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Conditioned Insularity in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novels *The Remains of the Day* (1989), *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *Klara and the Sun* (2021)

Submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements for a Masters Degree in English by Dissertation Only

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how the lives of the protagonists in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* are shaped by 'conditioned insularity'. Through the lens of various theorists, including Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, the study examines how myth, ideology, environment, language, cultural media, 'obfuscated intelligence' and language work in concert to program Stevens (a butler), Kathy (a clone), and Klara (a robot) into compliance with oppressive systems. Despite differences in setting and ontology, all three characters exhibit a haunting passivity; they are loyal to the systems that commodify their bodies and stifle their agency. This research highlights how Ishiguro's restrained narrators reveal the mechanics of consent, complicity, and socio-political conditioning, and how these insights reflect real-world labour relations.

Keywords

Kazuo Ishiguro; conditioned insularity; ideology; power; complicity; personhood; labour; service workers; interpellation; subjecthood; Foucault; discipline; panopticon; Althusser; ideological state apparatus; Bourdieu; habitus; emotional labour

Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro's novels *The Remains of the Day* (1989), *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *Klara and the Sun* (2021) offer intimate portrayals of narrators in their respective roles of service. In *The Remains of the Day*, the butler Stevens recalls his service to Lord Darlington, a once-Nazi-sympathiser, as he takes a road trip; in *Never Let Me Go*, the clone Kathy H. recalls her childhood as she cares for fellow clones who are dying from their forced donations; and in *Klara and the Sun,* the Artificial Friend (AF) Klara recalls her time as an AI companion to the child Josie as she sits dismantled and discarded in a junkyard. Each protagonist reflects on a life that is shaped – and expended – by service and sacrifice.

Kazuo Ishiguro is a British novelist, screenwriter and Nobel Prize laureate in Literature (2017). He was born in Japan in 1954, but moved with his parents to the UK at the age of five. His works often explore memory, identity, loss, and the passage of time, frequently through first-person narratives that are shaped by emotional restraint and that reveal unreliable perspectives. The '"Ishiguro character is above all limited existentially, ontologically, and epistemologically"'.[1] My thesis studies these limitations in Stevens, Kathy and Klara.

In *The Remains of the Day*, the ageing Stevens goes on a journey to the West Country of England, which ends with him visiting an ex-colleague, Miss Kenton. As he reflects on decades of service, we realise that Stevens has suppressed his individual needs and desires, including his feelings for Miss Kenton, throughout his career. We also discover that Stevens obeyed Lord Darlington's antisemitic orders unquestioningly even though his 'every instinct opposed the idea of [them]'.[2] Only now is Stevens starting to question whether his loyalty was misplaced. The text

ends with a sense of quiet regret as the butler realises how much he has sacrificed for Darlington and 'his lordship's' flawed ideals.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy recalls her childhood at the boarding school Hailsham and her late adolescence at 'the Cottages'. Both of these institutions are explicitly designed exclusively for clones. When we join Kathy, she is a 'carer' (someone who tends to other clones as they gradually die from their donations). Kathy's two close friends, Ruth and Tommy, have recently died from having their organs harvested and Kathy is about to start 'donating' herself. Through Kathy's recollections, we discover that she, too, has made sacrifices in her role. Despite seeming to be more self-aware than Stevens, Kathy also passively submits to her fate. Her calm acceptance demonstrates how deeply she has internalised her duty to serve a system that sees her as expendable.

Lastly, in *Klara and the Sun*, Klara's recollections include her time as an AI companion to Josie, an initially sick teenage girl. We learn about Klara's belief that the sun has healing powers, and about how, in a symbolic act of devotion, she sacrificed essential fluid to 'the Sun' (as Klara refers to him) in the hopes that he would save Josie. Josie does recover and because she no longer needs Klara, the indentured AF is neglected and eventually discarded. Despite this poor treatment, Klara shows no signs of resentment.

Stevens, Kathy and Klara suffer. Their unwavering devotion to service results in sacrifice, even self-sacrifice. Thus, it is not only the earliest text in this sequence that looks at the 'ethics of service,'[3] but *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* – with a markedly modern perspective – do, too. Through the 'artificial persons' Kathy and Klara, Ishiguro continues to offer narratives 'that [demand] a questioning of our values and ethics, and what we take for granted as truth'[4].

While butlers may not be prevalent in our world today and, indeed, clones and advanced robots, even less so, these three texts are worth studying because they ask the same prevailing and thought-provoking question. 'How do cultural practices develop to the point of being unquestioned, and, perhaps more importantly, unquestionable, social norms,'[5] such that people come to acquiesce to the systems that oppress them?

Despite the temporal and technological differences across their stories, Stevens, Kathy and Klara all share a haunting passivity. They do so because of deeply conditioned insularity. This is an internalised, limited (and limiting) worldview that is shaped by their 'programming'. It limits them because it convinces them that they are inherently inferior, thus preventing them from ever truly questioning their roles. Moreover, this conditioning shapes them into believing that sacrifice in the name of service is both natural and virtuous. My thesis compares and analyses this conditioning by examining the various methods of subjugation – which are executed through the use of myth and ideology, environment, 'obfuscated intelligence,' cultural media and language – that program each character's behaviour.

I explore how Stevens, Kathy and Klara are trapped within orchestrated insularities in which they come to believe, unquestioningly, in the norms and values that keep them trapped. I address why it is that each character appears neither to identify their own conditioning nor entertain the possibility of resisting it. Indeed, all three seem incapable of adopting a different perspective so *that* they may identify and/or resist it. Ultimately, not only do Stevens, Kathy and Klara obey the oppressive systems that keep them controlled; they safeguard them, too.

The parallels with our own world are striking, which is why these texts continue to contribute meaningfully to discourses on political embeddedness, socioeconomic inequality, and

the reproduction of labour power. From these discussions, questions about agency, free will and autonomy begin to emerge. We see these reflected in *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*. How much is the self (along with its agentic potential) constrained by normative values? Ishiguro contends that 'at an ethical and political level, most of us are butlers'. He claims that '[we] don't stand outside of our milieu and evaluate it,' [6] but I would argue that most of the time, we *cannot* stand outside of our milieu and evaluate it. This is because conditioned insularity, engineered by institutions and social structures and executed through social norms, blinds us as effectively as it does Ishiguro's main characters.

Scholars have made statements commensurate with mine, such as Rob Atkinson, who argues that, despite the 'varied interpretive lenses' that they use, all of Ishiguro's novels 'investigate the institutions and social structures that govern our lives'[7]. My thesis continues this investigation, finding new connections between Ishiguro's fictive worlds while incorporating his latest offering (*Klara and the Sun*) into the discussion. To help me examine the institutions and social structures in *The Remains of the Day*, I draw on the works of Louis Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu. For *Never Let Me Go*, I lean on Althusser again, but I also analyse Kathy's conditioning through the lens of Michel Foucault's theories. Althusser, Foucault and Bourdieu offer distinct but complementary insights into how individuals are conditioned to accept their roles within social structures.

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and his lectures on biopolitics are helpful when analysing the clones' conditioning in *Never Let Me Go* and, albeit to a lesser degree, the AFs' conditioning in *Klara and the Sun*. One example is the way in which the mechanism of surveillance at the institution Hailsham shapes Kathy into a self-regulating

subject. Althusser's theories on interpellation and ideological state apparatuses (such as those of education and religion) also inform my analysis. Bourdieu's work on habitus and personal tastes proves salient when examining Stevens's performance and the way in which he supports and sustains existing power structures. Foucault, Althusser and Bourdieu's theories provide a lens through which to understand how Stevens, Kathy and Klara are conditioned not through overt oppression but through subtle and pervasive conditioning. Ultimately, all three characters act in accordance with deeply ingrained norms (which are literally encoded in Klara's case), making alternative perspectives almost unimaginable.

When discussing Klara, an AI entity who is (in comparison to Stevens and Kathy) *literally* programmed for subservience at the expense of selfhood, I lean on more recent texts. Despina Kakoudaki's *Anatomy of a Robot: Literature, Cinema, and the Cultural Work of Artificial People* explores how fictive artificial beings reflect real-world labour concerns. Rachel Sherman's *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels* is helpful in examining the classed servitude and programmed deference we see in Klara. Lastly, Arlie Hochschild's *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* provides a useful analysis of emotional labour and its dehumanising effects.

Scholarship on Ishiguro's novels examines common themes that he explores, such as memory, identity and selfhood. It regularly comments on the narrative style in which Ishiguro writes, which is often minimalist and restrained (mirroring the psychological repression of his characters) as well as the devices that he employs, such as the unreliable narrator. In *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*, the use of the unreliable narrator powerfully interweaves memory, identity and selfhood. A narrator is considered unreliable when

the reader becomes suspicious of the veracity of the narrator's account. This is often due to discrepancies between what the narrator reports and what is conveyed in the text.

James Phelan and Mary Patricia Martin argue that Stevens's narration should rather be read in terms of 'underreporting' and 'underreading' because it '"is an accurate and honest report of his motives *as he understands them*"'.[8] Bruce Robbins argues that we experience the world of *Never Let Me Go* through 'a character of limited consciousness,' which leads us to question 'how our own happiness depends "on a blinkering of awareness,"'[9] and James Wood points out that Klara is 'only as competent as her algorithms permit'[10]. A key aspect of all three characters' blinkered awareness (and resulting unreliable narration) is self-deception. Examples include Stevens's denial of his feelings for Miss Kenton, Kathy's delusion that an idyllic retirement awaits her and Klara's misinformed faith in the Sun. It is through Stevens, Kathy and Klara's unreliable narration that these various strategies of self-deception are revealed.

The characters' self-deception reveals their conditioned insularity, but it also plays a role in sustaining that conditioning. I demonstrate how the strategies of denial that Stevens, Kathy and Klara adopt conveniently serve the respective systems that benefit from their exploitation. This could mean that they are shaped into adopting these strategies or, at least, that their blinkered awareness is valued and even nurtured. In *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*, there is evidence that obfuscated intelligence is used to limit Kathy's and Klara's consciousnesses. I define obfuscated intelligence as information that may or may not be true, and which is made difficult to access either because it is withheld, not fully elaborated upon or even purposefully obfuscated. In belated, obscured and almost haphazard ways, both characters

discover crucial information that directly impacts them. Regardless of the causes, Stevens, Kathy and Klara's limitations reveal their diminished agency and power.

Stevens, Kathy and Klara's blinkered awareness – their insular mindset – is the natural result of a purposeful disconnection between the 'real' outside world and their own insular ones. This separation, which reinforces an 'us versus them' dichotomy that is prevalent in all three novels, is executed through and manifests in: myth and ideology, environment, language, obfuscated intelligence and cultural media. Mirroring their ideological containment and isolation, for example, the protagonists are mostly confined to insular physical spaces: Stevens in Darlington Hall, Kathy in the boarding school Hailsham and Klara in Josie's home. I demonstrate how the ideological state apparatus (ISA) Hailsham shapes the clones into compliant, self-regulating subjects through indoctrination and structural power. It does so partly through enclosure, partitioning and functional sites (mechanisms that Foucault outlines).

Class-based hierarchies that are created and sustained by myth and ideology regulate Stevens's, Kathy's and Klara's worlds. There is ample scholarship on the theme of class in Ishiguro's work, which proves helpful when examining the characters' subjugation and conditioned insularity. In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens, with '[his] close link to upper-class, but modest origin,' can 'put both the upper and the working class in comparison'.[11] In *Never Let Me Go*, the 'organ-donation gulag, tucked away from public view and yet not kept secret, has its obvious real-world counterpart in what we call class'.[12] Lastly, in *Klara and the Sun*, the AFs 'present [workers] in a state of false consciousness, that is, the state of a not-yet-awakened proletariat that does not see its position within the structures of class struggle'.[13] Each protagonist serves, embodies and is exploited by hierarchical systems. While sometimes

invisible, in all three texts, class differences – and the characters' resulting othering – are taken for granted. Furthermore, according to Lisa Fluet, the characters not only accept class consciousness, but they also 'choose to speak for, and even defend, something like [it]'.[14] I examine the ways in which ideological programming (and literal programming, in Klara's case) normalises class-based oppression in all three texts. I also examine ideology's close counterpart: myth.

