is a story of going in endless circles to define one's identity. Kathy H., the protagonist of the story, tells us about her life through a diary-like narrative, which reminds us of the Bildungsroman:

Bildungsroman, class of novel that depicts and explores the manner in which the protagonist develops morally and psychologically. The German word Bildungsroman means "novel of education" or "novel of formation."<sup>1</sup>

We discover her life chronologically from childhood to adulthood and we witness the process of growing-up as she experienced it. When Kathy H. narrates her story, she is already thirty-one and is soon to die. Indeed, she has been a carer for almost twelve years now and is soon to start donating her organs, like the people she cared for, who are clones, just like her. Facing her inescapable death, she looks back on her past and shares with us the details about her life with Ruth and Tommy, the two closest friends she had, who are dead by the time she starts writing. Their growing-up together really reflects the Bildungsroman process as they undergo typical stages of life and the things that come with it: the innocence of childhood, the discovery of the(ir) world's workings, the rejection of codes and the quest to self-define... Their triangular friendship encounters many issues as jealousy arises and as, most of the time, they fail to communicate properly one with one another. While Tommy always stands by Kathy's side, Ruth draws her away from Tommy and rejects her: Kathy decides to become a carer and years pass before she gets to see Ruth and Tommy again. By the time they meet again, they have gained wisdom and, with hindsight, they are able to root out the evil, reunite and try to right the wrongs the best they can with the little time they have left.

*Never Let Me Go* possesses several characteristics that can lead us to define it as a dystopia. Even though not set in the future – but rather in the past, as we learn from the beginning that it is set in 1990s England – nor in a futuristic environment, the fact that the story deals with clones is already a strong argument in favor of this definition. The dystopian nature of *Never Let Me*

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<sup>1</sup> Britannica, "bildungsroman", <https://www.britannica.com/art/bildungsroman> (visited on 27/11/21)

*Go* has been questioned times and times again. Kalina Maleska, in her article “*Clones are humans: the dystopian elements in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go*”, raises this disagreement as to the nature of the novel:

Most critics do not recognize it as belonging in the utopian (or more specifically dystopian) genre. The reason for this is that the novel is concerned with human experience as we know it, and does not portray a future world in which the landscape has greatly been altered in comparison to the one that exists in the present, but rather portrays an alternative reality which largely resembles the present, with a single, yet essential, difference from our own world.<sup>2</sup>

This goes against one’s usual representation of a dystopia. Turning to the website Masterclass, here is what we can find about dystopia:

Dystopian fiction offers a vision of the future. Dystopias are societies in cataclysmic decline, with characters who battle environmental ruin, technological control, and government oppression. Dystopian novels can challenge readers to think differently about current social and political climates, and in some instances can even inspire action.<sup>3</sup>

This definition offers characteristics that can be found in Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel. The society in *Never Let Me Go* is not fighting environmental ruin or a cataclysmic decline, but the characters are the victims of government oppression. Technology in *Never Let Me Go* has reached the point where people can be cloned successfully so as to provide them with organs whenever needed. Speculative, this novel shows us a world that, though not real, could well enough become our future.

To me, this suffices to put the novel into this category. Notably, Kalina Maleska mentions several elements of the dystopian genre that can be found in the novel: “*the isolation of the clones from the rest of society because of lack of opportunities for social mobility*”, “*the consequences of technological progress in the world established in the novel*”, “*the clones are completely separated from the rest of the people in the society*”<sup>2</sup>, among many others. For sure, it is an atypical dystopia, but the life of the clones, defined by confined spaces, an impossibility to travel and be free, a fate restricted to slowly dying by having pieces of oneself taken away piece by piece, and the terrible inevitability of it all, are arguments enough to enter it in the

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<sup>2</sup> Maleska, Kalina, “*Clones are humans: the dystopian elements in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go*”, *Journal of Contemporary Philology*, 2019, Vol. 2 (1), p. 123-138.

<sup>3</sup> MasterClass, “*What is dystopian fiction? Learn about the 5 characteristics of dystopian fiction with examples*”, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-dystopian-fiction-learn-about-the-5-characteristics-of-dystopian-fiction-with-examples#what-is-the-significance-of-dystopian-fiction> (visited on 27/11/21)

dystopian genre. According to Merriam Webster's Dictionary, dystopia is defined as: "*an imagined world or society in which people lead wretched, dehumanized, fearful lives*"<sup>4</sup>.

Even though the story is set in the English society of the 1990s, it definitely depicts a dehumanized society, both from the side of the clones and from the side of the others: the clones are not even considered as humans, and end up believing this condition, but the other people are only a peripheral part of the book, and by farming people to harvest their organs, in my opinion, they trade their humanity. Fear in the clones is silent and internal, perhaps because they resigned themselves to this kind of life they cannot run away from anyway. By turning a blind eye to the lives of clones, people can go on with this inhumane practice.

Moreover, even if we do not see it clearly at first, we slowly understand what is so special about the "students", the name given to the children (including Kathy, Ruth and Tommy): they are clones, doomed to donate their organs one by one until they die (or rather "complete", as the euphemism used in the novel presents it), with no possibility of refusing or escaping. It is surprising that they should be called "students" and yet be considered as, for example, "creatures" (by Madam), showing the contradiction in the way they are perceived. Treating them as normal children and teenagers (going to school, learning things) for a time, before seeing them as only organ distributors whose approval is not asked for, makes it even more macabre. Therefore, they have no freedom of choice, and they are kept away from society, prevented from mixing with normal human beings. The discrimination they are the victims of does not stop there: they are considered as sub-humans; and, worse than everything, they have been deprived of the most natural trait of their being: they cannot have children. However, the injustice they are experiencing does not take on the form of violent repression or totalitarianism as one often sees in dystopia. Instead, they are raised in Hailsham, a school for clones, where Guardians take care of them, teach them different disciplines (including art, literature, geography...) and prepare them for their future duty. Outwardly, we can consider that they are being taken care of. But in fact, manipulation is more insidious, almost invisible to the naked eye: the students are "*told but not told*" (p. 79) about what will happen to them once they grow up, rumors are spread among students as of what happened to those who tried to escape (the rumors taking on a horrific, Grimm's fairy tale aspect), knowledge is not impartial and objective but selective and controlled, and their everyday life is monitored. In other words, manipulation is omnipresent in the students' lives, so much so that even when they leave Hailsham and go to

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<sup>4</sup> Merriam Webster, "*dystopia*", <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dystopia> (visited on 27/11/21)

the Cottages or other places to spend their time before becoming a carer or a donor, the thought of escaping does not even cross their mind. Consequently, dystopia in *Never Let Me Go* takes on a very original, unusual shape, making it, perhaps, even more gloomy than a proclaimed dystopia.

*Never Let Me Go* was written after the arising of the ethical debates concerning cloning in the 1990s. The birth of Dolly (1996-2003), the scientifically-engineered sheep, shook up people's beliefs and opened the Pandora's box of genetic manipulation. For or against, useful or harmful, ethical or immoral, heated discussions skyrocketed and nowadays' discoveries with eugenics and genetic engineering do not make it any better. In this respect, Kazuo Ishiguro's novel is a smart and unique approach to cloning, as it displays a world in which cloning is established, socially (and legally) accepted, and in which the clones look...exactly like us. To say it differently, nothing physical can differentiate them from human beings. This similarity creates an uncanny feeling in the human beings of the novel, including the Guardians, but also in us readers: what makes a human, human? What does it really mean to be human? Is this definition going to be challenged in the near future? Those are some of the questions that can arise from reading Kazuo Ishiguro. About his novel, in an interview, Kazuo Ishiguro says:

Over the last fifteen years I kept writing pieces of a story about an odd group of "students" in the English countryside. I was never sure who these people were. I just knew they lived in wrecked farmhouses, and though they did a few typically student-like things—argued over books, worked on the occasional essay, fell in and out of love—there was no college campus or teacher anywhere in sight. I knew too that some strange fate hung over these young people, but I didn't know what. In my study at home, I have a lot of these short pieces, some going back as far as the early '90s. I'd wanted to write a novel about my students, but I'd never got any further; I'd always ended up writing some other quite different novel. Then around four years ago I heard a discussion on the radio about advances in biotechnology. I usually tune out when scientific discussions come on, but this time I listened, and the framework around these students of mine finally fell in place. I could see a way of writing a story that was simple, but very fundamental, about the sadness of the human condition.<sup>5</sup>

The main purpose of Kazuo Ishiguro is not to warn us about technological progress. Instead, it deals with the “*sadness of the human condition*”, that is, our mortality. In *Never Let Me Go*, the society has found a way to cheat death and go against the natural order of life. On the

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<sup>5</sup> BookBrowse, “An interview with Kazuo Ishiguro”, [https://www.bookbrowse.com/author\\_interviews/full/index.cfm/author\\_number/477/kazuo-ishiguro](https://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/477/kazuo-ishiguro) (visited on 27/11/21)



contrary, the clones accept their mortality. This contradiction often led people to ask Kazuo Ishiguro about the resignation of the clones: why do they not escape? Why do they not fight back? On this subject, Kazuo Ishiguro, in an interview with Film Independent, said:

I was never interested in looking at that story of slaves who rebel and escape. [...] I'm fascinated by the extent to which people don't run away. [...] That is the remarkable fact, how much we accept what fate has given us. [...] Ultimately, I suppose, [...] I was looking for a metaphor for how we face mortality. [...] And we can't really escape from that.<sup>6</sup>

The quest for identity, though exemplified through the clones of *Never Let Me Go*, can be extrapolated to us all: what makes us humans? Who are we? Who do we want to be? This quest for the self is undertaken by Kathy H. in a sort of detective way: looking for clues in her past, she tries to define herself at the same time as we get to know her. Leaving breadcrumbs through her narrative, jumping back and forth in time, this quest turns into a crucial and obsessional hunt for meaning, as she tries to rediscover what she always knew, what has always been hiding in plain sight: the truth of her past. But what truth is that?

Ishiguro was born in 1954 in Japan but moved to Britain soon after. This lack of a defined, finite identity is something that can be found in *Never Let Me Go* but that surely extends to his other novels. His writing differs from usual dystopia, making it all the more interesting and unique, which is what struck me first when reading *Never Let Me Go*, and what made me choose to work on this novel in particular. We follow Kathy's narrative, we join her through the years she is recollecting, as if we were here, with her. We are silent witnesses to her ordeals, unable to react, unable to help her: we can only listen to her, to what she has to say, and reflect on ourselves afterwards. I think this is what attracted me the most to Kazuo Ishiguro: the way the story is told, always keeping us waiting, unable to fully grasp Kathy's personality and destiny until the moment she meets with Madam accompanied by Tommy, near the end of the novel. The reason for his writing this novel is shady: is it really about cloning, or is it about identity, really?

The least we can say is that *Never Let Me Go* may be approached from many different perspectives. Nevertheless, my analysis will focus on the issue of the quest for identity, and

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<sup>6</sup> YouTube, "Kazuo Ishiguro discusses his intention behind writing the novel, *Never Let Me Go*", Film Independent, 2016 (visited on 27/11/21)

more precisely, how the quest for identity is led by Kathy H., how the truth is slowly unveiled, to us (readers) but also to Kathy herself, who tries to remember and recreate her life, in a dystopian, atypical frame, how the construction of the narrative echoes the reconstruction of memory. Is Kathy's fragmentation of memory due to the natural process of recollecting or is it due to Kathy's unconscious fear of the truth? And finally, how does the act of recollecting revolve around a central mystery that resembles a detective's inquiry, thus embracing not only the dystopian but also the detective genre?

My analysis will be divided into three parts: firstly, I shall depict the dystopian and detective elements presented in this novel, and particularly, I will focus on what makes *Never Let Me Go* a very peculiar and unique dystopia. Secondly, I will address the issue of the quest for identity undertaken by Kathy, that is to say, what in the novel leads us to understand that she is looking for herself through her recollection of memories. And finally, I will discuss the way the narrative is paralleling Kathy's search for truth, and the way, likewise, Kathy is manipulating the narrative (consciously or unconsciously) so as to flee the harshness of reality.

## **I. NEVER LET ME GO: AT A CROSSROADS BETWEEN DYSTOPIA AND DETECTIVE FICTION**

### **A. DEALING WITH MORTALITY**

Dystopia is not at the core of this novel. In fact, it was not the central purpose of Kazuo Ishiguro in writing this novel. He did not focus on the genres, but on the ideas that filled his novel. He wanted to write a book about mortality and resilience. Therefore, it leads us to see this novel as being a unique dystopia. In contrast with, for instance, Margaret Atwood, who writes speculative fictions to warn us about the future, Kazuo Ishiguro does not claim his novel to be dystopian, nor does he warn us about anything directly. However, this novel still fits the genre of a dystopia. In their article, J. H. de Villiers and M. Slabbert explains:

The students have also been brought to life with the predetermined purpose of meeting someone else's demand. [...] The theme of dehumanization is introduced in the novel. Living beings are reduced to "mere objects". [...] They don't "die" but are rather said to "complete" after three or four donations, once again

invoking the image of an object fulfilling its purpose. The dehumanizing effect is inculcated in the students and perpetuated through other peoples' behavior towards them.<sup>7</sup>

Despite expressing emotions like love, hatred and sadness, as humans do, and despite their uncanny resemblance to us, the clones are still treated as mere objects, brought to life to accomplish a purpose, like an object. The fact that Kathy can feel those human things, express her creativity in art or write an essay for instance makes leads us to think that she resembles us more than the people in the novel believe. With the first-person narrative, we are thrown into her thoughts, and become close to her, knowing everything that goes through her head through this diary-like story of her life. Madame shows an ambivalent reaction to the clones, seeing them both as things to be used, and yet, feeling empathy for them. The purpose of boarding schools like Hailsham was to unveil the cruelty of the cloning practice. Miss Emily, one of the guardians, says, in the third part of the novel:

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*. [...] It wasn't something commonly held when we first set out all those years ago. [...] Together, we became a small but very vocal movement, and we challenged the entire way the donations programme was being run. Most importantly, we demonstrated to the world that if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being.<sup>8</sup>

However, despite fighting to prove that the clones had souls, at no point do Madame or Miss Emily say that this practice should be stopped. Their only belief is that clones should be treated humanely, but not that this practice should be forbidden. They resigned themselves to the world they live in, where people have found a way to cheat death:

After the war, in the early fifties, when the great breakthroughs in science followed one after the other so rapidly, there wasn't time to take stock, to ask the sensible questions. Suddenly there were all these new possibilities laid before us, all these ways to cure so many previously incurable conditions. This was what the world noticed the most, wanted the most. And for a long time, people preferred to believe these organs appeared from nowhere, or at most that they grew in a kind of vacuum. [...] How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask such a world to put away that cure, to go back to the dark days? There was no going back.<sup>8</sup>

In this regard, the society in *Never Let Me Go* has not accepted their mortality. Having found a way to live longer, better lives, they do not wish to go back. In a way, this example

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<sup>7</sup> De Villiers J. H., Slabbert M., "*Never Let Me Go: Science Fiction and Legal Reality*", *Literator*, 2011, Vol. 32, No 3, p. 85-104.

<sup>8</sup> Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go*, Bloomsbury House, Faber and Faber Limited, 2005, p. 255-256

is not far off from our own societies. Many experiments were made to find cures and treatments, whose ethics were questionable. And yet, people rejoiced around the results. Even though the society in this novel can be seen as cruel and inhumane, it only reflects our own dilemma regarding life and death: how far would we go to better our lives? The ongoing conflict about genetically engineered babies, whose parents could choose their gender, eye color, and potentially eliminate diseases before birth, would lead to a society where people would not have to deal with the death of their loved ones. Even though this novel was released in 2005, it is more relevant today than ever. In fact, this is a feature of dystopias we always encounter: using an apparently unrealistic setting to raise current issues in our society. Dystopias stem from an exaggeration of “what could happen” if we push our well-being to the extreme, no matter the consequences. In this regard, Schneider Ana-Karina writes, in an article on Kazuo Ishiguro: “*Fear of mortality was a force powerful enough to turn the country into a human organ farm. [...] Individuals and societies do not fully examine the broad consequences of their decisions.*”<sup>9</sup>

Miss Emily explains that people preferred to turn a blind-eye on the process of making clones and harvesting organs, because the benefits outweighed the process. In a way, it reminds us of the movie *The Island*, in which clones are also created to serve as organ-donors for real people. In the movie, one of the characters, Mac, tells the clones: “*Just cause people wanna eat the burger doesn't mean they wanna meet the cow*”. Other authors, like Petrillo Stephanie, have written on this selfish attitude from people in the novel:

That cloning technology was developed sometime in the 1990's and it was employed for the purpose of providing people with new organs. [...] Ultimately the people who support the program are unwilling to abandon it, regardless of the question of its ethics. [...] Humans are perpetually self-interested, to the detriment of other beings.<sup>10</sup>

After all, though we may consider ourselves as superior to animals, because we are endowed with reason, we still cannot get rid of our primal instinct: survival at any cost.

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<sup>9</sup> Marchalik Daniel, Jurecic Ann, “Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Uncanny Science*”, *The Lancet* (British edition), Vol. 387 (10026), 2016, p. 1365.

<sup>10</sup> Petrillo, Stephanie, “*Moral Theories and Cloning in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go*”, *Berkeley Undergraduate Journal*, 27(1), 2014, p. 45-62.

## B. THE DICHOTOMY OF HAILSHAM

Hailsham, the boarding school in which the students are raised, may appear first as a utopian place. Students there are seen by others as privileged. From the very beginning, Kathy says: *“people from Hailsham, or one of the other privileged estates”* (p. 4). When going to the Cottages, a place for clones to stay until they start becoming carers and donors, Chrissie and Rodney, two other students, say to Kathy, Ruth and Tommy, during a trip: *“But you Hailsham lot, you’re really lucky”* (p. 150). Because they have been raised in humane conditions, unlike clones in other places, other clones see Hailsham students as privileged. In fact, Miss Emily tells the Hailsham students how lucky they were, when she says: *“you’d not sleep for days if you saw what still goes on in some of those places”* (p. 260), referring to the other places where clones are raised. Before learning about the fate of the clones, when reading about Hailsham, we are led to believe that this place is idyllic: the students can rely on the guardians (the word “guardian” itself gives a sense of safety and protection), they are led to express their creativity through art, they do not suffer from any abuse, and they are looked after properly. Nevertheless, many things eventually lead us to see Hailsham as a hypocritical, somber place. First, the use of euphemisms, such as “guardian” for those who keep an eye on the clones until they are old enough to become carers and donors, gives a fake sense of security to the students. When they die, the clones are not said to die but to “complete”, as though they achieved something they should be proud of, taking away the horrific nature of this practice. Even though the students always knew about their fate, it was presented to them in a shady, indirect future: Kathy does say to Tommy, when they are children, *“but we have been taught about all that”* (p. 29), and yet, they avoid thinking about it as much as possible: *“to probe any further [...] would get us into territory we weren’t ready for yet”* (p. 37), *“we knew just enough to make us wary of that whole territory”* (p. 69), the word “territory” here appears twice, giving a peculiar sense of space to the students: they can get lost in the “territory” of their thoughts and doubts, in the territory of their imagination, but they are not allowed to ask about it too much, to try to wander and understand it completely. *“We’d backed off at the first sign we were entering that ground”* (p. 83), *“the donations went back to being a subject to be avoided. [...] This time round it wasn’t awkward or embarrassing any more; just sombre and serious”* (p. 87).

Then, the students are confined to Hailsham. They have never set foot outside, and rumors in Hailsham work as a dissuasion for students who would ever think of going away:

There were all kinds of horrible stories about the woods. Once, not so long before we all got to Hailsham, a boy had had a big row with his friends and run off beyond the Hailsham boundaries. His body had been found two days later, up in those woods, tied to a tree with the hands and feet chopped off. Another rumor had it that a girl's ghost wandered through those trees. She'd been a Hailsham student until one day she'd climbed over a fence just to see what it was like outside. This was a long time before us, when the guardians were much stricter, cruel even, and when she tried to get back in, she wasn't allowed. She kept hanging around outside the fences, pleading to be let back in, but no one let her. Eventually, she'd gone off somewhere out there, something had happened and she'd died. But her ghost was always wandering about the woods, gazing over Hailsham, pining to be let back in.<sup>8</sup>

Again, the reference to space ("woods", "boundaries", "wandered") is related to the idea of transgression and, above all, punishment. Those who dared wander off met a terrible end. This can be linked to the dystopian genre, in which everything is controlled and limited to certain areas, certain rules. Also, this could be linked to fairy tales, which often take place in natural areas, untamed spaces. Here, the woods are dangerous, because they seem to be endless (they have no perceivable end), a place to get lost into, and a dark one due to the shadows. Overall, they look like an unwelcoming space, due to their lack of light and, therefore, their lack of warmth.

These rumors play on different aspects. First, they play on the imagination of children, who easily get scared of the dark and of monsters. Actually, the woods are perceived by the students as frightening. For example, when Kathy and her friends punish a girl for having crossed a line, they force her to look at the woods at night. Secondly, they give the children a sense of security within limits: Hailsham is a safe haven that protects them from the scary outside world. Everything else is dangerous but Hailsham. Finally, they warn the students as to what would happen if they dare stepping out of Hailsham grounds: they would meet a painful and horrible death, and they would never be able to come back to the safe place that is Hailsham, no matter how much they beg for it.

Hailsham is located on a hill, far away from civilization. No matter where they look, the students cannot see a city, or anything else. This plays on their isolation and, therefore, on their confinement. As they have nothing to compare with Hailsham, and as Hailsham is their only reference, they cannot hope for anything else, anything better.

Moreover, the students must undergo medical exams every week: “*at Hailsham we had to have some form of medical almost every week*” (p. 13), which leads us to consider the students are treated like lab rats that need to be watched over and inspected carefully.

Finally, the knowledge being given to the students is controlled: they are taught not to smoke, not to have sex with just anyone, not to damage their health... The supreme idea in the novel is that students are “*told and not told*” (p. 79). Tommy even ended up realizing it, later:

Tommy thought it possible the guardians had, throughout all our years at Hailsham, timed very carefully and deliberately everything they told us, so that we were always just too young to understand properly the last piece of information. [...] It's a bit too much like a conspiracy theory for me – I don't think our guardians were that crafty – but there's probably something in it. Certainly, it feels like I *always* knew about donations in some vague way, even as early as six or seven. And it's curious, when we were older and the guardians were giving us those talks, nothing came as a complete surprise. It *was* like we'd heard everything somewhere before. 8

### C. DETECTIVE KATHY

And yet, Kathy cannot pinpoint exactly when this knowledge was given to them. She is in the dark regarding this matter, as many others. That is why she tries, throughout the novel, to get to the bottom of things, in a detective's manner. To develop this idea, I will mainly use the thesis of James Dalrymple, “*Jouer au détective chez Kazuo Ishiguro et dans le whodunit métafictionnel britannique*”<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, the whole novel feels like a detective story, where the truth needs to be unveiled, where things have to be put into question so as to find out the truth. Dalrymple argues: “*Les protagonistes se retrouvent à endosser le rôle du détective pour élucider des mystères. La révélation de la vérité est structurée autour des investigations du héros*” (p. 25). To Kathy, everything becomes a mystery: the tokens controversy, the Gallery, the rumors regarding the woods, [...] and she makes it her mission, her duty even, to figure things out. For instance, the first investigation she leads concerns Tommy. “*If it hadn't been for that encounter on the stairs, I probably wouldn't have taken the interest I did in Tommy's problems over the next several weeks. [...] I quizzed people until I'd got a more or less full account*” (p. 14). Kathy acts like a detective. “*I was, as I say, watching the situation closely*

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<sup>11</sup> Dalrymple, James, “*Jouer au détective chez Kazuo Ishiguro et dans le whodunit métafictionnel britannique*”, *Linguistique. Université Grenoble Alpes*, 2017, Français, NNT: 2017GREAL009, tel-01742516v2.