Andrew Bennett and other scholars, whose work I draw from, use the lens of colonialism to discuss the roles that class, ideology and myth play in *The Remains of the Day*. John J. Su asserts that nostalgia rationalises and maintains the myth of England, which then 'reproduces and reinforces hierarchies based on class structures'.[15] Bennett argues, 'Ishiguro examines colonialism from the "inside"… from the perspective of individuals who are on the side of empire and, therefore, of colonial rule, and who are unwittingly complicit in its structures of oppression.'[16] Other discourse on *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* relies on postcolonial critical theory, which considers how 'the colonial ''other'' [is] essentialized, inferiorized, feminized, and ultimately naturalized as the always already colonized'. With a focus on how a colonial past continues to impact a postcolonial world, these discussions demonstrate how the 'other' (such as an invisible servant who endures colonisation of the mind) comes to be known only 'through tropes that [reproduce] relations of domination'[17].

While there are only some postcolonial critiques of *Never Let Me Go* and none of *Klara and the Sun*, it is worth viewing Kathy and Klara as 'insiders' who are also unwittingly complicit in structures of oppression. Like Stevens, they regard their respective mythologies to be true, often displaying nostalgia for them. In *Never Let Me Go*, one myth that we see is that of the

deferral: the clones distract themselves with (or are distracted by) the belief that they can evade death by a few years if they can prove that they are in love. In *Klara and the Sun*, we see the quasi-religious mythology of the Sun: Klara surrenders all agency to her omniscient and omnipotent deity. Regardless of a myth's focal point – England, a deferral or the Sun – to varying degrees, false beliefs condition Stevens, Kathy and Klara. They come to accept their own marginalisation and the powerlessness that accompanies it.

The diegetic language of each text and the protagonists' linguistic styles reflect this marginalisation. In all three novels, language operates not as a vehicle of liberation but as a reflection of and/or conduit for insular conditioning. Stevens's linguistic propriety mirrors the decorousness of his rule-bound world while also revealing his internalised inferiority. In *Never Let Me Go*, language is a tool that obfuscates intelligence and masks coercion. Euphemisms, such as 'donations' (forced extractions) and 'completing' (dying), veil the cruel utilitarianism that underpins the clones' systemic exploitation. In *Klara and the Sun*, Klara's linguistic patterns expose the limits of her programmed worldview as well as the utilitarianism of her world, which has come to condition her understanding of the world.

Lastly, I look at how cultural media plays a role in conditioning insularity in Stevens, Kathy and Klara. The brevity of these discussions illustrates the dearth of cultural media in the protagonists' lives. As with access to information, access to cultural artefacts is limited. Moreover, the media that they are able to learn from is curated. It is frequently outdated or not representative of reality. Stevens only refers to three types of texts: the twenty-year-old *The Wonder of England* books, 'sentimental love [stories]'[18] and the *Britannica Encyclopaedia*. Kathy relies on pornography magazines for reflections on her origin. Even though '[television] at

Hailsham [is] pretty restricted, and at the Cottages too,'[19] the clones *are* given access to cheap and tawdry sitcoms (after which they model their behaviour). Klara also relies on magazines for information. Unlike many fictive representations of AI persons, Klara does not have access to a collective information network, such as the internet, and it is safe to argue that this significantly curtails her potential to adapt her limiting belief system.

In all three texts, we witness the prioritisation of the collective's 'needs' over the individual. In different ways and to varying degrees, Stevens, Kathy and Klara are subservient to an affluent collective. Their subservience is secured through a progressive stunting of selfhood. Expressing individuality and selfhood, including individual needs, is frequently discouraged and sometimes even disallowed. In many ways, Stevens, Kathy and Klara act as if their selves are and have always been unquestionably expendable – they are secondary to society's agenda, to a supposed 'greater good'. This conviction, paired with their diminished agency and autonomy, blinds the protagonists from even considering the possibility of rebelling.

Some scholars disagree with this interpretation. Kwame Anthony Appiah, for example, argues that Stevens does display individuality and exercises agency in his *choice* to be a butler.[20] While various analyses of *Never Let Me Go* interpret Kathy as having been conditioned into complacency, other readings argue otherwise. Zhixing Nie, Hardev Kaur and ManiMangai Mani's article likens Kathy's journey to 'the resilience and agency of marginalized communities'.[21] Regardless of how much agency is involved, Stevens, Kathy and Klara do sacrifice themselves. They do so in the name of what they consider to be a virtue: professional excellence in the service industry. It is this selfless martyrdom that I examine, partly because of its real-world relevance.

Margaret Atwood describes *Never Let Me Go* as 'a thoughtful, crafty, and finally very disquieting look at the effects of dehumanization *on any group* that's subject to it'.[22] By examining the dehumanisation of a human (Stevens, the butler), a 'sub-human' (Kathy, the clone) and an 'artificial person' (Klara, the AF), we can attend to the dehumanisation of marginalised people in our world, such as immigrant labourers, modern-day slaves and service-industry workers. Rather than stay blind to our own complacency and complicity (two topics that I explore in all three chapters), I believe that these works from Ishiguro offer us the opportunity to, as he says, 'examine our (complicitous) relation to' marginalised people[23].

While these novels differ markedly, *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* all explore how systemic exploitation in the service industry is made possible and permissible. Each narrator undergoes a process of conditioning that shapes their thoughts, actions and emotional responses such that they value being of service above all else – including their own selves. In each text, the reader is privy to the harsh totality of the protagonist's lived experience, with all its associated pain. Stevens, Kathy and Klara, heartbroken and alone, ask themselves the same question, 'What is it to be a good servant, and have I been one?' Even with the benefit of self-conscious hindsight, none of them wonders why they believe that, and have always lived as if, they indubitably *are* one. Although limiting normative values demand sacrifices from them, Stevens, Kathy and Klara show no resentment. I examine why they neither rebel against nor even regret the fundamental tenets of service that they have lived by.

In conclusion, I argue that the conditioning that Stevens, Kathy and Klara undergo regulates them into accepting their isolation and powerlessness. It is not only in *Never Let Me Go* (as Kakoudaki argues) that we 'absorb [the] most cutting recognition of our own daily modes of

acquiescence, our essential automatism, our fundamental susceptibility to convention, program, routine, peer pressure, social expectations,'[24] but also in *The Remains of the Day* and *Klara and the Sun*. This is why these three texts are worthy of further discourse as we try to better understand the ways in which you and I acquiesce to convention, programming, routine, peer pressure and social expectations.

Chapter 1

Service through Striving in *The Remains of the Day* (1989)

The Remains of the Day, set in July 1956, follows the life of a dedicated, subservient and elderly butler, Stevens, who is grappling with societal changes and the discrepancies between his ideals and his lived experience. Stevens serves at Darlington Hall, a once-grand estate. The novel begins with him having recently become a butler to an American, Mr Farraday, who – in Farraday's own words – has 'paid for' 'a genuine old-fashioned English butler'.[1] For Stevens, this handover to a new 'master' and other personal, professional and societal developments, prompt him to reminisce about his life up until the present, contemplate how he has spent his years and reflect on how to live going forward. Most of the text comprises Stevens's journeying to the West Country of England (his first time venturing out to parts that he has read about for decades) so that he may meet with Miss Kenton, the housekeeper who used to work at Darlington Hall. On his journey, Stevens reflects on his thirty-five years spent in service to Lord Darlington, many of which he spent working alongside Miss Kenton. Two-thirds into the text, we learn that Darlington was most certainly a Nazi sympathiser at one point – something Stevens is reluctant to admit, even to himself.

Over the course of the six-day journey, the reader learns incrementally (and often unwittingly on Stevens's part) about Lord Darlington's shameful actions and Stevens's hidden feelings for Miss Kenton. It becomes apparent that Stevens loved and still loves Miss Kenton. He meets with her after decades, and – rather than receiving a real-time narration of this climactic meeting, and true to Stevens's dissociated mode of being – the reader receives the recollection of this meeting a full day after it has occurred. Stevens describes how Miss Kenton admitted to

occasionally thinking about the better life she would have had with Stevens had she not married her husband. In an expressive demeanour (atypical of Stevens's style thus far), Stevens confesses to his audience that his heart was breaking after this revelation. For the first time in the text, near its end, Stevens questions out loud whether his life has been one of dignity as he has always reassured himself. At the very end of the novel, then, the reader sees glimpses of Stevens questioning what he seems to have accepted without question all his life. How is it that Stevens is left with such monumental regret only in the remains of his day?

By analysing Stevens's memoir-like retrospections and real-time observations, I plan to demonstrate that it is because he is trapped within an orchestrated insularity, blind to the ways that he has been conditioned into believing defined norms and values that keep him trapped. He lives an unwavering, absolute and lifelong subservience to his former master Lord Darlington – even though both the lord and the pre-World War II aristocratic system that Darlington represents are dead and buried. Despite their collapse – their irrelevance – Stevens still holds a deep-seated conviction as to the importance of his servitude to aristocrats who, in his mind, were and still are inherently better equipped to make national and even global governing decisions of great importance that affect individuals in the working class, such as himself.

As Stevens travels away from Darlington Hall, he reflects on his sacrifices in service, which were founded on a pursuit for 'greatness' and the attainment of dignity. Sometimes these reflections are palliative, reassuring Stevens that his life of service has been a life of meaning and value. However, sometimes his odyssey seems to prompt a re-appraisal of his ideals – many of which he inherited from his father, Mr Stevens Sr. It is almost certain that Stevens will continue to live and eventually die virtually alone, just as his father did. The death of his father, a

pathos-drenched and significant scene deserving of examination, stands as a stark reminder of what a lonely life of service can look like at its end. Stevens models himself on his father and perhaps he too will experience a lonely death, unseen and unobtrusive, hidden in the servants' quarters.

The text's depiction of the father-son relationship is instrumental in understanding Stevens's conditioning. Mr Stevens Snr represents a bygone ideological and political era in which the servant class was expected to serve unquestioningly, express absolute loyalty to one's master and sacrifice one's life to the call of duty of care. As the text unfolds, it becomes clear that Stevens's life is founded on this inherited ethos – and that he has suffered the consequences. Just as his seventy-five-year-old father committed the 'most trivial of errors' (the last of which was due to a most untrivial stroke) while under the employ of Darlington, an elderly Stevens now finds himself committing 'a series of very minor errors' in his twilight years.[2] These errors prompt him to journey out of his insular world so that he may meet with Miss Kenton in the hopes that she will return to Darlington Hall.