*around then [...] but I'd spotted other changes, [...] keeping an eye on Tommy"* (p. 21). She investigates Tommy as if he was a criminal or a piece of evidence that needs to be thoroughly looked in. It comes to the point that Tommy actually points it out to Kathy, when he says: *"You notice everything, don't you, Kath? [...] you're so nosy"* (p. 23).

As Dalrymple writes, *"Cette notion que l'analyse d'évènements du passé a déjà été conclue s'affiche aussi dans la tendance de Kathy à nommer certains "épisodes" mystérieux de son passé comme s'ils étaient des "cas" de détective"* (p. 34).

However, Kathy knows she must be discreet: *"And by the time I sat down with my friends, I was trying to figure out how I could sneak off afterwards down to the pond without getting everyone curious"* (p. 24). Dalrymple explains that there is "a sort of double investigation in the novel: the mysteries of her childhood memories and the investigations she did with Tommy as they grew up" (p.100). Actually, most of the things Kathy investigates on are things she questioned once she reached adulthood, when reminiscing about the past with Tommy. However, this detective nature of hers started in her childhood.

Kathy was already something of a detective back then: she tries to figure out what the Gallery is and what it is meant for, especially with Tommy; she wants to figure out with Ruth whether or not Madame is afraid of them, and they go as far as *"to put her theory to the test the next time Madame came to Hailsham"* (p. 33). This little adventure leads to a lot of planning by the students involved: *"we decided to take turns keeping look-out"* (p. 34), *"the plan we'd come up with to test Ruth's theory was very simple: we – the six of us in on it – would lie in wait for Madame somewhere, then 'swarm out' all around her, all at once"* (p. 34). Detective skills are mentioned here, such as deduction, experimentation, and tailing. It results in a sort of reversal of positions, between the observer and the observed, the carer and the cared for. In a way, children overthrow the authority in place with their investigation. Even though children are dehumanized and treated as rat labs, it seems that their investigation restores their human skills and almost turns Madame into a lab rat, an object for experiments.

The other big plan the students have, as children, is to protect Miss Geraldine from a kidnapping. *"By the time I joined the guard, Ruth and the others had already known for ages about the plot to kidnap Miss Geraldine. We were never quite sure who was behind it. We sometimes suspected certain of the Senior boys, sometimes boys in our own year. [...] We didn't know when the abduction would take place, but one thing we felt convinced about was that the woods would come into it"* (p. 49), *"our activities always revolved around gathering*



*more and more evidence concerning the plot itself. [...] Most of our 'evidence' came from witnessing the conspirators at work"* (p. 51). There is a reversal here too, as a way of gaining power in a place where the children are powerless and helpless, but also of gaining knowledge in a place where knowledge is constantly withheld from them. Because the adults won't give them the truth, they find a way to get it themselves, though differently.

Kathy also leads investigation on her own, notably concerning Miss Lucy: *"I watched her carefully whenever I could, not just from curiosity, but because I now saw her as the most likely source of important clues. And that's how it was, over the next year or two, I came to notice various odd little things she said or did that my friends missed altogether"* (p. 76). In a way, Kathy acts as though she was the only one endowed with discernment and able to figure things out. She thinks she is somehow superior to her friends because she has this capacity to think things over and the eagerness to understand things. As for us readers, it is up to us to separate right from wrong.

Dalrymple writes: *"il faut toujours que le lecteur fasse le tri entre les éléments du récit pertinents ou non quant à la résolution de l'énigme. [...] il est encouragé à prendre en compte le plus petit détail raconté au cas où celui-ci porterait une signification latente envers la résolution du mystère"* (p. 141). So not only are we to investigate on why the students are so special, on what will happen to the students, we also have to take everything Kathy says with perspective and distance, quite lost between what matters and what doesn't, sometimes thinking a detail is important whereas it turns out to be useless, or vice versa. It is no wonder one of the books referred to in the novel (and forbidden to the students) is Sherlock Holmes, the most prolific and famous detective in the world. Could it be a way to stomp out every possible attempt of the students to put their life in question? Or is it a simple allusion from Kazuo Ishiguro to the behavior of Kathy?

The last big investigation Kathy leads, along with Tommy, concerns the deferrals. That is, a way for students in love to postpone the moment they have to start donating their organs, so as to enjoy a couple years together before their inevitable destiny. This rumor goes back as far as the Cottages, but it is only when Ruth, Kathy and Tommy reunite, as Ruth and Tommy already started donating, that this rumor takes on a real investigating aspect. In fact, Ruth got the hand on the address of Madame, who, supposedly, is the one granting deferrals, as she was also the one getting artworks for her Gallery, artworks that, Tommy and Kathy suppose, are meant to show if two students truly are in love.

Kathy ends up investigating on her own, making sure that the address given by Ruth is the one: *“I’d sat down and waited – again, the way I’d done before – with my eyes fixed on the house over the street. ‘It was just like detective stuff. The previous times, I’d sat there for over half an hour each go, and nothing, absolutely nothing. But something told me I’d be lucky this time’ ”* (p. 239). As for Tommy, he carefully draws animals, hoping it isn’t too late for him to present artworks to Madame, so as to get a chance to be with Kathy for some years. However, their theory is crushed by Madame and Miss Emily: *“if they are so foolish, let them believe it”* (p. 252), *“you’ve thought carefully. You’ve hoped carefully. For students like you, I do feel regret. It gives me no pleasure at all to disappoint you. But there it is. [...] There’s no truth in the rumour. I’m sorry. I truly am.”* (p. 253).

To conclude with this part, *Never Let Me Go* does not fit in one’s usual definition of a dystopia. And yet, the fate of the clones, the ambivalent face of Hailsham, and the underlying uncanny feeling about it all make it so that *Never Let Me Go* can be defined as a dystopia, even if, to this day, this is still put into question. As we are investigators of the society Kathy lives in and of her destiny, Kathy is the investigator of her life: unable to escape her death, she turns towards the past, secluded in her memories after Ruth and Tommy died, trying to revive it all. The diary-like nature of this novel makes it so that it looks both like a confession book, a detective novel, and like a testimony of her life, a receptacle for her memories to live on forever.

## **II. THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY: RECOLLECTION OF MEMORIES**

### **A. THE CRUCIAL ASPECT OF MEMORY**

The purpose of Kazuo Ishiguro was to focus on memory and mortality: how do we deal with the inevitability of death, and how does memory play a part in accepting and dealing with death. Memory also serves as a way to define our identity: looking back at who we used to be, we are able to shape a definition of ourselves, regarding our actions, our way to think, our lifestyle. Therefore, the purpose of Kathy is to find herself, to define herself, looking back in time, as she has already reached the end of her life. Even though her society striped her of her humanity, she refuses to consider herself as just a tool, but instead, builds herself an identity

and a set of memories, just as any other human would do. In her article, Guo Wen writes: “*Yugin Teo also notes that Ishiguro presents us with novels about “the continual affirmation of the memory of people and places that made us who we are”*”<sup>12</sup>. By remembering her friends, her guardians, the things she did, felt and experienced, Kathy can assert herself as being someone, and not forget. She knows perfectly well that the end is near, making it all the more important:

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. What I really wanted, I suppose, was to get straight all the things that happened between me and Tommy and Ruth after we grew up and left Hailsham.<sup>8</sup>

Reading her story, we completely forget that she is a clone: in fact, everything about her seems human to us. She expresses doubt, uncertainty, love and worries, just as we do. In her article, Kalina Maleska explains: “*the human identity of the clones, their memories, apprehension, love, sadness are so much like the human identity familiar to the people of the contemporary world*”<sup>2</sup>. Just like the people in the novel, if we are not told that the clones are clones, we would have no way to notice.

The way Kathy addresses the reader can lead us to wonder who she is talking to. The fact that she assumes we know about her life, especially when she says: “*I don't know how it was where you were*” (p. 13), makes us believe she may be talking to a clone like herself. However, I would like to think she talks to us, not minding whether we might be a clone or not. The fact that she wonders what other people grew up with actually leads me to think that she, herself, did not target someone in particular (clone or human), but wanted to address everyone at the same time. However, Maleska considers that:

Kathy tells her story to someone; it appears that she talks to a person directly, to another carer, but that person never responds in the course of the novel, so it can be concluded that Kathy most probably imagines she is talking to someone [...] that a likeminded soul will hear her, which would give comfort to her life that is soon to end.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, a clone may read this testimony differently than a human would, as he would know what she is going through, so they could link their feelings and apprehensions. Kathy's memories, as Maleska adds later, “*come in fragments*”, just like “*her address to the unidentified person*”. She also adds:

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<sup>12</sup> Guo, Wen, “*Human Cloning as the Other in Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*”, *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 17.5, 2015, p. 1-7.

These statements compose only a small part of the sentences in which Kathy remembers her past, but they are significant because they clearly show that she wants to make her presence felt, recognized by someone else, which would confirm her identity [indicates] her wish that the person listening to her would also be a clone, like herself, raised in a similar boarding school. If someone knows her story, she feels her memories would go on, and not be lost along with her upcoming death.<sup>2</sup>

This way, Kathy gives a voice to the voiceless, by being the one giving her testimony to her life as a clone. Just as the society she lives in does not know about her kind, we also know nothing about her. This testimony serves them just as it serves us. She cannot look to the future anymore, but only to the past. Who she is is not only defined by the whole, but by every single moment of her life, that led her where she is now: waiting to donate her organs, having lost everyone she cared for, and everything she knew – that is, Ruth, Tommy and Hailsham. Maleska points out:

Facing the death of her closest friends and her own impending death, Kathy H. remembers her childhood, questions her actions in an attempt to make sense of her life and understand her and her friends' place in the world.<sup>2</sup>

## B. DEFINING HER HUMANITY

Kathy is not human – she does not have a surname, she cannot have babies, which means she cannot leave a legacy either, except for her testimony. We can feel that she is in a rush: several times we see the word “*anyway*”, as though she did not want to waste too much time on something because too many other things matter and ought to be said as well. And yet, she jumps back and forth and feels the urge to explain everything, so that it becomes clear to us...and maybe to herself. The words “*remember*”, “*reminiscence*”, “*remind*” appear too many times in this novel to be counted – almost at every page of the book. By saying so many times “*I remember*”, she asserts her life as something real, maybe trying to convince herself of the reality and importance of it all. Maleska writes:

The clones are no different from the humans. [...] The same concerns, the same complex inter-human relations, that they establish their identity in the interactions with other people around them and through remembering past events and trying to grasp their meaning and share them with a likeminded person.<sup>2</sup>

And that is why it is so important for Kathy to talk about everyone and everything around her: not only does it define who she is, but it also engraves them forever into her memory and

into history. We are defined by our memories, by our experiences. Kathy is no different on that point.

Going back in time through recollection allows Kathy to collect evidence as to who she is. Just as she investigates people and events around her, she also investigates herself. By going through her life so meticulously, she deconstructs and reconstructs herself piece by piece, going over the story of her life as a detective would over a case.

Kathy is not the only one reminiscing about her life. Several times in the novel, she explains remembering the past with Tommy or Ruth: “*Ruth and I often found ourselves remembering these things a few years ago*” (p. 16), “*these were two regular phrases Ruth and I came up with when we were reminiscing in her room at the centre in Dover*” (p. 43), “*When Ruth and I discussed it while I was caring for her in Dover*” (p. 49), “*Not long ago, when Tommy and I were reminiscing about all of this*” (p. 65), “*Tommy said to me when we were remembering it all again a few years ago*” (p. 87), just to give a few. So, it seems that Kathy is not the only one struggling to define herself and looking for ways to shape her identity. It is a way for them all to leave something behind, to have something tangible to hold onto. Virginia Yeung writes:

The donor’s request makes explicit two things: the consolatory power of memory and the link between memory and death. Kathy starts her narration after losing her best friend Ruth and lover Tommy. Her autobiographical account is a reaction to the trauma of these experiences and also to the fact of her own death, which has become imminent.<sup>13</sup>

Sheltering her memories in a book, something will stay when she is gone. As the last one standing among her friends, she has a duty to write about their life, to mark their time on earth. Because they are not here anymore to do so, it falls on her hands. At the moment she starts writing, everything’s gone already. She cherishes her memories: “*I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won’t lose my memories of them*” (p. 280). She is not experiencing anything anymore, she is only waiting for her time to come, with a surprising eagerness and impatience: “*I wouldn’t mind at all if that’s where I ended up*” (p. 17). Now that she has nothing left, the burden of her life takes over as her mind gets busy with memories and regrets. Her organs will be gone, her life will end: the only thing she can hold onto is her memories:

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<sup>13</sup> Yeung, Virginia, “*Mortality and Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go*”, *Transnational literature*, Vol. 9(2), 2017, p. 1-13.

It's like with my memories of Tommy and Ruth. Once I'm able to have a quieter life, in whichever centre they send me to, I'll have Hailsham with me, safely in my head, and that'll be something no one can take away.<sup>8</sup>

In the last page of the novel, Kathy breaks down. That is when she stops looking at the past and focuses on her unavoidable death, and emotions take over. There is no more space for rational thinking and repressing emotions, and there is no denying her humanity anymore, with its frailty, its fragility, and its complex workings.

That was the only time, as I stood there, looking at that strange rubbish, feeling the wind coming across those empty fields, that I started to imagine just a little fantasy thing, because this was Norfolk after all, and it was only a couple of weeks since I'd lost him. I was thinking about the rubbish, the flapping plastic in the branches, the shore-line of odd stuff caught along the fencing, and I half-closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I'd ever lost since my childhood has washed up, and I was now standing here in front of it, and if I waited long enough, a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the field, and gradually get larger until I'd see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call. The fantasy never got beyond that – I didn't let it – and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be.<sup>8</sup>

Here, in my opinion, Kathy is repressing what she feels: she passed her whole life in a sort of emotional denial, refusing to break down, and numbing herself like that might have been a way for her to go through all of the ordeals she had to face. She even represses her fantasy, knowing that if she lets herself imagine more, she might shatter. In the end, she goes back to being a thing, an object with a purpose, as she goes where she is supposed to be. The novel ends on this, which brings a pathetic turn to this finale. Kathy has nothing more to say, or maybe she does not have the strength to anymore. She lets us to wonder what happened to her after that, but apparently, to her, it was not worth saying, or she did not have what it takes to keep going.

The rubbish imagery is quite striking, with the notion of rubbish being collected along the fencing. This could be a metaphor here of the wind of time scattering memories which are restored to her through the two-fold process of remembering (re-collecting fragments) and narrating. The fencing would then stand for an ephemeral enclosure of memory and writing, capturing the fragments from the past, before they are blown away again. And yet, it can only catch fragments, not the whole thing. Kathy also links the rubbish to the things she has lost, and beyond losing her friends, she also lost some of her memories.

### C. A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY: KATHY AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ALL CLONES

Kathy does not only have an individual identity. In fact, the clones have a collective identity as well: Ruth and Kathy, Kathy and Tommy, and all the students of Hailsham have something in common: their identity. On that, Charlwood Catherine writes:

Being able to share the memories and feelings of their days in Hailsham is a way of affirming its existence as an integral part of their histories...their affirmation of each other's lives through the stories they tell constitutes a mutual or collective recognition of each other.<sup>14</sup>

The history of their lives is mutual, that is also why Kathy spends so much time reminiscing about it with Ruth or Tommy: so as to set the record straight, to compare her version with theirs, even if that means, sometimes, clashing against their version of things: "*she claimed it had been just a matter of two or three weeks – but that was almost certainly wrong. She was probably embarrassed about it and so the whole thing had shrunk in her memory*" (p. 49). She makes assumptions as to other people's versions of things, which might add to her narcissism (just like the fact that she is persuaded she noticed many things other people did not).

Kathy holds her memories dear: "*when I think of that moment now, standing with Tommy in the little side-street about to begin our search, I feel a warmth welling up through me*" (p. 168), "*today, if I happen to get the tape out and look at it, it brings back memories of that afternoon in Norfolk every bit as much as it does our Hailsham days*" (p. 171). They are her way to be, her way to exist. This little tape is a bridge to her past memories, and a way to keep these memories alive by reviving them, re-experiencing them (re-living them). About that, Chanapa Duangfai writes:

Memory or remembering is a self-reflection and this can lead to the recognition of one's own self. [...] Memory is shaped by the desire for meaning. When our past, present and future are intrinsically connected, it is possible that we can develop an understanding towards ourselves as a whole. [...] The memory of Hailsham becomes collective because it allows Kathy to link up with other clones.<sup>15</sup>

If we look at the website ScientificAmerican.com, on Locke's memory theory, we find:

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<sup>14</sup> Charlwood, Catherine, " "Stop...and Remember": Memory and Ageing in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novels", *American, British and Canadian Studies*, Vol. 31, 2018, p. 86-113.

<sup>15</sup> Duangfai, Chanapa, "Psychological disorder and narrative order in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novels", *University of Birmingham*. Ph.D., 2018, p. 1-218.

According to Locke's "memory theory", a person's identity only reaches as far as their memory extends into the past. Thus, as a person's memory begins to disappear, so does his identity.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, following this theory, Kathy's identity is whole, as she can remember her life as early as when she was five: "*I can remember, at five or six, doing things with Hannah and with Laura*" (p. 45). She can easily make an account of her whole life, and put memories next to their timeline. Therefore, her eagerness to write about her life, her fear of forgetting, might be linked to her existential fear: if she does not remember things, she might lose her identity. That is why she holds on tightly to her memories. With her work of recollection, Kathy affirms her identity and may look at the future – however short – that lies before her eyes, knowing who she is. About this, Guo Wen explains:

Aside from nostalgic emotion, Kathy has tried to recreate the 'bygone world' to better understand her past. Structuring one's past experience and attempting to understand it as a unified whole is essentially an act of establishing an identity. Lockean philosophy holds that consciousness constitutes the self and 'as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person'. Locke's theory emphasizes the innate link between personal identity and memory.<sup>13</sup>

In that sense, Kathy's eagerness to relive her past, and to keep some objects from her past to trigger memories, could be linked to her desire to shape her identity and her humanity. The more thoughts and actions she can remember, the more human she becomes.

Dr Kevin Hull, on his website, writes about "*The crucial role of memory in creating identity and a positive sense of self*":

Memory plays an important part of identity formation. [...] As a child develops and has experiences, there is a part of the brain that creates a story from these experiences and over time there is a sense of self that develops. This is known as Autobiographical Memory (AM). Memory plays an important role in helping an individual remember the good choices and positive parts of oneself [...]. Memory also helps young people make better choices in the future by calling to mind mistakes previously made and correcting future behavior.<sup>17</sup>

Kathy holds onto her good memories of Hailsham, the Cottages, but also Kingsfield, where Tommy ends. In fact, the things she says about those places tend to be positive, which impacts both her way to remember, but also her way to deal with her memories and life. On top

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<sup>16</sup> ScientificAmerican, Bobby Azarian, "*Morals, not memories, define who we are*", <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/morals-not-memories-define-who-we-are/> (visited on 27/11/21)

<sup>17</sup> DrKevinHull, "*The crucial role of memory in creating identity and a positive sense of self*", <https://drkevinhull.com/blog/2018/4/21/the-crucial-role-of-memory-in-creating-identity-and-a-positive-sense-of-self> (visited on 27/11/21)



of that, by remembering the fights she had with Ruth, she improves her behavior and does her best to become a better friend, right to the end.

To conclude, memory plays an essential part in defining one's identity and one's life. That is why laying down all her memories is so crucial to Kathy. Having searched her whole life for who she was, at the end of the book, she finally has her answer. And, even if her body parts will slowly be taken away, at least, her memories will be hers until the very end. Ready to face the end, she can stop writing and accept her upcoming death with a peaceful mind, knowing that she successfully proved she had an identity, where people like Miss Emily and Madame failed to do that.

### **III. THE PARALLEL BETWEEN THE NARRATIVE AND KATHY'S SEARCH FOR TRUTH: KATHY'S MANIPULATION OF THE NARRATIVE AND FLIGHT FROM REALITY**

#### **A. THE (UN)RELIABILITY OF KATHY'S MEMORY**

Memory is often thought of as something unreliable. Time passes, and memories – or details of our memories – fade. Remembering something wrong or not remembering it at all are two common flaws of our memory. Kathy experiences both of these flaws. Several times in the novel can we read things like: “*the line would blur between what were my memories and what were his*” (p. 5), “*or maybe I'm remembering it wrong*” (p. 8), “*this was all a long time ago so I might have some of it wrong*” (p. 13). Kathy is not purposefully trying to alter reality by giving fake accounts of her past. She actually tries her best to remember things right, but acknowledges her flaws. She does not take her memory for granted, and she realizes she might have misremembered some things. She even recognizes that sometimes, she might have slightly altered her memory: “*maybe I'm exaggerating it, but my memory is that...*” (p. 56), “*maybe I've exaggerated it in my mind, but I've got an impression...*” (p. 76). The reliability – or its absence – of Kathy's memory has often been put into question:

Ishiguro uses more conventional means of signaling his narrators' skewed perspectives, usually by having their versions conflict with stories told by other characters. Ishiguro insists in interviews, however, that his protagonists are not unreliable in the postmodern fashion: they have no ulterior motive in concealing the

truth. On the contrary, the will to truth is always there. [...] Ishiguro's narrators are only unreliable to the extent to which they fail to grasp the truth of their stories.<sup>18</sup>

I find this statement very relevant, because the eagerness of Kathy to find the truth could definitely be linked to her incapacity to see her own. In fact, being at the end of her life, knowing nothing of her will remain but her memoir, she does have no reason to lie to us readers. Her memory is as reliable as our memory. The passing of time impacts her memory, but her "unreliability" stops there, in my opinion, as she goes over all of her childhood to set the record straight, for us, but even maybe more, for herself. Kathy being a person, her memories rely on her subjectivity, on the way she saw and experienced things. However, as we do not have Tommy's or Ruth's versions of their story, we could consider that we only have one side of a coin, and as such, that we cannot completely depend on her account of what happened. But the way Kathy always puts Tommy and Ruth forward could lead us to think otherwise: she tries her best to analyze Tommy and Ruth's reactions and feelings, being honest as to when she is angry at them and when she forgives them. As they are dead already by the time she starts writing, she also has no reason to speak ill of them.

Kathy's search for truth is paralleled by the narrative, as the novel does not unfold in a linear, chronological or "set up" way, but as her memories come. Even if she does try to organize the events she wants to tell us about, she actually needs several times to talk about other things for the whole to make sense to us, so that we can understand what she means. The way her story is told reminds us of the way our mind, and our memory, work. We do not think chronologically or in a linear manner, we express thoughts as they come. Kathy does the same by talking about what comes to her mind: "*I should explain a bit here about the Exchanges we had at Hailsham*" (p. 15), "*but that's not really what I want to talk about just now*" (p. 45), "*all of this about Miss Geraldine reminds me of something that happened about three years later*" (p. 55). That is another thing: one thought triggers another, leading to memory paths Kathy may not have predicted. Therefore, her account of her past can be seen as reliable as she speaks truthfully and honestly about what comes to her mind: when she feels like talking about something or not, when she needs to step back and focus on something else before, or not.