When the reader first meets Stevens, he asserts that he is 'proud to have given [his] best years of service' to Darlington[3]; however, by the end of the novel, as he expresses a commensurate sentiment to a stranger, he asserts it through tears of what can only be described as remorse. Stevens feels spent. He admits that he does '"not have a great deal more left to give"' as he has '"given what [he] had to give … all [of it] to Lord Darlington"'.[4] Often at the expense of personal relationships and his own well-being, Stevens has sacrificed his life in the name of his duty. As such, he is the quintessential English butler – he is the

> apotheosis of the perfect manservant who obliterates all traces of his own personality, all instinctive drives and desires, all individual dreams in the service of his master. The dream servant is none other than the English butler, the human robot with the 'correct' accent, the 'correct' manners. [5]

Stevens's performance comprises the 'correct' accent (which we see in his linguistic scrupulousness) and the 'correct' manners (which include his impeccable costumes, among other exhibitions). This performance is underpinned by particular values that derive from particular myths. It is these same myths that the values then help to sustain, creating a self-perpetuating, transgenerational system of beliefs. I analyse, among others, the ideal of the 'Great Butler,' a myth that Stevens inherits from his father. The Great Butler's primary objective is to execute perfectly the code that has been 'programmed' into him. Doing so requires that one values the qualities of the Great Butler (or, to be more specific, the Great *English* Butler, although, according to Stevens, the two are synonymous). One value of the Great Butler is dignity, a key concept in the novel, which Stevens continually expounds upon. While it may be true that he strives for dignity (and, by extension, honesty, integrity, self-respect and possibly an actualised 'self'), Stevens has been bred to eschew *true* dignity (as well as these other virtues) as they do not serve the social machines that his 'real' outside world is built on. Stevens pursues a definition of dignity that places an emphasis on how consistently he can correctly, robotically and, thus, efficiently perform the role of butler. This is why 'all traces of his own personality, all instinctive drives and desires, all individual dreams' are routinely denied.

Furthermore, Stevens never fully identifies how this self-abnegation is conditioned – how it serves those in power rather than any lofty ideals. He also never entertains the possibility of resisting it – even in the heart-wrenching admission that his life is lacking in dignity as he cannot claim to have *chosen* his own path[6]. Stevens remains oblivious to his conditioning and this may be owed, in part, to his apparent difficulty in adopting alternative perspectives – a myopic

inflexibility, which manifests not only in the rigidity of his views and values, but also in his speech, manners and tastes. Stevens's insular mindset keeps him ideologically confined and disconnected from the 'real' outside world. Not only has Stevens come to internalise and abide by a conditioned insularity, but he ultimately safeguards it, too. Although *The Remains of the Day* is centred on a man's project of attempting to order his memories to examine his 'self,' Stevens's narration betrays a truth: he has been conditioned to 'over-identify with [his] professional [role],'[7] such that the individual self whom he attempts to examine has become diminished and subsumed by his committed-to role as servant.

I will occasionally reference the works of Louis Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu to demonstrate how Stevens is regulated through various, generally inconspicuous, methods of coercion. These methods dramatically and perniciously condition Stevens's deeply held values and beliefs so that they adhere to the agenda of the system that relies on his servitude. These methods of coercion (or devices of subjugation) constrain Stevens's individual selfhood with the aim of ensuring that the collective's 'needs' for service are met. I would argue that he is socialised from a young age to believe that his selfhood is and can only be servanthood. While neither Althusser nor Bourdieu explicitly use the term 'insularity' in their theoretical works, their texts can nevertheless shed light on how Stevens is conditioned into adopting an insular perspective – a perspective that has shaped him into being '"unprotestingly obedient throughout his life"'[8].

Stevens is bred for subjugation through the use of: myth and ideology, environment, 'obfuscated intelligence,' language and cultural media. Methods of subjugation are used in all areas of Stevens's life, in the hours from before his master awakes to when his master decides to

retire for the night. Through their omnipresence, they are able to sustain 'a reproduction of [labour] skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order'[9]. By examining these different devices of conditioning and their effectiveness at reproducing submission, it will become clear how antithetical they are to Stevens truly pursuing an individual self – one that would *not* be, by definition, predicated on the 'needs' of the established order. Before delving into a textual analysis of each device of subjugation, it is worth examining the style of narration that Ishiguro employs in *The Remains of the Day* because it relates to the relationship between performativity, insular conditioning and two major devices of subjugation in the text: myth and ideology.

Stevens is the unreliable narrator who curates his story for the reader. He has a proclivity to 'underreport'[10]. He often retells past events inaccurately or incompletely, and he admits that he may misremember events. As Stevens's personal odyssey progresses, our suspicions that something is amiss in his narration are progressively confirmed. There are many moments where the reader is reminded that the 'intelligence' we receive about Stevens's world is shaped by him and is therefore, by dint of his natural subjectivity, likely to be distorted – possibly completely untrue or unfounded.

A key element of Stevens's subjective, memoir-like narration is that he frequently addresses the reader directly. Stevens makes asides to us: '*as you know*, finding recruits … is no easy task' and 'like many of *us*, I [am reluctant] to change too much of the old ways'.[11] This suggests that he sees the reader as being part of his community – possibly being a butler. Stevens appears to assume that we are acquainted with (and possibly even acquiescent to) the same norms that govern his behaviour. This assumption hints at his 'naïvely blinkered perspective on

the world,'[12] his difficulty with considering other viewpoints. Occasionally, this naivety results in Stevens making humorous conclusions, such as the one that his masterful silver polishing contributes 'towards the easing of relations between Lord Halifax and Herr Ribbentrop' one tense evening at Darlington Hall[13].

Stevens's unreliable narration – which is limited all the more by his mistakenly thinking that he is speaking to someone within his community – introduces the element of irony. While the reader may empathise with Stevens's version of events, we bring a perspective to his retellings that he inevitably lacks. Owing to the weakness that is inherent in all acts of narration, Stevens's 'interpretation is never mere duplication'[14]. We realise that when Stevens retells past events, he reframes not only the events, but also his role in them. Our ironic distance alerts us when Stevens makes flimsy rationalisations (for his own and Lord Darlington's behaviour). Unlike Stevens, we come to see that his continued belief in the nobility and dignity of his service stands in contrast with what he ended up serving: Nazi Germany.

However, it is '[only] at a relatively advanced stage of the story [that] the reader, whose access to information is dependent on Stevens as both narrator and focalizer, [is] attuned to all the aspects of Stevens's self-deception'.[15] The reader becomes attuned to his strategies of self-deception because we learn to identify clues, such as when his narration becomes suspiciously insistent and uncharacteristically expressive. This is something that tends to occur when he discusses Miss Kenton:

> It is of course tragic that her marriage is now ending in failure. At this very moment, no doubt, she is pondering with regret decisions made in the far-off past that have now left her, deep in middle age, so alone and desolate. And it is easy to see how in such a frame of mind, the thought of returning to Darlington Hall would be a great comfort to her. *Admittedly, she does not at any point in her letter state explicitly her desire to return*.[16]

Stevens could easily be talking about himself here – about his own regret over decisions that have led to a lonely and desolate life. We discover that, although Miss Kenton has had periods of unhappiness in her marriage, she has no intention of returning to Darlington. On the contrary, she is looking forward to the birth of her first grandchild. She says that her husband is 'a kind, steady man' whom she has 'grown to love'.[17] Thus, perhaps the most significant example of dramatic irony in the text is the reader's understanding that Stevens is in love with Miss Kenton – and yet tragically unaware of it.

Paul de Man's *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* proves helpful when considering how Stevens displays both blindness and insight in his narration. Broadly speaking, de Man argues that interpretations are structured by the very limitations that they fail to recognise. As such, they create a kind of 'productive blindness'. While the interpreter constructs meaning, they also undermine it. In *The Remains of the Day*, we see what de Man describes as the tension between the desire to present '"the totality of life"'[18] and the reality of fragmentation that is actually presented. Stevens's minimisations, strategies of self-deception, flimsy rationalisations and outright inconsistencies, which are examples of irony in the text, illustrate the fact that 'our entire social language is … designed to escape from the direct expression of desires that are, in the fullest sense of the term, unnameable'[19]. Owing to the 'philosophical impossibility' of 'unmediated expression,'[20] a novel can never be 'an imitation of reality'; it will always contain 'ironic language [that] mediates between experience and desire'[21].

Stevens desires and attempts to present a whole and direct picture of reality, but he re-presents his mediated desires instead. One example is his habit of referring to Miss Kenton as 'Miss Kenton' – even though she has been 'Mrs Benn' for twenty years. Stevens broadcasts his

true desire that she still be unattached. Although he claims that he merely refers to Mrs Benn as Miss Kenton because he 'knew her at close quarters only during her maiden years and [has] not seen her once since she went to the West Country to become "Mrs Benn,"'[22] the reader sees through this weak reasoning. Surely, the correct and proper Stevens has been addressing her as 'Mrs Benn' in his letters over the years, which would imply that it is a deliberate choice to refer to her as 'Miss Kenton' in his internal speech.

While there are moments where Stevens may be purposefully deceiving us, there are many more – such as this one – where the person he wishes to deceive most is himself. His unreliable narration is littered with moments of glaring contradictions that stem from complete self-denial. Indeed, as Miss Kenton accuses him once, Stevens does 'pretend'[23]. In addition, Stevens sometimes says or does the opposite of what he had intended. One example is his botched attempt to console Miss Kenton after the death of her aunt, which ends up being an admonition to her to 'be a little less complacent' about the performance of new recruits.[24] Stevens's only frame of reference within his limited awareness is that which falls within his and Miss Kenton's shared profession. Although he wishes to find the words to console her, he is unable to see outside of their professional connection.

Nevertheless, Stevens also displays insight. He identifies 'turning points' in his relationship with Miss Kenton. Stevens perceives two universal and tragic truths: turning points are often only recognised in retrospect and one misses these pivotal, 'precious moments' because, at the time, one feels 'as though one had available a never-ending number of days, months, years in which to sort [things] out.' Only now, Stevens realises that when he miscomputed (pun intended) how to respond to these turning points – these 'small incidents' –

he rendered 'whole dreams forever irredeemable'[25]. The reason as to *why* he has this realisation so late in life is evident in another example of ironic language in the text. Displaying both blindness and insight, Stevens chooses to describe his informal meetings with Miss Kenton over cocoa first as 'overwhelmingly,' then as 'predominantly,' and, lastly, as 'essentially' professional[26]. Stevens feels compelled to frame these meetings as professional in nature because he has been shaped to prioritise his function over his feelings. However, his changing adverb choice signals his insight into the meetings' *true* nature. Stevens is admitting that, ultimately, these precious meetings are virtually (or 'essentially') – that is, very close to but not quite – professional. Unfortunately, partly because of a turning point in which Stevens, once again, mishandles his reactions, the meetings with Miss Kenton end and, as we know, Miss Kenton goes on to become Mrs Benn.

Thus, Stevens's inconsistencies, deceptions and overly calculated language are evidence of his narrative unreliability, but they are also 'the very mode by which... Stevens's ever-conflicted subject position and the processes through which it is created and maintained' are inscribed.[27] Stevens's behavioural and linguistic 'tics' are clues to his performance of subjecthood. This performance is guided by a conditioned ('created and maintained') habitus. Stevens's habitus '[functions] below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will,'[28] which is why there is regularly a gap between his experiences and his desires. Stevens feels compelled to execute a function that serves a greater structure (English aristocracy). Not only is this compulsion outside of his control, but it also appears to be un(re)cognisable. Stevens's various tics reflect his strained efforts at inhabiting, utterly and fully, his prescribed role: the objectified subject, the English butler. Stevens denies his individual needs at every turn because he has been taught to value

self-abnegation as a form of dignity. Part of Stevens's self-regulation is to never allow his own needs – his own suffering – to become visible. However, through Stevens's ironic language and moments of blindness and insight, we witness his suffering, even as it remains largely invisible to those around him. As his individual needs come into conflict with subconscious, unexamined drives, a tension surfaces at the level of performance. These manifest conflicts evidence Stevens's underdeveloped self and limited self-awareness.