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<sup>18</sup> Schneider, Ana-Karina, "Reading Kazuo Ishiguro's *"Bewilderment Trilogy"* as Bildungsromane", *American, British, and Canadian studies*, Vol. 31(1), 2018, p. 27-46.

## B. FRAGMENTATION OF THE NARRATIVE

Reading the novel, we may feel quite lost in the chronology of it, with the jumps in the past and present that Kathy is doing throughout the book. This feeling of disorientation echoes the free and wild nature of our memory, on which we cannot put chains or order: it unfolds freely as it comes. The numerous “anyway” we can find in the novel also show a rush that sometimes happens between one thought and another, when a new, more important one replaces the previous thought. Therefore, the narrative is fragmented, just like Kathy’s memories, and putting everything back in order becomes a detective work for us.

However, we do have three central parts, which make for the three parts of the novel: her life at Hailsham, her life at the Cottages, and her life as a carer. This break between the three central parts of her life makes it easier for her to navigate through the troubled waters of her memories, and could also be linked to her desire to set things straight, to give order to the only thing she controls: her memories, no matter how scattered and unclear they seem to her, and to us. Buchweitz Nurit writes about the duality of the narration in *Never Let Me Go*:

This obfuscation is underscored in this chapter particularly through wordplay in the semantic context of light and darkness and intermittent flickers of awareness. The selection of words constructs interchanges and dualities of covert and overt; light and darkness; clear and blurry; and, in metaphorical terms, sunshine and rain. The interplay of light and dark is both literal and figurative, in the sense that it embodies the slipperiness of language and disavows the truth. This is also underpinned by the full weight of Kathy’s appropriation of this duality in recounting her life experience, where her language and choice of collocations and idioms is laden with literal and metaphorical linguistic signals that reside on light and darkness.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, the weather plays an important part in the novel. The most striking example is when Miss Lucy reveals to the students that they were “*told and not told*”: the weather represents the somber reality of this truth. The weather creates a bleak atmosphere, a blurry sight: through the rain, there is not much to be seen. The rain obstructs sight, just like the guardians obstruct the truth from the students. The tension is built up with the increasing downpour.

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<sup>19</sup> Buchweitz, Nurit, “*School and Schooling, and the Boundaries of the Human in Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go*”, *IAFOR Journal of Literature and Librarianship*. Vol. 9(1), 2020, p. 128-144.

The downpour had started while we were changing, and we found ourselves gathering on the veranda – which was sheltered by the pavilion roof – while we waited for it to stop. But the rain kept going, and when the last of us had emerged, the veranda was pretty crowded, with everyone milling around restlessly.<sup>8</sup>

The woods are also referred to as a place of darkness and danger. They are even personified as being ill-intentioned, ready to attack the students (the horrible stories about the woods giving weight to that personification):

The woods were at the top of the hill that rose behind Hailsham House. All we could see really was a dark fringe of trees, but I certainly wasn't the only one of my age to feel their presence day and night. When it got bad, it was like they cast a shadow over the whole of Hailsham; all you had to do was turn your head or move towards a window and there they'd be, looming in the distance. Safest was the front of the main house, because you couldn't see them from any of the windows. Even so, you never really got away from them.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, when Kathy and Tommy go to Madame to get a deferral, the house is described as a claustrophobic, suffocating place, foreshadowing the answer the clones are going to get to their request: *"everything got pretty dark. We were in a hallway so narrow you felt you'd be able to touch the walls on either side just by stretching out your elbows"* (p. 244), *"to the right, an even narrower passage leading deeper into the house"* (p. 244), *"pointed again into the dark"* (p. 244), *"I tried to see past her, but it was just darkness"* (p. 245). As such, the house reminds us of a coffin, dark and narrow, where you can barely move, barely see anything but what is right next to you. This dark space has a maze-like dimension, leading to the loss of bearings of Kathy, creating mystery.

### C. THE ALTERATION OF REALITY

Therefore, the memories of Kathy seem to be enlightened – or darkened – by the way she remembers things from her past. Hailsham is often described as a bright place: *"there was bright sunshine"* (p. 7), *"it was windy and sunny"* (p. 34), *"I was doing this little walk one sunny evening"* (p. 44). On the other hand, the Cottages are described as an ambivalent place, where the students are often cold and need to protect themselves from the changeable weather: *"so I remember a lot of the time, outside the summer months, being chilly. You went around with two, even three jumpers on, and your jeans felt cold and still"* (p. 115), *"When I remember sex at the Cottages, I think about doing it in freezing rooms in the pitch dark, usually under a ton of blankets"* (p. 125), *"sometimes it got so cold you just had to pile anything you could over you"*

(p. 125). It looks like the only bright place in Kathy's memory is Hailsham. And yet, the other place she finds beautiful is the one she got to spend the rest of Tommy's life in, with him: "*before long, I was getting used to the Kingsfield, growing to like it even*" (p. 233), "*I don't want to give the wrong idea about that period at the Kingsfield. A lot of it was really relaxed, almost idyllic*" (p. 233). It is quite ironic for Kathy to be referring to Tommy's last "stop" before his death as an idyllic place, and, above all, to this place where many clones come to die. However, it does not seem too surreal when one thinks about it. Kathy could never know better, and could never dream of anything more. The name itself gives the sense of a luxurious place: Kingsfield. Moreover, in the never-ending movement of her life between places, this last place offers stability and rest.

So I can conclude that her memories are altered by the way she remembers those places, and depending on the weather elements associated to them, which can be striking: even though Hailsham was the place where the students were forced to stay and could not get out of without meeting a (supposed) terrible end, it is more often than not described as a shiny, reassuring, comforting place. And, on the other hand, the Cottages, even though being the place where the students can go away freely and live on their own, without guardians to monitor them, is often described as a cold, inhospitable place. And again, the place where Tommy has to stay – and where Kathy may end her life – is described as peaceful and safe. So her memories seem to be conditioned by what she has been taught and conditioned to her entire life: that controlled places are safe, but free places are dangerous and uncertain.

By conditioning her memories like that, I wonder if Kathy is simply nostalgic or embellishing the past to deal with the trauma of her life. By putting away or numbing the pain of her past, by brightening up the story of her life, is not Kathy simply trying to make it easier for her to live with her past and future? This is what may be inferred from Nurit Buchweitz's remarks on the shift from dark to light, or from rain to sun:

Paradoxically, the more Kathy's text uses brighter, clearer, and more lucid tropes, so too is the content more somber, because of the reality it conceals, and vice versa: the more the text is murky, so too is it brighter, in the sense of reality becoming apparent. Notably, Kathy's last image in the paragraph above of "day moving into night" signifies the unveiling of truth. Finally, Kathy relates Miss Lucy's termination of her exposé with a double-entendre sentence, claiming light and shadow both realistically and metaphorically: "'It's not so bad now', she said, even though the *rain* was as steady as ever. 'Let's just go out there. Then maybe the *sun* will come out too'" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 80; emphasis mine).<sup>19</sup>

By manipulating her memories that way, Kathy manipulates her representation of reality, fleeing from a reality that may be too uncomfortable or disturbing to her. Even when Madame tells Tommy and her that there is no deferral, she does not even fight back. While Tommy lets out his pain and frustration (“*when I heard the first scream*”, p. 268; “*Tommy’s figure, raging, shouting, flinging his fists and kicking out*”, p. 269; “*his jumbled swear-words continued uninterrupted [...] I caught a glimpse of his face in the moonlight, caked in mud and distorted with fury*”, p. 269), Kathy remains calm and contained. Even when Tommy dies, and she acknowledges her grief, she still has control over herself: “*it was only a couple of weeks since I’d lost him. [...] and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn’t sobbing or out of control*” (p. 282). Perhaps, by numbing her narrative, Kathy also finds a way to numb her emotions and deal with her traumatic experiences. And yet, we cannot help but feel strange when seeing how much control she has over her emotions, or how little she lets them take over: it’s an uncanny feeling.

Her autobiographical account is a reaction to the trauma of these experiences and also to the fact of her own death, which has become imminent with her life as a carer drawing to a close. This section discusses Kathy’s use of memory to alleviate the horror of finitude. [...] Whether it is ‘remembered forgetting’ or ‘recollected anticipation’, Kathy’s nostalgic remembrances can be connected to a deeper psychological mechanism. Nostalgia is, to a number of researchers, a positive emotion. Sedikides and his co-researchers assert that it is a mental exercise that fulfills such functions as ‘enhancement of the self, support of the cultural worldview, and bolstering of relational bonds.’ Kathy’s recollection, ‘a deliberate response to an uncomfortable psychological state’, deepens her understanding of herself and her social environment. It also allows her to reconnect emotionally with her friends, creating a sense of warmth and secure attachment.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, memory – and its link to one’s life and identity – is crucial in this book where Kathy cannot leave a legacy or a tangible mark into the world, where her death is imminent.

In these ways memory is presented as a mental activity with a positive value. It offers something mortals can fall back on when they come face to face with the eventuality of death. [...] But unlike its role in his [Ishiguro’s] other novels, memory in *Never Let Me Go* is not used as a means of self-deception, denial or suppression in this story. It serves a pathetic and yet worthwhile function of being soothing and consolatory.<sup>13</sup>

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, it could be said that memory cannot be reliable since it depends on our subjectivity, the passing of time and our capacity to remember – and our desire or not to embellish or darken our past – but Kathy tries to make it as truthful as possible, knowing her limits, acknowledging she might have exaggerated some parts, but wishing nonetheless to give as many details as possible so as to give us – as much as can be – a full picture of her life. Alternating between her quest for the truth and her eagerness to make sense of everything that has happened to her, Kathy shows us an intriguing and unique way of dealing with one's mortality, in a society that has cheated death and nature's laws at the cost of the lives of "*poor creatures*" (p. 267), whose identity remains uncertain, whose status is questioned by the very people who brought them to life, but who refuse to face the consequences of their actions once their interests are met:

By constructing a society that is essentially indifferent to the subjects from whom vital organs are harvested, Ishiguro demonstrates that humans are perpetually self-interested, to the detriment of other beings. By using the terms "they" and "their", the Hailsham director Miss Emily implies that she and the directors are detached from the majority sentiment of people in their society who deny the clones' humanity. But even if Miss Emily believes the children are fully human, she ultimately gives up on their cause, which renders her belief meaningless. The head directors of Hailsham, Miss Emily and Madame, suggest that the school was a special project to offer the clones more comfortable lives as they waited for their organs to be harvested. But the self-proclaimed "benevolent" directors never admit to opposing the practice of harvesting organs from clones; they only aim to provide a "more humane and better way of doing things"<sup>10</sup>

Which leads us to wonder if this humane raising of the clones really means anything, knowing that their end remains the same whatsoever. Tommy and Kathy are bewildered and confused when talking to Miss Emily and Madame, not understanding the point of their education and artworks, considering their destiny will not change from the ones of clones raised in other places. Perhaps, knowing the meaninglessness of it all, Kathy's reaction (numbing her emotions and embellishing her past) is the most relevant, embracing nihilism as a way not to suffer from her life, unlike Tommy who experiences it all and suffers greatly from it. At the end of the novel, in the very last line – the one with whom we close the story, making it all the more important – Kathy closes the story of her life, silences her humanity and accepts her "purpose", like an object, when she says: "*I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be*" (p. 282), giving up on her life, accepting her destiny, having nothing more to say, no one left around her, and having accomplished her mission by leaving her legacy through her narrative. Her resilience to her upcoming death is remarkable, and that of all the clones, actually: neither Ruth nor Tommy fight or escape before

having their organs harvested nor after knowing that the next donation will most likely be their last. Their identity was ascertained by their artworks, their relationships, their readings and memories, and, despite her subjectivity, Kathy gives a voice to the clones, attests to her humanity via her abilities to remember, to show empathy, to create art, feel and express emotions, and, most of all, by leaving a legacy, the only one left for her to give. As Guo Wen writes:

Cave offers four ‘immortality narratives’ that he suggests explain the four basic forms of human attempts at everlasting life: preserving the physical body by searching for the elixir of life in the past and looking to medical science in the present [as does the society in *Never Let Me Go*]; hoping for resurrection; belief in the immortal soul; and leaving a legacy, in such forms as cultural works and biological offspring. [...] They (the clones) attempt to leave a legacy by building an identity through structuring and narrating their past experience.<sup>13</sup>

The purpose of Kazuo Ishiguro in writing this novel was not to warn us about cloning, nor to focus on the ethics of such a practice as many authors or specialists do since the birth of Dolly the Sheep, that started a seemingly unstoppable quest for immortality. His purpose was to show us the way in which people deal with their mortality, in a faithless, nihilistic world that denies clones their humanity, denying them the access to organs or to religion. In that sense, *Never Let Me Go* can still be considered a dystopia – we cannot help but feel empathy and sympathy for the clones, in the face of the injustices they go through, and frustration at seeing them accepting their death with so much resilience. I believe this novel is a thoughtful and interesting way to question our own mortality, the fleetingness and shortness of life, by showing us the link between memory and mortality, inviting us to cherish our past and hold onto our memories, which will, eventually, be the only thing left for us to hold onto. In that way, the title of the novel, *Never Let Me Go*, shows the importance of holding on, and especially, of holding on to the last thing we will have when facing our own death. As the narrative of Kathy unfolds, so does our own, in a fragmented, uncertain, subjective way. We may be able to section our life into different parts, but they tend to intertwine, and they cannot mean anything unless connected to the others. Our memory is a unified whole of disconnected elements, that can only resemble something once all the elements are put together: the beautiful, but also the ugly. Rather than erasing her past to only keep the brighter parts of it, Kathy brings it all together, refusing to let go of her past, wishing for her identity to be whole as her body will slowly become fragmented.



Even though her life is shortened, Kathy has been through all the stages of life an elderly person goes through: she has been a child, experiencing innocence; she has been through her teenage years, learning about jealousy, anger and love; she has discovered adulthood, learning about her body, her desires and her limitations; and, like an old person, she has been able to make sense of it all, to connect it all, to right the wrongs with Tommy but especially with Ruth, being now at peace with them and with herself, accepting her mortality. The circle is complete by the time we reach the full stop of the novel, in its most brutal, inevitable reality.

# PARTIE DIDACTIQUE

## INTRODUCTION

Mon sujet d'analyse universitaire étant trop complexe pour des élèves de lycée, j'aurais pu aborder la thématique de la dystopie avec ma classe de 1G3 via la thématique du clonage dans la littérature anglophone. Kazuo Ishiguro aurait, bien évidemment, sa place dans cette séquence, mais aussi d'autres écrivains mais aussi des écrivaines. Mes objectifs seraient multiples : tout d'abord, enrichir la culture littéraire de mes élèves (notamment car une bonne partie de ma classe est en LLCER/AMC), donner envie aux adolescents de lire en développant leur curiosité et en leur faisant découvrir de nouvelles choses, proposer des auteurs masculins comme féminins afin de promouvoir la diversité, encore trop absente dans les programmes littéraires scolaires, où les auteurs les plus étudiés sont encore bien trop souvent des hommes, faisant de l'ombre aux femmes, pourtant nombreuses, à avoir apporté leur pierre à l'édifice littéraire.

Ce projet rentrerait donc dans le Programme de langues vivantes de première et terminale générales et technologiques, enseignements commun et optionnel, annexe 2, pour le préparer à la vie adulte et aux études supérieures, comme le stipule celui-ci :

« En développant ainsi au lycée ses compétences linguistiques, culturelles et de communication, l'élève se prépare à l'enseignement supérieur et à un usage plus assuré et spontané des langues vivantes. À travers la pratique des langues étrangères et régionales, le lycéen consolide aussi sa maîtrise de la langue française. Il renforce également son sens critique et esthétique, sa curiosité intellectuelle, sa capacité à décentrer son point de vue, à prendre du recul et à nuancer ses propos. Il affine progressivement son usage raisonné des médias et gagne en autonomie dans son rapport aux apprentissages. »<sup>20</sup>

L'axe d'étude le plus pertinent pour ce sujet d'étude serait « Innovations Scientifiques & Responsabilité », dont voici quelques extraits du Programme :

Quelles réponses chaque aire géographique étudiée apporte-t-elle aux bouleversements technologiques et scientifiques actuels ? Le progrès scientifique est à l'origine d'avancées très positives pour l'humanité, mais donne également lieu à de nombreuses interrogations sur certains effets induits, [...]. La prise de conscience des dangers éventuels liés à ces innovations scientifiques nourrit une réflexion sur l'éthique du progrès dans une aire culturelle donnée.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.education.gouv.fr/media/25049/download>

Le savant est-il responsable des usages de ses découvertes ? Doit-il s'impliquer dans la sphère publique pour peser sur les décisions politiques ? Quelle marge de manœuvre possède le citoyen pour faire entendre sa voix ? Comment les sociétés peuvent-elles prévenir les dérives liées aux innovations technologiques ? [...] L'axe invite à observer ces aspects de la question dans l'aire culturelle concernée et d'explorer les similitudes ou les singularités avec d'autres cultures. Mots-clés : recherche génétique [...] clonage [...]20

Dans cette séquence, mon activité langagière principale serait la compréhension écrite (CE), qui donnerait lieu à une tâche finale (TF) d'expression écrite (EE). Ainsi, lors de la séquence, les élèves seraient entraînés à rédiger des travaux écrits, pour les préparer à la réalisation de la production finale, qui constituerait en la réalisation du premier chapitre d'une histoire dystopique. Il s'agirait donc d'un sujet d'écriture d'invention. La tâche intermédiaire (TI) qui permettrait de mener à bien ce projet constituerait en l'élaboration d'une première et d'une quatrième de couverture d'une œuvre fictive imaginée par les élèves. Ainsi, cela permettrait également aux élèves qui le souhaitent de faire parler leur créativité, et motiverait ceux-ci en leur laissant le choix (dans la limite du raisonnable) du sujet de leur histoire et de l'esthétisme de leur production.

Au vu du temps restreint qu'il me reste d'ici la fin de l'année scolaire, et du fait que je n'ai pas encore terminé mes séquences (ni les évaluations que je dois faire pour le projet d'évaluation de l'établissement), je ne pourrai malheureusement pas mettre en place cette séquence avec mes élèves. Néanmoins, la séquence 3 constituait en l'étude de dystopies dans la littérature et le cinéma anglophones, et se rapproche donc de la séquence que j'aurais pu proposer ici. Je ne pourrai pas non plus proposer un rayonnement hors-classe pour valoriser les productions de ceux-ci (avec, par exemple, une exposition de leurs travaux au CDI). Néanmoins, ayant déjà réalisé un projet pédagogique interclasses avec mes 2<sup>o</sup>4, pour lequel mes 2<sup>o</sup>4 présentaient un exposé à mes 1G3, et ceux-ci leur posaient des questions et les « évaluaient », j'aurais envisagé cette fois-ci de présenter les productions écrites de mes 1G3 (première et quatrième de couverture + chapitre un) à mes 2<sup>o</sup>4 et de laisser ceux-ci « voter » pour les trois meilleures productions finales.

## TABLEAU SYNOPTIQUE

<b>Classe / Niveau</b>	Cycle Terminal – Première – B1 vers B2
<b>Thématique</b>	Gestes fondateurs et mondes en mouvement
<b>Axe</b>	Innovations Scientifiques & Responsabilité
<b>Sujet d'étude</b>	“Human Cloning in English Literature”
<p><b>Tâche intermédiaire (EE)</b> : Write the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> cover of a dystopian story about human cloning. Remember to use the codes we have seen in class to do so (presentation of the story, biography of the author, magazines review, synopsis, ...).</p> <p><b>Tâche finale (EE)</b> : Write the beginning of the first chapter of your story (between 1 and 3 pages). Remember to use the codes of an incipit (presentation of the character(s), place, time, the main action, ...). (Between 1 and 3 pages)</p>	
<b>Objectifs</b>	<p><b>Linguistiques (lexicaux, grammaticaux, phonologiques)</b> : rebrassage des différents temps grammaticaux ; lexique de la dystopie et de l'éthique ; prononciation du morphème -ED (prétérit/participe passé) et du -S final (pluriel, 3<sup>e</sup> personne du singulier au présent simple, génitif, ...)</p>
	<p><b>Culturels</b> : auteurs et autrices anglophones (Eva Hoffman, Nancy Farmer, Margaret P. Haddix) dont deux auteurs canoniques (Kazuo Ishiguro, Aldous Huxley) ; la dystopie</p>
	<p><b>Méthodologiques</b> : rédaction d'une première et quatrième de couverture, rédaction d'une situation initiale (incipit d'une histoire)</p>
	<p><b>Citoyens</b> : prise de conscience du début sur le sujet du clonage, notamment humain, dans le monde ; découvrir ses implications ; développer un esprit critique à ce sujet</p>

## DEROULEMENT DE LA SEQUENCE

### ➤ **Séance 1**

Pour la première séance, il s’agira d’introduire le thème de la dystopie, tout en injectant du vocabulaire aux élèves. Cette séance se fera donc en deux parties.

La première partie constituera en la réalisation d’une carte mentale suite à un brainstorming avec les élèves, en utilisant deux outils :

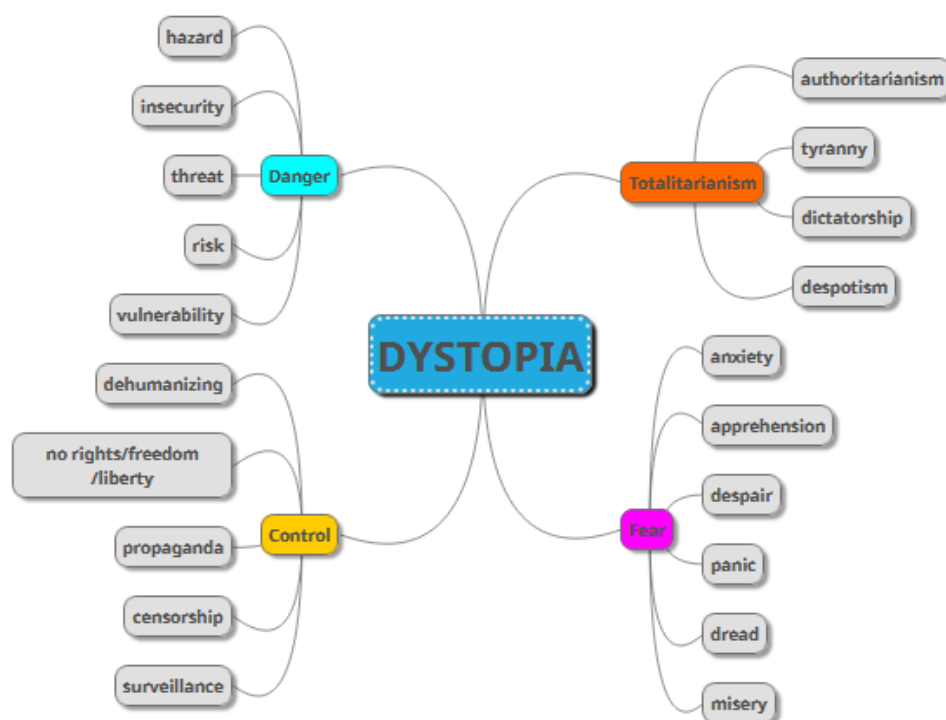
- Le dictionnaire des synonymes Thesaurus<sup>21</sup>, afin d’enrichir le vocabulaire des élèves en proposant des synonymes divers des mots qui seront proposés, et aussi afin de les sensibiliser à la sémantique anglaise : tous les mots ne veulent pas exactement dire la même chose, et certains mots conviennent plus à un contexte donné que d’autres.
- L’outil de création de cartes mentales MindMup<sup>22</sup>, gratuit, afin de mettre au propre le brainstorming des élèves mais aussi afin d’utiliser le numérique à des fins d’apprentissage, en procurant aux élèves des outils divers et variés, notamment pour faciliter l’apprentissage et pour affiner l’organisation des idées des élèves et des savoirs.

Un des résultats possibles, non exhaustif, pourrait alors être le suivant.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.thesaurus.com/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.mindmup.com/>



Le but est donc de donner aux élèves du vocabulaire, dont du vocabulaire complexe (B1 vers B2), afin de mieux décrire et de mieux présenter les choses, et ici, la dystopie.

Ensuite, il s'agira de rentrer plus en détails dans le thème de la dystopie, en proposant, par exemple, une vidéo explicative sur celle-ci. Ainsi, nous allons faire une activité de compréhension orale (CO), sur la vidéo YouTube de la chaîne TED-Ed, « How to recognize a dystopia – Alex Gendler »<sup>23</sup>.

Anticipation : afin de réactiver ce qui aura été vu à l'étape précédente, en donnant simplement le titre de la vidéo, la question posée aux élèves sera la suivante :

*How, do you think, can we recognize a dystopia?*

Le but est que les élèves reprennent les mots vus à l'étape précédente, afin de formuler leur réponse. Les réponses sont données à l'oral, sans prise de notes.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a6kbU88wu0>

Compréhension globale : ici, le but est que les élèves présentent simplement la vidéo, sans rentrer dans les détails (ce qui sera l'objet de la compréhension détaillée). Pour cela, l'on pose seulement la question suivante aux élèves, suite à un premier visionnage entier de la vidéo, pour lequel la consigne aura été : *Write down the keywords you hear in the video. Then, briefly present the document.*

La trace écrite est réalisée avec les élèves, suite à leurs réponses. Dans les grandes lignes, voilà ce qu'on pourrait envisager de trouver dans celle-ci.

*This document is a video, published by TED-Ed on YouTube in 2016. In this video, the narrator starts by explaining the concept of utopia, from which the concept of dystopia derived. Then, he gives several examples of dystopia, and explains why they were written.*

Compréhension détaillée : maintenant, on repasse la vidéo deux à trois fois selon les besoins des élèves, en leur donnant une worksheet avec les questions suivantes :

- 1/ What's the book that gave a name to the concept of utopia? Who was it written by, and when?*
- 2/ Why was the genre of dystopia born?*
- 3/ In your own words, explain what Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" is about.*
- 4/ Looking at the video, give examples of real-life dystopia.*
- 5/ Finally, what's the purpose of a dystopia?*

Là encore, la correction est faite avec les élèves : on projette la worksheet au tableau et on corrige sur l'ordinateur.

## ➤ Séance 2

Pour cette seconde séance, l'on commencera déjà par un petit rituel de début de séance, en expression orale en interaction (EOI) : chaque élève doit donner un mot se rapportant au thème de la dystopie, et deux élèves ne peuvent pas dire le même mot. Au-delà de revoir le vocabulaire de la séance précédente, les élèves peuvent aussi apporter de nouveaux mots. A ce moment-là, on corrige également leur prononciation, si besoin, et on leur fait répéter.

Ensuite, je poserai la question suivante aux élèves : *What do you remember about Aldous Huxley?*

Le but est d'anticiper le document suivant, qui sera l'étude d'un extrait de *Brave New World* par Aldous Huxley, que voici :

*The scene takes place in a hatchery\* where humans are being created artificially.*

He pointed. On a very slowly moving band a rack-full of test-tubes was entering a large metal box, another, rack-full was emerging. Machinery faintly purred\*. It took eight minutes for the tubes to go through, he told them. Eight minutes of hard X-rays being about as much as an egg can stand. A few died; of the rest, the least susceptible divided into two; most put out four buds\*; some eight; all were returned to the incubators, where the buds began to develop; then, after two days, were suddenly chilled, chilled and checked. Two, four, eight, the buds in their turn budded; and having budded were dosed almost to death with alcohol; consequently burgeoned again and having budded – bud out of bud out of bud – were thereafter – further arrest being generally fatal – left to develop in peace. By which time the original egg was in a fair way to becoming anything from eight to ninety-six embryos – a prodigious improvement, you will agree, on nature. Identical twins\* – but not in piddling twos and threes as in the old viviparous days, when an egg would sometimes accidentally divide; actually by dozens\*, by scores at a time.

But one of the students was fool enough to ask where the advantage lay. “My good boy!” The Director wheeled sharply round on him. “Can’t you see? Can’t you see?” He raised a hand; his expression was solemn. “Bokanovsky’s Process is one of the major instruments of social stability!” Standard men and women; in uniform batches. The whole of a small factory staffed with the products of a single bakanovskified egg.

“Ninety-six identical twins working ninety-six identical machines!” The voice was almost tremulous\* with enthusiasm.

Extract from *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley, 1932



Anticipation : afin d’anticiper l’étude de ce texte, l’on commence déjà par donner une grille de matching de vocabulaire, pour aider les élèves avec les mots qui pourraient s’avérer compliqués (mots après lesquels se trouve une étoile). Voici la grille en question :

1/ Match the word with its definition: A=hatchery    B=to purr    C=a bud    D=a twin    E=a dozen    F=tremulous	
	The sprout of a plant that becomes a leaf or a flower
	Shaking or quivering slightly
	One of two children born at the same birth
	An installation or building in which the hatching of something is artificially controlled
	A low, continuous vibratory sound, like one of a cat
	A group or set of twelve / A lot

On corrige cette grille avant de passer à l’étape suivante.

Compréhension globale : on donne aux élèves la consigne suivante, pour faire un résumé de l’extrait :

2/ *Using your own words, make a summary of the extract, using:*

- *Elements referring to where the scene takes place*
- *Elements referring to the characters*

Ce texte étant relativement difficile, il faudra, là aussi, corriger cette question avant de passer à la compréhension détaillée, afin de lever le voile sur une quelconque difficulté de compréhension. On invite plusieurs élèves à donner leur réponse, et on forme une trace écrite avec eux.

Compréhension détaillée : on donne aux élèves les questions suivantes :

3/ What is the Bokanovsky's Process? What are the arguments given by the Director in favor of it?

4/ Describe the reaction of the Director when hearing the question of the student.

5/ What is the point of view of the narrator? Illustrate your answer with examples from the text.

6/ What was the intention of the author in writing *Brave New World*?

A travers ces questions et consignes, les élèves analysent le texte. La dernière question permet de revoir ce qui a été vu avec la vidéo lors de la séance 1, et d'émettre des hypothèses sur le but de ce roman. Ainsi, l'on crée le lien avec le sujet de la séquence : *Human Cloning in English Literature*.

Prolongement : en tant que prolongement à cette étude et afin d'enrichir la culture littéraire des élèves, nous donnons deux vidéos YouTube à ceux-ci. A la maison, ils doivent regarder l'une d'entre elles, ou les deux, s'ils sont motivés. En même temps, ils doivent prendre des notes. Voici les deux vidéos en question :

Vidéo 1 : « Brave New World | Summary & Analysis | Aldous Huxley » (Course Hero, YouTube)<sup>24</sup>

Vidéo 2 : « Video SparkNotes: Aldous Huxley's Brave New World summary » (VideoSparkNotes, YouTube)<sup>25</sup>

Pour vérifier qu'ils ont bien visionné une vidéo, on leur demande de donner deux éléments qu'ils ont appris sur ce roman lors de la séance suivante (ils peuvent alors avoir recours à leurs notes).

### ➤ Séance 3

Après avoir vérifié le visionnage de la vidéo par les élèves via la restitution d'éléments vus dans celle-ci, on dit aux élèves que le texte qu'ils ont étudié appartient au début du roman (chapitre 1), et donc, contribue à son incipit. On demande alors aux élèves ce qu'ils savent de

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=db0eHfPqa1A>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raqVySPrDUE>

l'incipit : comment est-il constitué ? Puis, après un temps d'échange, on leur donne une petite fiche méthodologie, comme voici :

### Comment écrire un incipit ?

Qu'est-ce qu'un incipit : un incipit est le début d'un roman. Il s'agit de la situation initiale de l'histoire.

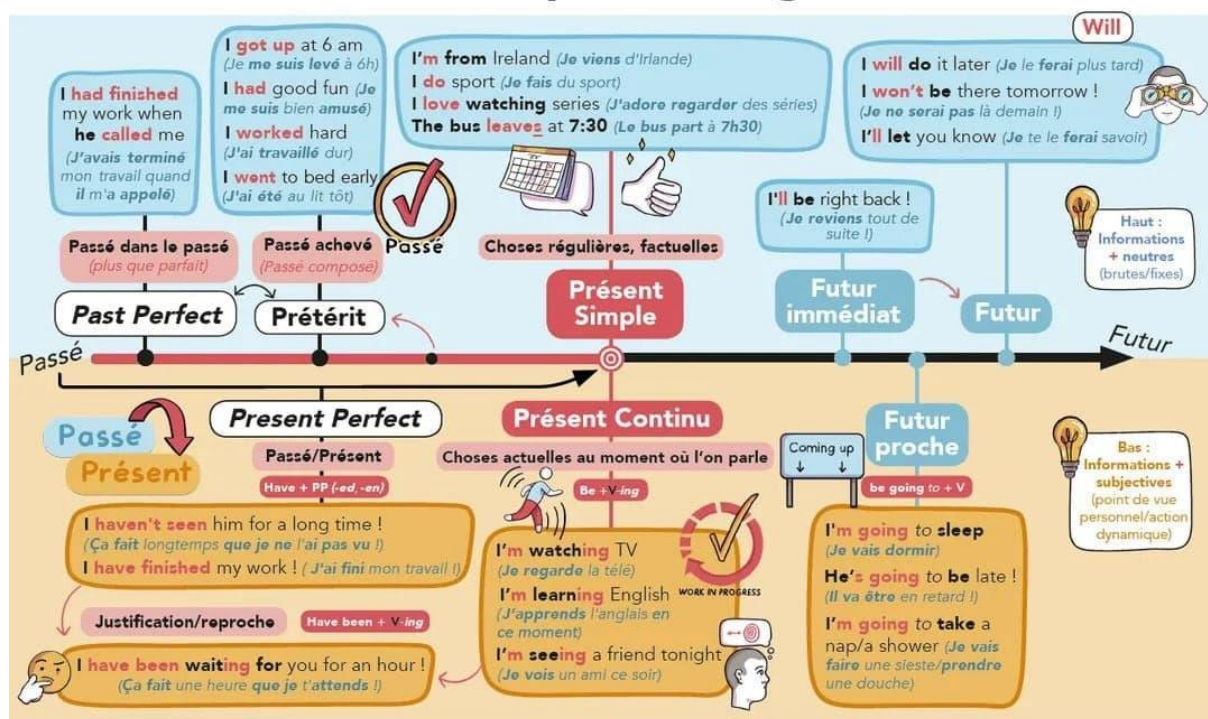
Que doit-on trouver dans un incipit : l'incipit doit permettre de se plonger dans l'histoire en en comprenant les enjeux. Il doit donc contenir :

- La présentation du ou des personnages principaux
- Le lieu où se déroule l'histoire
- Le moment où se déroule l'histoire
- L'action principale, ce qui va amener à l'élément déclencheur ensuite

On demande ensuite aux élèves de reprendre l'extrait d'Aldous Huxley, et de repérer les temps qu'ils trouvent. S'agissant d'une histoire, le temps principal est le prétérit, aussi appelé temps du récit. Mais ce n'est pas le seul temps. On demande aux élèves quels sont les temps de l'anglais, et pourquoi on les utilise. Cela donne lieu à un temps d'échange où les élèves rebrassent leurs connaissances sur le sujet. Après cela, on peut envisager de leur donner la fiche suivante, qui permet, de manière ludique, d'apprendre la grammaire anglaise. J'ai trouvé cette fiche sur une page Facebook, tenue par un professeur d'anglais, qui publie de nombreuses fiches de grammaire comme celle-ci. Le nom de cette page est « l'anglais avec Guillaume »<sup>26</sup>, et il possède aussi une page Instagram et une page Pinterest.