Stevens's direct narration to the reader does more than just expose his myopic inflexibility. His taking for granted that we are part of his group foregrounds this understood-as-shared collective identity: the servant class. Bourdieu's work on how class-based practices become unquestioned and unquestionable social norms through the repeated performance of one's habitus becomes salient here. Bourdieu describes habitus as 'embodied class'.[29] Stevens belongs to the servant class and his disposition – a useful synonym for habitus, which is defined as a system of dispositions resulting from an organising action[30] – reflects this. Stevens's disposition has been organised so that his way of being (his performance of selfhood) reinforces his service-class status and maintains the power structures that he serves. Stevens's performativity stems from his habitus and his habitus is shaped by the numerous myths and stories that he has been conditioned into believing.

Environment, myth and ideology, which are used to condition insularity in Stevens in concert, are often closely interconnected. From the outset of Ishiguro's novel, it is clear that Stevens's world – both physically and mentally – *is* Darlington Hall. On page one, he is contained within a circumscribed time and place: 'JULY 1956 / *Darlington Hall*'. Stevens admits that he has 'travelled very little, restricted as [he is] by [his] responsibilities in the house'.[31]

Farraday says that Stevens is always locked up in the residence. Shortly afterwards, in paradoxical phrasing, Stevens himself says that he has '[seen] the best of England … with*in* [Darlington Hall's] very walls'.[32] While this suggests that Stevens views his 'imprisonment' as having been positive, we can also deduce that he has not seen England in its true fullness. Stevens himself, then, admits to having only seen slices of its 'reality'.

Miss Kenton says that Stevens's room resembles 'a prison cell'.[33] This happens after Stevens describes his father's room in the exact same way.[34] It is worth acknowledging that although Miss Kenton's character is mediated through Stevens, she is still likely to be a more reliable source of information on Stevens than Stevens himself. There are indications throughout the text that she is emotionally perceptive and honest, such as her confrontational question to Stevens ('"[Why] do you always have to pretend?"'[35]). Thus, her description of his room is likely accurate. Indeed, elsewhere we are told that both Stevens's and Mr Stevens Sr's rooms are dark, cold and bare of signs of personality. Both men appear to follow the Edwardian rule specifying that '[ornaments] and pictures [be] strictly forbidden in most servants' bedrooms'[36]. Stevens is even reluctant to have flowers in his butler's pantry.[37] It seems that Stevens's world – which is free from traces of individuality and shares similarities with his father's – is insulated from a broader reality that is outside of Darlington Hall.

Furthermore, one must note that Stevens and most of the servant-class members are allotted spaces to live 'downstairs,' where their personal lives remain contained and invisible. They live in dark and cramped confines in which their senses are stunted and their movement is hampered. Stevens wonders whether his father's hunching is due to his old age or 'the habit of accommodating the steeply sloped ceilings of the room'.[38] He describes the 'back corridor,'

which only the servants traverse, as 'a rather cheerless affair due to the lack of daylight penetrating its considerable length'. In fact, even 'on a fine day, the corridor could be so dark that the effect was like walking through a tunnel'.[39] Stevens repeatedly makes mention of the 'darkness' and 'dimness' of the corridor. Interestingly, moments of deep personal pain for Stevens occur in this invisible, ignored and relegated space, such as the two separate occasions on which he stands outside of Miss Kenton's door in anguish, feeling certain that she is crying… but, owing to years of repressing his emotional self, being unable to comfort her.

While Alison Maloney's *Life Below Stairs* examines service in the Edwardian era, it is a helpful text to consider in Stevens's case. Darlington Hall appears to be run according to bygone values. Lord Darlington himself clings to the past; he reads outdated books and is resistant to democracy. In a similar fashion, Stevens still clings to aristocracy even though it is dying. Therefore, while the Edwardian era predates the time period Stevens's flashbacks pertain to by a decade, Maloney's research into servanthood is still valuable. On the topics of servants' living quarters, movement and bodies, Maloney has this to say:

> Most of the codes of conduct revolved around being as unobtrusive as possible. Although Edwardian families liked to be able to afford the armies of maids that ran around below stairs, they didn't wish to see or hear them at any time. Most of the lowlier servants never spoke to their mistress or master, even if their paths crossed, and this was encouraged in the many regulations recommended at the time. The kitchen staff rarely left the basement and should a parlourmaid or chambermaid pass a member of the family they were expected to stand against the wall and look down at the floor. One contemporary servants' guide advised, 'Always "give room": that is, if you encounter one of your betters in the house or on the stairs, you are to make yourself as invisible as possible, turning yourself toward the wall and averting your eyes'.[40]

Servants were regulated such that self-effacement – self-erasure, even – was expected. One's personal life (that is, one's humanity) was relegated and contained. Similarly, the servants of Darlington Hall are forced to suppress and hide their personal lives – including their emotions,

suffering and needs. They are 'tucked away,' as it were, in the symbolic corner of Darlington Hall, along with its servants' quarters.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard explores how spatial arrangements can influence and reflect the unconscious – one's emotions, memory and imagination. He speaks of the corner as a 'symbol of solitude for the imagination'. It is a haven of immobility, which is something 'we prize most highly'.[41] Corners can represent a space to retreat. They can offer peace to 'the dreamer [who] would appear to enjoy the repose that divides being and non-being'.[42] In Stevens's case, however, this is not so. He likens one corner, his pantry – which is dark, cold and 'even a little damp'[43] – to a 'general's headquarters during a battle'[44]. It is true that it provides 'privacy and solitude,' but it is still a space of 'being'. It is a space that demands of Stevens a scrupulous performance. Stevens says that 'it is imperative that all things in it are ordered – and left ordered.'[45] He disapproves of Miss Kenton bringing flowers into his pantry, stating that 'distractions [should be] kept to a minimum'.[46] Thus, this corner represents not imagination and repose, but rather a closely guarded sterility, 'stark and bereft of colour'[47]. At Darlington Hall, the servants' invisible spaces – their corners – *impose* rather than gift immobility, sometimes literally, as in the case of Mr Stevens Sr's suffocatingly sloped ceiling.

Stevens carries his enforced invisibility and immobility with him everywhere, permanently residing in a psychological corner. Moreover, not only is he expected to be almost always invisible, but, somehow, he must also be permanently available to cater to his master's every whim. Stevens asserts that his being a 'great' butler rests on his ability 'to achieve that balance between attentiveness and the illusion of absence'.[48] Much of the time, he stands to attention, statue-like and in the shadows; Stevens is constantly striving to be unseen as well as

permanently accessible. This demands the sustained effort to achieve the unnatural: to either 'de-animate' into an object or to animate and execute the appropriate action – depending on what is required moment to moment.

Stevens casually mentions a norm of service by describing how, 'as is [his] custom,' he pauses for a second to listen at a guest's door before knocking. He goes on to justify his somewhat duplicitous action (safeguarding his virtue a little too insistently, as is his wont). By mentioning this custom, he highlights a significant practice (or disposition) of the servant class. Stevens states: 'You may not yourself be in the habit of taking this small precaution to avoid knocking at some highly inappropriate moment, but I always have been and can vouch that it is common practice amongst many professionals.'[49] Stevens draws attention to how those in service are conditioned to be keenly and constantly aware of their masters' needs, states of mind and potential embarrassments. Stevens's life frequently revolves around trying to anticipate the 'needs' of the upper-class individuals whom he serves. He is always at the 'ready to relieve [their] discomfort at the first opportunity'.[50] It is a 'great merit' when he is inconspicuous – only partially visible and able to remain stationary, 'standing … in the shadows some distance from where' important men discuss important things.[51] When Stevens is able to transform into an object that activates *only* when needed – when his self-effacement and objectification are strong enough to transform him into an invisible instrument – he is in the ideal state of being for his masters.

This ability to be statue-like is beneficial for those he serves, partly because they feel unthreatened and trust that he will not act on the conversations that he overhears. Indeed, Stevens is proud of how Darlington trusts him to be present in 'highly inappropriate' situations, such as

conversations with Herr Ribbentrop, ambassador for Hitler.[52] (This character is modelled on Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Nazi Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1938–1945.) Stevens does not care that this trust is based on the correct assumption that he would never betray his master's misdeeds to the world. Darlington and the system he stands for have not only conditioned Stevens into performing self-erasure, but they have also conditioned him into believing that the achievement of this eradication is a higher good. It is a virtue that is as honourable as it is discomposing to achieve.

Part of Stevens's self-erasure is how he is 'attached'[53] to Darlington Hall; he is an extension of the house and its master. As such, he does not have (or is not encouraged to have) a realised, individual self with the moral capacity that is necessary to make judgements on Darlington's actions, speech or coalitions. Indeed, Stevens believes it is 'simply not possible to adopt… a critical attitude towards an employer and at the same time provide good service'.[54] Stevens's striving to be an 'a-ethical' appendage, which serves Darlington perfectly, is founded on conditioned values, such as the belief that to be a great butler, one must become inconspicuous. If one is inconspicuous enough, they need not be suspected of ever adopting a critical attitude toward their master.

It is with this insight into the butler's constrained and insular world that the reader joins an elderly Stevens on his trip. He is setting out to the West Country of England for the first time in his life. Or rather, he is setting out to his *idea* of the West Country. Stevens has a preconception of what the English landscape is, which is based on an idealised myth of England. His mental constructs of England, the English landscape and the Great Butler are closely interconnected; all three are shaped by a shared, overarching myth of English greatness. Molly

Westerman points out that in Stevens's repeated return to the question of English greatness, he 'shifts abruptly from his extended description of the English landscape… to the question of what constitutes a great butler… [and this move] "associates butlering (and himself) with Englishness"'.[55] As well as conflating the Great Butler myth with England/Englishness, Stevens also conflates the two with the English environment when he asserts that 'when one encounters [both great butlers and the English landscape], one simply *knows* one is in the presence of greatness'[56]. Stevens's mythology of 'Great Englishness' automatically incorporates England's centuries-old repressive class structure. The 'division of society into classes according to [an] individual's status, wealth, [and] power,' which 'has existed for as long as the society itself,'[57] appears to be a natural and unquestioned essence of England's greatness.

How does Stevens come to have these mythologised ideas of England, the English landscape and himself as (striving to be) the Great Butler? One concrete contributor is Mrs Jane Symons's *The Wonder of England* – a cultural artefact in the Darlington Hall library that is at least two decades old. It re-presents an outdated and intrinsically 'treated' interpretation of English villages as calm and restrained. The villages are quite literally constrained by the pages that they are on and by the choices that Mrs Symons makes as to how she presents them, which come to shape Stevens's understanding of England and its environment. Not only is this guidebook his point of reference for the 'real' England outside of Darlington Hall, but because Stevens prefers its artistic depictions to the photographs of the physical spaces,[58] his understanding of reality beyond his insular world (and his *preferred* version of it) is thrice-removed. Stevens's interpretation and narrated presentation of the English environment are outdated and 'mock' – 'a term used by a character to mean fake' – explains Monika Gehlawat. Gehlawat states further that, just as the environment is fake, 'so too the first-person

voice that tells the story announces its constructedness'.[59] The artificiality of the myth of England and its landscape parallels Stevens's own meticulously orchestrated and regulated performance as the perfect manservant.

Stevens leaves the confines of Darlington Hall confident in his understanding of England, its environment, Englishness, and himself; he is certain that he knows England – it is calm and restrained, free of spectacle.[60] Owing to Stevens's conflation of himself, England and its landscape, he associates these virtues with himself. In Stevens's mind, he is also calm and restrained, free of spectacle. Yet early in his motoring journey, the reader sees that just beyond the borders that he is accustomed to being confined within, Stevens is, in fact, very unfamiliar with his own country's environment – and possibly with himself, too. His anxiety becomes obvious when he encounters what he describes as strange and unrecognisable surroundings. He starts using uncharacteristically animated and sensorial diction. He *senses* a 'steep drop' and *feels* 'a slight *sense* of alarm – a *sense* aggravated by the *feeling* that [he] was perhaps not on the correct road at all, but speeding off in totally the wrong direction into a *wilderness*'. Stevens slows down and even '*[feels]* compelled to stop the car a moment to take stock'.[61]

For a man who is generally far from corporeal in his descriptions, the word choice of 'senses' (three times), 'feels' (twice) and 'wilderness' (once) indicates experiences that are atypical of Stevens's world (or, at least, of his worldview). Stevens's state of mind is disturbed by the rawness of immediately felt sensations. Thus, the 'freedom inherent in Stevens's first motoring trip… issues a substantial challenge to his mythology of constraint'.[62] The raw and wild unfamiliarity of the countryside comes into direct conflict with Steven's familiar ideas of the English environment (and, by association, Englishness and his own character). Stevens is the

furthest he has been from his corner of Darlington Hall. His unwitting reaction, which is made most clear in how he expresses himself, provides an insight into how his foray from the safety of his confined corner to the outside world has begun to challenge his unconsciously held beliefs.

Soon after this jarring experience, Stevens encounters a stranger who encourages him to go off the beaten track to enjoy the best 'view in the whole of England'. At first, Stevens takes this man to be a vagrant. He describes him as vulgar, foolish, thin and wearing a cloth cap. Stevens refers to this man as 'some local fellow'. When the man repeats himself instead of directly addressing a remark that Stevens has made, Stevens assumes that the man does not understand him. Instead of considering the possibility that the man is *choosing* to ignore Stevens, Stevens concludes that the man is ignorant. All of these 'tells' indicate that Stevens assesses this man to be working class and inferior to him. Stevens decides to undertake the physically exerting hike on an untamed path to the recommended spot (partly to spite the man) – and declares that it *is* 'a most marvellous view'.[63]

It is noteworthy that a spot close to where he has lived all his life (but still far enough that Stevens considers it to be disconcertingly unfamiliar); that is recommended to him by a working- (and lower-) class individual; *and* that requires physical exertion to reach (speaking again to the working-class element in this scene) inspires not only appreciation for a hidden gem, but also a rare moment of self-reflection. Stevens claims that experiencing this view changes his 'frame of mind' and gives him the courage he needs to go through with visiting Miss Kenton.[64] Stevens experiences the ideals of beauty and truth when he explores an 'exclusively local' space, recommended to him by one whom Stevens likely views – by dint of their social standing – as lacking what he considers to be the highest ideal: dignity.

Early on in Stevens's divorce from Darlington Hall, he experiences both jolting and joyful discoveries. These revelations may be an indication that Stevens's false and insular understanding of the world is being questioned. Indeed, some scholars, such as John J. Su, argue that Stevens's road trip away from his insular, prison-like bubble catalyses a shift in his thinking.[65] Matthew Beedham argues that while 'Stevens's change is not linear … he does change'.[66] The rare moment of self-reflection may be evidence of this. Perhaps Steven's awareness does get 'unblinkered' – at least, somewhat. However, part of my goal in this chapter is to demonstrate why these interpretations of progression are not entirely convincing.

It becomes clear to us that Stevens believes in and admires idealised and impossible versions of England, English landscapes, Lord Darlington (and the aristocracy that he represents) and his own self. It is a symptom of Stevens's blinkered and naive awareness that he is *confident* that the English landscape is one of *objective* greatness.[67] This example is comical (how can anyone be confident of something so subjective?), but it also exposes something darker. Stevens's ideals are illogical and frequently prejudicial. In his views on something as neutral as a country's landscape, he has internalised imperial Britain's racism. He views other environments, such as Africa, with its 'unseemly demonstrativeness,'[68] as inherently inferior. Stevens values what he considers to be undramatic and inconspicuous because, for him, those are marks of British greatness. These qualities shape his behaviour, which we see in his desire to always strike the 'balance between attentiveness and the illusion of absence'.

Stevens's nostalgia reflects his relationship with outdated ideals. He yearns for a 'better time,' and he is reluctant 'to change too much of the old ways'. He believes that he is witnessing a 'sharp decline of professional standards' around him, where 'finding recruits of a satisfactory

standard is no easy task'.[69] Darlington, too, longs for outdated ideals. His fake reading of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 'signals [his] lack of understanding of "exactly what Britain has become or what its status in the world is"'. Darlington hides '"behind outdated and unexamined notions of British ubiquity and British power"'.[70] Several scholars discuss nostalgia's role in *The Remains of the Day*. Su highlights how nostalgia is a political tool that rationalises and maintains the myth of England. He argues that Stevens's ideal of English 'greatness reproduces and reinforces hierarchies based on class structures'.[71] Although Stevens lives in a world that has witnessed the breakdowns of the colonial project and the pre-World War II class system, he is nostalgic for their bygone, prejudiced ideals. Thus, without seeming to fully realise it, Stevens subscribes to Anglocentric racism and class discrimination.

Stevens's faith in noble service in the name of jingoism is a symptom of his myopic loyalty to Darlington and the system that the lord represents. Manifesting as nostalgia, Stevens's compulsion to see and re-present the lord and what he stood for in a favourable light appears only to strengthen with Darlington's death and the estate's decline. Despite this, in two separate moments of 'blinded insight,' Stevens denies having worked for Lord Darlington[72]. While, as a rule, duty to Darlington takes precedence, there is a repressed part of Stevens that is ashamed of his master. Generally, however, Stevens's nostalgia, along with his preference for obedience, duty, hierarchies and sacrifice, overshadow this shame, regularly keeping it hidden – even from himself. Nostalgia stops Stevens from critically assessing Darlington's – and, thus, his own – actions.

Through his valorisation of a bygone imperial Britain and other myths of English 'greatness,' Stevens is shaped into accepting and even sustaining class-based prejudice. Another

myth – the myth of upward social mobility – has a similar effect. Stevens strives to be a great butler (or, at least, a better butler than his peers). This aspiration results in him participating in the repression of himself and those within his group. Stevens's aspiration of upward social mobility within his own class may appear noble, and indeed, that is how he frames it; however, in reality, this striving creates a cycle of suffering. A process of perpetuating an oppressive system (along with the systemic self-repression that it instils in those being oppressed) ensues. A necessary step in 'being the best' is to rank the manservants within one's social circle. Stevens evaluates that certain butlers – Mr Marshall, Mr Lane and his father[73] – dominate the hierarchy because they had the right values. In contrast, Stevens maintains a snobbish attitude of superiority toward others within his own class because they do not pursue the 'correct' values or because they are working-class individuals who do not happen to sell their labour to the upper class. His attitude toward the cloth-cap-wearing fellow of earlier is an example of the latter. Stevens feels no sense of class solidarity when he interacts with the man; he does not seem to see him as an equal worth 'forging solidarity with'. As Richard Delgado posits, '[Why] bother to get to know the locals when you don't consider yourself to be one of them?'[74]

Stevens's snobbery is also evident in his denunciation of valets (servants well below his station). To Stevens, they are ignorant gossipers who idolise the likes of Mr Neighbours, a butler who '[masterminded] a number of large occasions with conspicuous style'[75] – the word 'conspicuous' having pejorative connotations for Stevens. It is interesting that a peer whom Stevens derides (a man of similar standing whose organisational skills could ordinarily be an object of Stevens's admiration) has the name 'Neighbours'. Perhaps he is an example of someone within Stevens's own circle – a servant to the upper class and a 'socioeconomic Neighbour,' if you will. However, despite this proximity, Stevens sees no need to forge solidarity

with Neighbours. Years of living and working within a segment of the real world (its upper-crust) and serving its class-obsessed individuals (whose survival depends on maintaining the class structure) have shaped Stevens into adopting their habit of snobbery.

Interestingly, in the Edwardian era, 'snobbery in the ranks below stairs was perpetuated as much by the staff themselves as by their employers'.[76] Perhaps this is because snobbery is conditioned into servants by their employers – those who benefit most from its deleterious consequences. 'False consciousness,' derived from Marxist theory, may shed light on Stevens's ambition to be a great butler and its resulting snobbery. False consciousness is a distortion in thinking that results in individuals supporting and perpetuating the very systems that oppress them. Stevens's ambitious striving to be a great butler is a conditioned motivation that results in destructive behaviour, such as his self- (and therefore peer-) evaluation. By ranking his fellow servant- and working-class members, he reinforces hierarchies. This ambition *seems* to be a virtuous goal that an individual has chosen, but the truth is that, from a young age, Stevens is raised on myths (vehicles for ideologies) that instil in him an unthinking drive to be a good servant – a great butler. He is purposefully shaped to believe that his 'personal identity and overall purpose in life is inextricably linked to [his] labor and function'[77]. Stevens has been taught to believe that by never '[abandoning] the professional being [that he] inhabits,'[78] he will achieve 'great butler status,' thereby living a happy personal life.

The definition of 'ideology' that I use in my analysis of Stevens's conditioned insularity is a set of ideas that 'serves the interests of the ruling economic class'. Ideology, in this sense, is 'distorted knowledge, producing a state of false consciousness for all those living within its understanding of reality'. It keeps Stevens blind to alternative perspectives that may challenge

the status quo so that, not only does he become alienated, but he also 'cannot even realize or recognize that [he is] alienated'.[78] Stevens has been taught to believe in certain ideologies, and while he likely *believes* that he willingly pursues values that are derived from these sets of ideas, his 'thinking' is based on a false consciousness. Stevens may believe that his striving to categorically inhabit his role is self-determined, but, in reality, the 'real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to him'[79]. Designed by their oppressors, false consciousness indoctrinates working-class servants like Stevens so that they 'accept and internalize beliefs that are propagated by the ruling class'[80]. One example of this indoctrination is Stevens's distaste for Mr Neighbours' conspicuousness, which extends to his condemnation that 'conspicuous butlers' like Neighbours are paid 'wildly high wages'.[81] Stevens believes that a great butler is satisfied with whatever wages are deemed fit for them by their master and according to their standing in society – thinking that is 'wildly' convenient for the master. Ultimately, Stevens is an 'ideological servant'[82]. He believes that he is a conscious thinker, but he is a victim of ideological indoctrination.

Over the course of the text, this indoctrination is signalled by the cracks in his performance. These surface as Stevens struggles to meet his personal needs while being compelled to inhabit his professional role entirely. Stevens's word choice of 'inhabit' in his proclamation of what makes a butler great is illustrative: his role is a residency – albeit a permanent one. How to wear a performance permanently, how to carry a particular disposition (Bourdieu's synonym for habitus) always, how to abide inside an artificial structure as if it was naturally built into one's being – these are key considerations for Stevens throughout the text. From the beginning of *The Remains of the Day*, where he deliberates over what costume is appropriate for his travels as he 'might be seen driving the car' and 'be obliged to give out that

[he] is from Darlington Hall,'[83] to the last page, where the performative act of bantering has the last word, the pressure of *permanently* executing the appropriate performance takes a toll on Stevens.

Stevens agonises over which type of smile is appropriate when playing butler to his American master, Mr Farraday. Farraday is fond of banter, which Stevens struggles to reproduce correctly. This vexes the butler throughout the text. Ironically, it is Stevens's conditioning that hinders him in performing his new role appropriately. His cold and robotic coding has not comprised the 'human warmth' that bantering requires. When Stevens resolves to improve his bantering skills, it is not because it is human or warm, but because it is a reasonable 'duty for an employer to expect a professional to perform'.[84] In other words, something is only worth pursuing if it helps him serve his function better.

Stevens's consternations over costume, mannerisms and speech illustrate some of the painful disconnects that he experiences between himself and the role that he inhabits. Stevens strives to resemble what is expected of him: a perfectly unemotional instrument of service, a statue in the shadows waiting to serve. When he succeeds (by serving port instead of attending to a dying father, for example), he is proof that, for the structures in control, the more a servant 'can resemble a thing, the better it will be at its job'[85]. When Stevens can repress his emotions, his needs and his attachments, then he is the perfect servant because he functions efficiently.