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/langlais-avec-Guillaume-108159157732809/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/langlais-avec-Guillaume-108159157732809/?ref=page_internal)

# Les temps en anglais



On en profite bien sûr pour donner le nom de la page Instagram et Facebook aux élèves, afin qu'ils puissent trouver d'autres fiches, en cas de besoin et si cela les intéresse.

Suite à cela, on distribue aux élèves un dossier avec plusieurs premières et quatrièmes de couverture, des romans suivants :

- *The Secret*, Eva Hoffman
- *The House of the Scorpion*, Nancy Farmer
- *Double Identity*, Margaret P. Haddix
- *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro

Cela leur serait donné en plusieurs feuilles, bien évidemment, mais pour des raisons économiques ici, je réduis la taille de chaque image pour que ça ne rentre que dans une seule page. Pour les élèves, je donnerais 4 feuilles A4 en format paysage, avec sur chacune la première et la quatrième de couverture d'une de ces quatre œuvres.


La consigne donnée aux élèves, en français (puisque'il s'agit de méthodologie avant d'être de la compréhension écrite), est la suivante : *Quels sont les éléments récurrents que vous voyez sur ces premières et quatrième de couverture suivantes ?*

Une fois que les élèves auront réfléchi à la question et donner leurs éléments de réponse, on corrige avec eux de la façon suivante : on ouvre un document Word au

vidéoprojecteur et on fait une trace écrite au propre, qu'on imprimera ensuite et qu'on distribuera aux élèves. Voici ce à quoi cette trace écrite pourrait ressembler :

Comment rédiger une 1<sup>ère</sup> et 4<sup>ème</sup> de couverture ?

A quoi sert la première de couverture ?

- A avoir des informations sur le livre (auteur, titre)
- A donner envie au lecteur de lire le livre

Que trouve-t-on sur celle-ci ?

- Le titre du livre
- Le nom de l'auteur
- Le nom et le symbole de la maison d'édition + collection
- Facultatif : une illustration / image
- Facultatif : une citation du livre ou d'une critique de magazine/d'auteurs

A quoi sert la quatrième de couverture ?

- A avoir un résumé de l'œuvre pour savoir de quoi elle parle
- A avoir des critiques pour savoir comment le livre a été reçu
- A en apprendre plus sur l'auteur

Que trouve-t-on sur celle-ci ?

- Un résumé du livre
- Facultatif : Une biographie de l'auteur
- Facultatif : des critiques de magazine/d'auteurs

Pour la fois suivante, les élèves doivent relire leur méthodologie et les premières et quatrièmes de couverture qui leur sont données.

➤ **Séance 4**

Cette séance se déroulera en deux parties :

- Une partie de travail phonétique
- Une partie de réalisation de la tâche intermédiaire

De mon expérience, il m'a semblé difficile de faire apprendre aux élèves les règles de prononciation du -ED (prétérit, participe passé) et du -S (pluriel, 3<sup>e</sup> personne du singulier, génitif) en leur donnant des règles en rapport avec les consonnes et les voyelles. Par conséquent, pour la partie de travail phonétique de cette séance, j'ai plutôt décidé de leur préparer deux fiches :

- Une fiche avec le morphème -ED et les verbes à terminaison en -ED les plus courantes. Je leur donne simplement les symboles phonétiques /t/, /d/ et /id/, et ils doivent placer à côté de chaque verbe la prononciation correcte.
- Une fiche avec la terminaison -S et les pluriels, verbes à la 3<sup>e</sup> personne du singulier, et génitifs les plus courants. Je leur donne les symboles /z/, /s/, /iz/, et ils doivent, encore une fois, placer à côté de chaque mot la prononciation correcte.

Après, l'on corrige ensemble et à voix haute, et ils répètent après chaque mot, pour fixer la prononciation.

Chez eux, ils devront s'entraîner à répéter ces mots, car le rituel d'entrée de la prochaine séance sera le suivant : je donnerai deux mots à chaque élève (en morphème -ED et -S) et ils devront les prononcer correctement. Chaque élève aura deux paires de mots différents.

Pour la seconde partie de cette séance, les élèves devront être en salle informatique. Chaque élève aura un ordinateur, et ils auront accès au moteur de recherches (pour trouver des images), au dictionnaire Wordreference<sup>27</sup>, et au logiciel Word pour rédiger leur travail.

Lors de cette séance, on leur donne la consigne suivante sur une petite fiche : Write the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> cover of a dystopian story about human cloning. Remember to use the codes we

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.wordreference.com/>

have seen in class to do so (presentation of the story, biography of the author, magazines review, synopsis, ...).

En support, ils ont également le droit de s'aider de leur méthodologie et des exemples qu'on a vu lors de la séance précédente.

Ce travail constituera la tâche intermédiaire de la séquence. Celle-ci, non notée, constitue en l'évaluation formative de la séquence. Pour rappel, l'évaluation formative sert à préparer l'évaluation sommative, comme le rappelle l'article suivant du site de l'Université de Laval :

L'évaluation formative n'est associée à aucun point, note ou pourcentage. Elle a pour fonction de favoriser la progression des apprentissages et de renseigner sur les acquis des étudiantes et des étudiants. Elle vise des apprentissages précis et relève d'une ou de plusieurs interventions de nature pédagogique. L'évaluation formative est effectuée en cours d'activité et favorise la compréhension des erreurs commises.<sup>28</sup>

Les élèves ont le reste de l'heure pour faire cette tâche intermédiaire. A la fin de l'heure, ils doivent l'imprimer ou nous l'envoyer (selon le matériel présent en salle informatique). Ce travail sera corrigé pour la prochaine fois.

## ➤ **Séance 5**

Après avoir fait le rituel d'entrée (répétition des mots en -ED ou -S), on rend aux élèves leur tâche intermédiaire. Ils sont, encore une fois, en salle informatique. Une fois de plus, la séance se divise en deux parties.

Lors de la première partie de la séance, les élèves reprennent leur document Word et corrigent leur première et quatrième de couverture. Puis, ils l'impriment à nouveau, cette fois-ci, sans erreur.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.enseigner.ulaval.ca/ressources-pedagogiques/l-evaluation-formative-et-sommative>



Lors de la deuxième partie de la séance, on donne aux élèves la consigne de la tâche finale, et le barème de celle-ci. Ainsi, les élèves préparent un brouillon de tâche finale, dans les grandes lignes : leurs idées, comment ils envisagent de rédiger leur incipit, ... Ils ont accès à leur fiche méthodologique sur la rédaction d'un incipit, et à la fiche suivante (reprenant la consigne et le barème).

Pour rappel, au niveau B1 selon le BO du Programme de langues vivantes de première et terminale générales et technologiques, enseignements commun et optionnel, les élèves sont censés pouvoir « écrire des descriptions détaillées non complexes sur une gamme étendue de sujets familiers dans le cadre de son domaine d'intérêt. Peut rédiger une critique simple sur un film, un livre ou un programme télévisé, en utilisant une gamme limitée de langage »<sup>20</sup>.

Au niveau B2, il peut « écrire des descriptions claires et détaillées sur une variété de sujets en rapport avec son domaine d'intérêt. Peut écrire une critique de film, de livre ou de pièce de théâtre »<sup>20</sup>.

Considérant que certains élèves pourraient ne pas avoir le niveau attendu, je propose une échelle de points selon le niveau de réussite de l'élève, allant de 0 à un nombre de points maximal par catégorie, qui sont les suivantes :

- Qualité de la langue anglaise (grammaire, syntaxe, orthographe)
- Richesse et originalité des idées
- Réutilisant du vocabulaire lié à la séquence
- Qualité de la production (copie soignée)
- Respect de la méthodologie (éléments d'un incipit présents)

Lors de cette dernière séance en classe, ils auront aussi l'occasion de poser des questions et de s'entraider, s'ils ne comprennent pas la consigne ou certains aspects du barème, le but étant qu'ils ne perdent pas de temps le jour J ni qu'ils attendent le dernier moment pour savoir comment ils seront évalués lors de l'évaluation sommative qu'est la tâche finale. Pour rappel, selon l'Université de Laval :

L'évaluation sommative ou certificative a pour fonction l'attestation ou la reconnaissance des apprentissages. Elle survient au terme d'un processus d'enseignement et sert à sanctionner ou à certifier le degré de maîtrise des apprentissages des étudiantes et des étudiants. Elle doit être réalisée de façon juste et équitable en reflétant les apprentissages réalisés.<sup>28</sup>

### **Tâche finale – Expression Ecrite**

Consigne : Write the beginning of the first chapter of your story (between 1 and 3 pages). Remember to use the codes of an incipit (presentation of the character(s), place, time, the main action, ...). (Between 1 and 3 pages)

Barème :

Qualité de la langue anglaise (grammaire, syntaxe, orthographe)	<b>0 1 2 3 4 5</b>
Richesse et originalité des idées	<b>0 1 2 3 4</b>
Réutilisant du vocabulaire lié à la séquence	<b>0 1 2 3 4</b>
Qualité de la production (copie soignée)	<b>0 1 2 3</b>
Respect de la méthodologie (éléments d'un incipit présents)	<b>0 1 2 3 4</b>

#### ➤ **Séance 6**

L'heure entière sera consacrée à la réalisation de la tâche finale. Les élèves n'auront pas le droit de prendre des notes ni d'avoir accès à leur première et quatrième de couverture. Néanmoins, ils auront eu le temps, lors de la séance précédente et à la maison, de prendre connaissance de la consigne et du barème, afin de savoir sur quoi se concentrer. Ils pourront, en revanche, prendre avec eux leur fiche de tâche finale (consigne et barème), si tant est que la fiche est vierge (dans le cas contraire, une nouvelle fiche leur sera donnée).

### **CONCLUSION**

Cette séquence, bien que relativement courte, permet de travailler plusieurs points phonologiques et grammaticaux. Elle se veut surtout une séquence de rebrassage (les élèves ayant déjà étudié en français l'incipit d'une histoire) et d'apport culturel, permettant de découvrir principalement des écrivaines anglophones.

Bien que je n'aie pas pu réaliser cette séquence cette année, j'envisage de la travailler la prochaine fois que j'aurai une classe du cycle terminal. Il faudrait alors garder cette séquence pour le 2ème voire 3ème trimestre, car bien qu'elle soit courte, elle est riche en apports, et nécessite donc que les élèves soient déjà habitués à apprendre régulièrement leur leçon et à manipuler la langue anglaise pour pouvoir rédiger une écriture d'invention. De plus, le côté ludique de cette séquence me pousse aussi à favoriser une apparition de celle-ci vers la fin de l'année scolaire, pour finir l'année sur une touche plus légère et créative.

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## **Back cover**

**Summary:** This memoir is meant to discuss how memory builds one's identity, the peculiarity of Kazuo Ishiguro's dystopia, and how the narrative can be manipulated in order to escape reality or create a different one. Via the narrative and the content of her memories, Kathy, the narrator of *Never Let Me Go*, was able to overcome her situation as a clone, a simple copy of someone, in order to become an individual with a mind of her own, and quests for truth of her own.

**Keywords:** *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro, memory, identity, dystopia, detective fiction, cloning, humanity, ethics