Storytelling – mythology by another name – also conditions Stevens into adopting an insular mindset. A significant story that Stevens and his father model their ideals after is the one in which an English butler in India calmly 'disposes' of a tiger, leaving no discernible traces so that when it is time for dinner, the master and his company are spared the unpleasantness of

witnessing even traces of its disposal.[86] Whether this story is factually true is unclear and Gehlawat makes a convincing argument that it is entirely myth, leading to her conclusion that 'Stevens models himself on myth,' something I have argued. Gehlawat asserts that Mr Stevens Sr's closest approach to critical reflection is simply retelling the tiger story over and over.[87] Stevens, too, simply retells the myth, modelling his life after a story that has been written for him and which he never questions. The main function of this symbolic, transgenerational story is to instil and reinforce particular ideologies. As such, it is a ritual used by the family in its capacity as an ideological state apparatus (ISA). Through the repeated retelling of this story, Stevens learns about class-based social roles, such as 'servant' and 'master'. His beliefs are subtly shaped so that he behaves as expected when he becomes 'servant'.

Stevens manages to restage this fable and 'kill the tiger' twice. In both situations, killing the tiger results in failing to react to impending personal loss: first, to that of his father and second, to that of a potential future with Miss Kenton. Both moments place broad political situations side-by-side with personal moments of suffering for Stevens, where the butler suppresses his individual needs so that he may continue to serve those in power. Stevens not only relegates ('disposes of') his suffering, but he also strives to get rid of any discernible traces of it so that his masters do not have to engage with him as a real person or witness anything remotely unpleasant.

The first instance of 'killing the tiger' is the build-up to and death of Stevens's father, which coincides with a celebratory end to the 1923 conference that Darlington hosts. Leading up to the death, Stevens downplays his father's failing health. However, the reader is given numerous clues that Mr Stevens Sr is in fact dying. Although Stevens finds his father with a

weak pulse and 'no colour [Stevens] had seen on a living being,' Stevens continues to serve port to celebrating guests. The death of Mr Stevens Snr (for which Stevens is absent) is juxtaposed with his attendance to his ideological father, Lord Darlington. Upon receiving news of his father's death, Stevens *seems* unperturbed, but when Mr Cardinal (Lord Darlington's godson) asks after Stevens's well-being three times and Darlington himself says that Stevens looks as if he has been crying (after which Stevens quickly wipes his face), the reader sees that Stevens is, indeed, deeply perturbed.[88]

Stevens continues to serve Darlington's guests despite the stressful news that he has just received. For the butler, his stoic service is noble because his father 'would have wished [him] to carry on'.[89] He deals with the rude and demanding M. Dupont insisting on trivial medical help (Dupont's sore feet contrasting with the death of someone important to Stevens) and the ignorantly condescending Mr Cardinal (his talk of nature and life contrasting, too, with Mr Stevens Sr's death) – all while ignoring the reality of what has just occurred. For Stevens, his ability to ignore his own needs and suffering (and those of his father) while keeping these events and their effects hidden means that he has '[displayed], in the face of everything, at least in some degree a "dignity" worthy of someone like Mr Marshall – or come to that, [his] father'. Decades on, Stevens maintains that '[for] all its sad associations, whenever [he recalls] that evening,' he does 'so with a large sense of triumph'.[90]

The myth of the tiger is about keeping unpleasantries invisible from those in power, who should not be made to deal with discomfort or challenges. The myth of Great Britain and her noble causes is about keeping those in power served and in good health so that they may continue to dictate the rules. Lastly, the myth of the Great Butler is about keeping calm and

composed despite deep, personal pain. All three myths have shaped Stevens's value system in such a way that his performance in this tragic scene was always predetermined.

Mythology and storytelling play a major role in disseminating and indoctrinating authoritarianism, fascism and totalitarianism. All three ideologies prioritise state power over individual freedoms – an essential feature that Stevens has been shaped to see as normal, even valuable. All three also harbour a related, harmful trope: 'benevolent paternalism'. Stevens's belief that Darlington is inherently superior is maintained, in part, by the 'notion of benevolent paternalism,' a myth that Susie O'Brien argues was used to 'legitimate the deployment of power by the British ruling class, both at home and abroad'[91]. Indeed, Stevens displays child-like devotion to the lord multiple times throughout the text. Like a child, Stevens feels obliged to 'tattletale' to Darlington about conference attendants gossiping about the lord.[92] Stevens believes that there '"are many things [Miss Kenton] and [himself] are simply not in a *position* to understand concerning, say, the nature of Jewry,"' but that Lord Darlington '"is somewhat better *placed* to judge what is for the best"'.[93] Stevens is claiming that Darlington, owing to the position in which he has been 'placed,' has a fundamentally superior intelligence that he and Miss Kenton lack. That is, Darlington is the sage and magnanimous father who is better placed to make complex decisions.

However, Darlington is not Stevens's well-meaning father. Whether intentionally or not, Darlington is part of – and executes suppression on behalf of – an autocratic structure (English aristocratic society), and this structure is motivated to shape individuals into serving and preserving its authoritarianism. Stevens exhibits unquestioning servitude to its authority, partly because he believes so deeply that Darlington is a superior and benevolent paternal figure. In so

doing, Stevens '[insists] unwaveringly on the ideology by which [he is] enslaved' – a key signifier of totalitarianism, according to Gehlawat.[94] Margaret Scanlon argues that the text '"allows readers to see individuals such as Stevens, who is always following someone else's rules, [in] … the shelter they take in totalitarianism"'.[95] Totalitarianism is something that a few characters, not only Stevens, seek shelter in. Lord Darlington is beguiled by it, to the point that his life comes to be described (by his most fervent follower) as a 'sad waste'[96]. However, it is ultimately the power-poor individuals (such as the Jewish maids who Darlington orders Stevens to dismiss, the act of which upsets and alienates Miss Kenton) who suffer and sacrifice most within a totalitarian system. Stevens leaves decisions up to Darlington, remaining powerless and suppressed till the end, and discovering too late that he has not lived his own life.

The aristocrats whom Stevens serves 'naturally resent the idea of ordinary people making important decisions instead of them'.[97] Several characters posit the argument (which supports the status quo and those already in power) that a select few in the upper class are naturally better able to make decisions for the whole – one of the basic tenets of authoritarianism, totalitarianism and fascism. Darlington and his peers believe this, but, more crucially, so does Stevens. This is because he has been shaped to relinquish any agency and embrace a form of learned helplessness; Stevens believes that he is incapable of making important decisions or having his own opinions. When Darlington's guest Mr Spencer interrogates the butler on political intricacies with the express purpose of humiliating him, without knowing it, Stevens becomes a 'butler [who is] displayed as a kind of performing monkey at a house party' – something he claims to detest.[98]

Stevens's reply each time to Mr Spencer's ridiculously complex and context-less questions (like whether 'the debt situation regarding America is a significant factor in the present low levels of trade') is 'I'm very sorry, sir, but I am unable to be of assistance on this matter'.[99] Although he is incapable of seeing it, the demeaning interrogation strikingly mirrors the 'regrettable case' that Stevens describes earlier in the text in which 'it had become an established sport in the house for guests to ring for the butler and put to him random questions'[100]. Stevens is subject to humiliation and, furthermore, this humiliation is condoned and even initiated by Darlington, his supposedly benevolent paternal figure.

Despite this, Stevens feels proud of how quickly he figures out that it 'was clearly expected that [he] be baffled by the [questions]'. Stevens is pleased with himself for being 'well on top of the situation' almost immediately, and for delivering the appropriate and expected response of incompetence. It is the correct response because it reassures the gentlemen by confirming their existing belief: ordinary people are not equipped to make political decisions, so it is not unethical to withhold political agency from them. What's more, Stevens's staged bafflement allegedly convinces a previously pro-democracy acquaintance of Darlington that '[democracy] is something for a bygone era'. Thus, Darlington reassures Stevens, Stevens's 'ordeal… was not in vain'.[101] Through Stevens's embrace of the role that is expected of him, he sustains and possibly even spreads totalitarianism's harmful and disempowering rhetoric that ordinary people should not be politically enfranchised.

Had Stevens been unable to fathom the performance that the men expected of him, it is unlikely that he would have tried to engage with Mr Spencer's questions anyway. This is because he *does* feel ill equipped to have or express political opinions – something Bourdieu's work

examines. ‘The propensity to speak politically, even in the most rudimentary way… is strictly proportionate to the sense of having the right to speak,’ says Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.[102] Stevens is convinced of Darlington’s (and his circle’s) superiority, and, as such, he has internalised a class-based inferiority. However, it goes beyond feeling incapable of expressing political opinions. Stevens even believes that he is unable to make judgements to do with his own profession, the role his whole being is so obsessed with: ‘it is hardly for me, in any case, to make judgements of this sort thing’ (what makes a butler great), says Stevens.[103]

Stevens is infantilised and disenfranchised into assigning control over his life to a select few in power; however, moreover, he is shaped to believe that this is for the greater good. The parallels with authoritarianism and totalitarianism – and even fascism – are clear. Stevens accepts Darlington’s dismissal of the Jewish maids (a clear example of the lord’s support for fascism) because he has been conditioned to believe that only lords like Darlington can make these judgements. This obeisance hints at the dangerous potential that England’s long heritage of an autocratic class structure has to support political systems like authoritarianism, totalitarianism and even fascism. As Westerman points out, it is Stevens’s Englishness (his ‘national identity’) and ‘the service system (which masks it and yet is part of the class system) [that] combine to wedge him pretty firmly in place,’ such that ‘“he never questions his role in the machinery”’.[104] Not only does Stevens not question Darlington’s fascistic leanings (or his own actions in service of them), but he also actively minimises them. This is despite the fact that the lord’s decisions impact ‘undesirables’ like the maids as well as Stevens himself; the maids’ dismissal causes a significant rift between himself and Miss Kenton. However, Stevens’s belief that those in power are best suited to make decisions for him and his child-like devotion to the paternal figure

Darlington blind him to this. Stevens is unable to see that his beloved ideological father's political actions (which are based on authoritarian, likely totalitarian and, at least briefly, fascist thinking) cause the butler to behave in ways that conflict with his own values and his own well-being.

Before examining the next device of subjugation – obfuscated intelligence – it is worth explaining what I mean by this term. I have chosen the word 'intelligence' over 'knowledge' because throughout *The Remains of the Day* (true to Ishiguro's narrative style that keeps the reader in a state of confused suspense as we try to ascertain the story's 'true' details), both the reader and Stevens are fed bits of information – some of which may be true and some of which may not. The gathering of intelligence is made difficult by the way in which some details seem to be either withheld, not fully elaborated upon or even purposefully obfuscated – hence the term 'obfuscated intelligence'. This phenomenon is present in many different forms in the novel: at the text-to-reader level, where Ishiguro, through Stevens, withholds information from us; at an individual character level, where Stevens withholds information from himself and others; and at a global narrative level, where the characters in power withhold information from those without. Access to information (which is connected to access to power) is a key consideration in *The Remains of the Day* for both the reader and Stevens.

The wide framework of *The Remains of the Day* is such that broad and important historical events are '[elliptically] alluded to'; events such as the build-up to the Suez Crisis 'are the powerful absences which shape the characters and narratives'.[105] These major events and the political transformations that they result in are not mentioned, but there are subtextual clues that signal their effects, such as Stevens and Darlington's nostalgia for a 'Great' England. Even

retrospectively known historical information is elusive in the text and this is also true for diegetic information closer to home – Darlington's home. Intelligence about characters is parcelled out in meagre rations. The reader garners information accidentally and incrementally through Steven's limited narration. One example is Darlington's political history; it is only two-thirds into the text that one learns that Darlington was most definitely a Nazi sympathiser.

Obfuscated intelligence is a key element in authoritarianism's efficacy as an ideology that oppresses those without power by withholding information. In Stevens's 'Darlington Hall world,' it is taken for granted that there are important people (upper-class gentlemen) who are inherently superior and should discuss and decide on matters that affect everyone. Those inherently inferior to them (servant-class butlers) should facilitate this important and noble work by focusing purely on serving them practically constantly. There is no need for the servant class to make decisions, so there is no need for them to have access to information. Stevens has been conditioned to believe this, and his behaviour reaffirms this status quo. He strives to achieve that balance between attentiveness and the illusion of absence so that those discussing people, politics and policies can do so freely without fearing any repercussions. It is a major point of pride for Stevens that Darlington 'never made any efforts to conceal things' and even assures visitors 'on numerous occasions' that they must feel free to speak their mind – the implication being that it is only Stevens in their presence.[106]

While Stevens sees his invisibility as a mark of dignity, I tend to agree with Deborah Guth who argues that his 'ability to suffer indignity' is his only dignity[107]. There is an understanding between the butler and those whom he serves that they should feel free to discuss matters that directly affect people like Stevens without including him. Furthermore, these

‘important men’ should do so without needing to worry that their detached and sometimes problematic discussions are about the class of human individuals in their presence. Therefore, while there may be ‘transparent’ exchanges of information in front of and accessible to Stevens, in reality, the butler is excluded from them. The intelligence that he has access to is still essentially obfuscated because he is merely witness to it; it is not his to engage with and affect.

Stevens’s language plays a role in signalling obfuscated intelligence in the text, revealing his ‘tells’ and reflecting his stunted self. One example is the ‘trivial errors’; he mentions his own three times and his father’s four times. These errors mirror a state of confusion that he seems to regularly occupy; Stevens repeatedly ‘finds himself’ doing or saying things. There are numerous clues to suggest that Stevens is quite disconnected from himself, which may be part of why there is some discrepancy between his intended behaviour and what he actually does. Stevens’s repeated use of the phrase ‘that is to say’ (said thirty-nine times) and his habit of speaking of himself in the third person may be more than just symptoms of propriety in his speech; they may also indicate a disconnect between his intentions and his actions – that is to say, they may signal a dissociative state. Thus, Stevens’s own self is obfuscated from himself.

Indeed, language and obfuscated intelligence are interrelated methods of subjugation in *The Remains of the Day*. Both are used to condition Stevens, and both are used by him. Language is a key element in one’s performance of their habitus. As such, it is through language that ideologies that support class-based prejudice are frequently established and propagated in *The Remains of the Day*. When Stevens visits the small village Moscombe, for example, Dr Carlisle realises that Stevens is not the upper-class gentleman that he is pretending to be, but rather a manservant to one, and this realisation prompts a shift in the way he addresses Stevens.

Perhaps as a test, before confronting Stevens on this, Dr Carlisle implies (indeed, he does not even explicitly request) that Stevens get out of the vehicle to open a gate for them to pass through. Stevens immediately complies – something a gentleman would presumably not have done so obligingly, if at all. The doctor's language changes markedly when he begins to suspect Stevens is not who he is pretending to be; he starts using the phrases 'old chap,' 'old boy' and 'old fellow' to address the butler. Likewise, Stevens addresses Dr Carlisle as 'sir' once he knows his real identity has been discovered.[108]

This scene between Dr Carlisle and Stevens is an example of Althusser's notion of interpellation. Both men have undergone 'the process of internalizing an identity' that they have been 'encouraged, or even forced, to accept'. When someone is interpellated or 'hailed,' they are transformed into subjects.[109] Once Stevens and Dr Carlisle hail each other, thus subscribing to the ruling ideology that ranks by socioeconomic class, they become subjects: lower-class servant and middle-class professional. It is telling that Stevens is relieved when Carlisle forces him to admit that he is of the servant class. The role of servant is one that Stevens is comfortable inhabiting, and he knows how to execute its expected performance appropriately.

Class, perhaps the key theme of the text, is continuously highlighted by the language that the characters use (and endure *or* enforce, depending on where they are in the hierarchy). Although Farraday, Stevens's new master, may come across as light-hearted and egalitarian in his use of banter, 'bantering not only has rules but also often conceals power relations'[110]. Stevens is forced to go along with Farraday's jokes, which are told at his expense. This cloaked bullying mirrors Cardinal's ignorant and incessant assertion that he and Stevens are friends. For this assertion to be true (and therefore in order to not contradict Cardinal's understanding of

reality), Stevens is forced to play the part of 'friend' and hit all the right acting marks. Even as the butler serves brandy to Cardinal (who is 'slumped down into a leather armchair'), Cardinal insists twice that Stevens share a drink with him and twice that he sits down. Cardinal gets angry with Stevens for continuing to hold his butler tray, the prop that signals the men's class difference – too clearly, for Cardinal's liking. Stevens apologises and seats himself in 'an appropriate posture' on an armchair – one that Cardinal directs him to, no less.[111]

Unlike Dr Carlisle who expresses discomfort at Stevens calling him 'sir' (a discomfort Stevens responds to by addressing Carlisle as 'Doctor,' another *class*ifying title, before promptly falling back into the habit of using 'sir'),[112] Cardinal does not have an issue with Stevens addressing him as 'sir,' even as he insists that he and Stevens are friends. While Farraday and Cardinal may initially come across as less dictatorial than Darlington's era of masters, they are equally guilty of seeing Stevens as a modifiable commodity rather than as an individual. Even though Cardinal insists that he and Stevens are friends, there is no evidence to suggest that he knows anything about Stevens as a person. His insistence that Stevens alter his performance because *he* needs to believe that they are friends is based on Cardinal's own discomfort and needs; it is Stevens who must change and perform in the way that Cardinal sees fit. Similarly, it is Stevens who must learn to banter in the way that Farraday sees fit.

Stevens consistently reacts 'appropriately' – or makes it his mission to do so. The propriety of his language is an example. By propriety, I am referring to the way in which Stevens rigorously uses the correct and conventional language that is associated with his role as English butler. Stevens's language is like his butler tray; it is a prop that makes known his predetermined role. His clipped speech establishes that he is a servant who serves English gentleman, and, as

Meera Tamaya points out in her comparative analysis of *The Remains of the Day* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, 'The key to establishing… mastery is, of course, teaching the natives the colonizers' language'[113]. Stevens has been conditioned to talk in a way that mimics his master's speech. From his immaculate grammar to his compulsive use of 'his lordship' when referring to Darlington to his third-person reportage (and many other quirks), Stevens's language has been part of a 'colonising' project. Indeed, as Gehlawat identifies, Stevens's *entire* 'self-stylization often approximates a lord rather than a butler. The perfect manners, the clipped speech, the decorum of the butler are, after all, modelled as much on his master as on any other myth'.[114]

This is why the Moscombe villagers mistake Stevens for a gentleman. He carries himself like a gentleman – as he has been trained to do. He has been bred to admire and desire his master's behaviour, speech and costume – and by extension, his master's values too. Through his behaviour, speech, costume and, very importantly, his value system, Stevens admires, desires and continues to sustain Lord Darlington and the structure that he represents/represented. It is a symptom of Stevens's conditioned self-stylisation that he feels that he needs to look the part as someone from Darlington Hall on his road trip. To achieve this, he feels compelled to buy 'travelling clothes' (because he does not possess the appropriate costume). From this, we can infer two things. Firstly, Stevens has not travelled in at least thirty-eight years, which suggests that Darlington never encouraged him to travel. Secondly, although Stevens aspires to (and is expected to) carry himself like a gentleman, mimicking Lord Darlington's speech and costumes, he is not given the means to actually achieve this aspiration.

Stevens's encouraged aspiration to model himself on his 'colonisers' comes with the understanding that it will never – must never – transcend from mimicry to actualisation. Despite this understanding, Stevens may secretly wish to fulfil this aspiration. He claims that he bought the travelling clothes because 'it is important that one be attired… in a manner worthy of one's *position*'[115]; however, surely his butler's uniform (or a driver's equivalent) would be the appropriate attire for Stevens's position – that is, a manservant. Stevens may have always (in all probability, unconsciously) wished to pass himself off as a gentleman in front of strangers because he enjoys when they 'regard [him] as a rather grand visitor on account of Mr Farraday's Ford and the high quality of [his] suit'[116]. There is a sad irony in the way that Stevens is sustained by a conditioned and futile dream of achieving something unattainable. We see this even more clearly in his proclamation regarding dignity.

Stevens declares to the Moscombe inhabitants that it is dignity which makes a gentleman a gentleman,[117] implying that 'non-gentlepeople' (such as the ones whom he is talking to) cannot have dignity. Thus, Stevens implies, possibly unwittingly, that dignity is an essential quality – something that one is born with. As if this pronouncement is not offensive enough, Stevens tells us that he sees 'little point in attempting to explain this' to his audience.[118] Throughout his stay in Moscombe, we see several examples of how cultural processes, such as performance, costume and language, establish and reify class structure. Stevens's attitude toward the Moscombe villagers, in contrast to their self-denigration and fawning over him, exposes his condescension toward the working class. Stevens uses telltale words to categorise the villagers, such as the twice-repeated term 'agricultural'. He takes the time to describe the Taylors' meal (it is crusty bread with broth) and table (it is roughly hewn).[119] These choices illustrate a ranking process – one that Stevens has been conditioned to believe in and apply. Thus, Stevens's visit to

Moscombe further exposes his snobbery, signalling his indoctrinated belief that the upper class is inherently superior. The visit draws attention to something else – the futility and irrationality of his conditioned life project: to attain dignity.

Stevens argues that dignity is essentially unattainable, a noteworthy admission if one considers the compromises and sacrifices that he has made in striving for it. In another example of irony in the text, Stevens had previously claimed that a colleague's analogy for dignity – Mr Graham compared it with beauty – was false because it suggested that dignity is an essential quality. '[My] main objection to Mr Graham's analogy was the implication that … if one did not self-evidently have it, to strive after it would be as futile as an ugly woman trying to make herself beautiful,' says Stevens. He goes on: 'I believe strongly that this "dignity" is something one can meaningfully strive for'. Stevens believes that Mr Graham's stance is 'rather defeatist'.[120] However, Stevens's definition of dignity and his judgement that the Moscombe villager Mr Smith's suggestion that 'every man and woman … can strive for and get' dignity is 'far too idealistic… to deserve respect'[121] suggests that he is equally defeatist. This defeatism is by design – failure had always been woven into the dreams that were sold to Stevens by the system. While he has been conditioned to strive for (a particular definition of) dignity throughout his career, this aspiration was always paired with the unconscious conviction that, according to the 'laws' of class, Stevens would never be able to attain it.

Nevertheless, Stevens does strive, and one way that we see this is through his language. It mirrors the obsession with order, control, rules and separation upon which the structure that is in control survives. His distinctive way of speaking suggests a *preference* for the ordered, the unemotional and the clinical. However, while these idiosyncrasies of Stevens's speech may seem

like personality traits that merely reflect his individual tastes, they are, in fact, results of conditioning strategies. They have been engineered to shape his perception of the world and, very importantly, his role and position within it. Bourdieu's work in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* examines how ostensibly personal preferences and individual tastes are often culturally conditioned features of a collective. I have argued that Stevens has been conditioned to favour, for example, propriety in his speech. Not only does it serve to establish his role, but it also ultimately benefits his masters in another way: Stevens becomes distanced from his objectified self.

Stevens has a habit of third-person distancing; he frequently refers to himself in the third person, even occasionally doing so with those he is speaking to (such as his father, with whom he has a strained and removed relationship). This pattern in Stevens's speech is a marker of his upper-class self-styling, but it is also one of the ways that Stevens objectifies himself. It is an unconscious process that enhances his function as servant because, as Gehlawat highlights, the more a servant can resemble a thing, the better it will be at its job. It is interesting that this linguistic habit of Stevens becomes more pronounced when he discusses something that is emotional rather than professional (that is, to do less with his profession than his individual needs). When he first starts to second-guess his conviction that Miss Kenton wants to return to Darlington Hall, he admits: 'In fact, one has to accept the distinct possibility that one may have previously – perhaps through wishful thinking of a professional kind – exaggerated what evidence there was regarding such a desire on her part.'[122] In these and other moments of self-doubt, anxiety or suffering of some kind, Stevens's already formal register becomes even more formal. These linguistic clues betray an insight into his true emotions, but they also

highlight how his conditioning has shaped him to behave robotically – distanced from his own human suffering, from his own human needs.

Language in the text in general – not only Stevens's – separates, objectifies and arguably even commodifies characters in *The Remains of the Day*. One example is a governing rule of the Hayes Society (an ISA, to use Althusser's term): 'it [is] a prerequisite for membership of the Society that "the applicant be *attached* to a distinguished household"'[123]. The word choice may be significant; is the butler comparable to a piece of furniture or some other object? A thing that functions more like an attachment than a whole and individual human being? As mentioned, Stevens himself conflates butlers with the English landscape. By doing so, he participates, albeit unwittingly, in his own objectification and commodification by suggesting that an individual who serves (that is, a servant) is reducible to a landscape, a resource – a utility that exists to be exploited.

Stevens also employs tactics in his speech to distance himself from himself. He demonstrates his deep loyalty and attachment to his role as servant with a recurrent habit: he reports, verbatim, characters' more 'colourful' colloquial phrases. When Stevens refers – thrice – to Farraday's offer to 'foot the bill for the gas,'[124] the awkward word-for-word repetition announces his discomfort with his new master's casual demeanour, which is in stark contrast to what Stevens is used to and, more importantly, what he is used to valuing. Indeed, the other times that Stevens reports speech directly, he quotes, with seeming embarrassment, phrases comprising language atypical of his formal register.[125] Stevens feels the need to distance the offending language from himself because it is not a part of his repertoire as a butler; it is out of

character with the role that he is driven to inhabit utterly. Stevens's conditioned demeanour, which manifests noticeably in his speech, adheres inflexibly and overwhelmingly to propriety.

It is an example of the text's dramatic irony that while Stevens's speech is defined by linguistic propriety and tight control, it often inadvertently betrays a lack of control. Stevens repeatedly uses phrases that imply an unplanned disconnect: 'what I *mean* to say' (seven times), 'I *should* say' (thirty-five times) and 'I *found* myself' (fourteen times). Twice, Stevens expresses that he feels there is no option but to 'comply'[126] and eighteen times that he feels 'obliged'. In his moment of anxiety about being in an unfamiliar environment early in his journey, Stevens says that he feels 'compelled' to stop the car.[127] These language choices hint at a subtext operating in *The Remains of the Day*: Stevens often feels and behaves as if he has no agency. He 'finds' himself in situations, says things incorrectly, says things that he feels under duress to say, and feels manipulated by external forces. He also uses the word 'confess' nine times in his memoir-like narration; Stevens sees his literal trip down memory lane as a confession of sorts. There *is* regret about the choices that he has made – but can we say that he ever actually had sufficient agency to make them?

Another irony in *The Remains of the Day* is that it is Stevens's strongly conditioned demeanour that hinders him from performing his felt duty to banter skilfully with Farraday. Stevens decides to 'study' (his wording) a radio programme because 'the witticisms performed on it are always in the best of taste and [are in] keeping with the sort of bantering Mr Farraday might expect'; he '[devises] a simple exercise which [he tries] to perform at least once a day'.[128] Stevens approaches bantering, then, with the same robotic precision as he does anything else, which is probably why it does not improve. Stevens sees bantering as a formula that one needs to

apply in the given situation – all while being acutely aware of the 'hazards' of 'uttering all manner of unsuitable things'.[129]

Stevens's capacity to spontaneously express 'human warmth' has atrophied because he has been raised and conditioned in an environment that demands that he always be in control. It is an environment that allows little room for error. Shaping Stevens in this way has benefitted the system that relies on his service. If he is unemotional and predictable, he is more likely to unprotestingly obey its rules – even when those rules become unethical and would typically evoke emotion and provoke reaction. Stevens's unquestioning respect for and unprotesting obedience to the chain of command mirrors a tradition that is known for cultivating these exact qualities – the military.

There is a reverence for the military throughout *The Remains of the Day* and it frequently functions to sustain certain ideologies and myths, such as the myth of Great Britain. Metaphorical language is the vehicle for this reverence. A villager '[stands] to attention before [Stevens] as though reporting to an officer in the army' because he believes Stevens to be a gentleman and therefore a symbol of (Great) Britain.[130] Stevens compares his butler's pantry to a general's headquarters.[131] In Stevens's world, England's military pursuits, which in this context are synonymous with colonialism and imperialism, are a normative good. Exploitation, in the guise of civilising the subjugated, becomes noble.

In preparation for the 1923 conference at Darlington Hall, Stevens sets about preparing as 'a general might prepare for a battle' and even gives 'the staff a military-style "pep-talk", impressing upon them that, for all their having to work at an exhausting rate, they could feel great pride in discharging their duties over the days that lay ahead'.[132] Stevens compares serving

the upper class with fighting a noble cause in warfare, thus feeding the farce that service is noble and important work that ultimately serves Mother England. Not only do these military analogies work to keep Stevens and his peers suppressed, but they also encourage the belief that no emotions or errors are allowed when one is executing such an 'important and noble' task.

Various ISAs, such as the family and cultural ISAs, sustain Stevens's role-based identity through the use of both language and cultural media. Prior to working for Darlington, Stevens's father is a significant source of cultural media, such as the butler–tiger myth, an artefact that is 'passed on from father to son, made real by their relentless approximations of its form'[133]. While at Darlington Hall, Stevens's insular mindset is nurtured, to some extent, by the texts that he interfaces with in his decades-long servitude there. He accesses these texts through one curated access point: Lord Darlington's library. There is the twee twenty-year-old artefact, Mrs Symons's *The Wonder of England*, with its artistic depictions of villages; a complete set of the *Britannica Encyclopaedia*, which, like *The Wonder of England*, is an outdated relic; and whatever Darlington has allowed on his shelves (such as 'sentimental love stories'). From literature to art to ritualised oral fables, these cultural products of various ISAs function by ideology rather than violence, shaping Stevens's belief system to fit the agenda of those whom he serves.

Stevens's embarrassment at Miss Kenton discovering that he reads romantic literature reflects how powerfully ISAs can impact one's beliefs and behaviour. At first, and in strident self-defence, Stevens claims to read these novels purely because doing so is 'an extremely efficient way to maintain and develop one's command of the English language.' He then admits that '[he] did at times gain a sort of incidental enjoyment from these stories'. Eventually, in another moment of 'blinded insight,' Stevens admits that what he really took offence to was that

he was '"off duty" at that moment Miss Kenton had come marching into [his] pantry' – and a great butler 'should never allow himself to be "Off duty" in the presence of others'.[134]

Caught 'off guard' in this moment with Miss Kenton, Stevens is unable to '*inhabit* his role, utterly and fully'[135] in time to recover his usual disposition. Emotional intimacy and vulnerability surface. While this could have been a productive turning point in his relationship with Miss Kenton, the embarrassment prompts Stevens instead to '[resolve] to set about re-establishing [their] professional relationship on a more proper basis'. He decides that 'things between Miss Kenton and [himself] had reached … an inappropriate footing.'[136] Instead of acting on his personal desires, Stevens reacts to what he sees as a threat to his professionalism. He represses his true feelings, thus reproducing the idea that the 'worker' should never permit emotions, personal needs or even enjoyment in the 'workplace'. By exercising what he sees as emotional discipline, Stevens reproduces capitalist relations of exploitation, acquiescing to and supporting the belief that those who serve should prioritise the collective's 'need' for efficiency and excellence over their own emotional needs.

While there is ample evidence to show that Stevens is conditioned, the issue of his complicity is less clear. Statements such as this one seem shamelessly complicit:

> After all, what can we ever gain in forever looking back and blaming ourselves if our lives have not turned out quite as we might have wished? The hard reality is, surely that for the likes of you and I there is little choice other than to leave our fate, ultimately, in the hands of those great gentlemen at the hub of this world what employ our services. What is the point in worrying oneself too much about what one could or could not have done to control the course one's life took?[137]

However, I would argue that, as a consequence of his conditioning, Stevens lacks full agency (or, at least, *feels* that he does), which complicates the issue of his complicity. He has been purposefully and effectively shaped to pursue a lifelong (unattainable) goal of dignity and

to believe that it can only be achieved by unprotestingly serving 'great gentlemen,' leaving his fate in their hands. That is why he defers to the authority of Lord Darlington, serving his will without question. Stevens relinquishes his agency. The question, then, is: does relinquishing one's agency free them from any moral responsibility?

Ivan Stacy would say no. He argues that Stevens contributes 'to the perpetration of atrocity or, more often, to the perpetuation of the discourses and systems of thought which help to create and justify these atrocities'.[138] An example of this is the firing of the Jewish maids. Present-day Stevens says, 'I may as well say this since the Jewish issue has become so sensitive of late – my every instinct opposed the idea of their dismissal.'[139] According to this admission, not only did Stevens fire the maids even though he was in complete, instinctual disagreement with it, but he will also only admit that now because the current climate demands it. It has become something that would be inappropriate *not* to have an opinion on. However, at the time of the dismissal, when he followed orders and dismissed the women, the opinions of those he served were such that it was more appropriate *not* to denounce the dismissal. This illustrates how Stevens is a slave to whichever status quo his insular world currently prescribes to. His language choice at the time of the dismissal further exposes his conditioning. Despite his insistence that the dismissal went against his instinct (and his insistence in the nineteen-thirties that it was 'a terrible misunderstanding'), Stevens's wording when the firing occurs mimics his master's racist ideology: he says the two housemaids are being dismissed due to their '*nature* of Jewry'[140]. Not only is Stevens not in a position to challenge his master (or, rather, not only does he *feel* that is the case), but he has also been shaped to idolise Darlington, and as such, adopt his logic.

The reader cannot know for sure whether Lord Darlington ever acknowledged that firing the two staff members because they were Jewish was wrong. However, more important than whether this did happen is how Stevens chooses to re-present Lord Darlington. Stevens claims that '"his lordship [declared] … unequivocally that it was all a terrible misunderstanding,"'[141] which – if Stevens's original depiction of the interaction with Darlington is accurate – is a blatant lie. However, believing this '"is at least a great comfort"'[142] for Stevens. He even goes so far as to blame Darlington's antisemitic behaviour on someone else – Mrs Carolyn Barnet, a socialite and 'a member of Sir Oswald Mosley's "blackshirts" organization'.[143] Stevens desperately needs to take consolation from self-deception and continue to hold his idol in high regard because he has been shaped to see himself as an 'attachment' of Darlington. As such, his own virtue – an extension of his master's – is at stake. Darlington does not even need to defend himself; Stevens does that for him.

Stacy argues that Stevens possesses 'sufficient agency to contribute to the discourses and structures that shape the historical forces out of which atrocity grows'.[144] He states that even though Stevens is not in the position to be a perpetrator, his 'failure to… construct narratives that acknowledge the full extent of [his] own and others' culpability in the suffering of others' makes him complicit.[145] It *is* difficult to exculpate Stevens as he does perpetuate the habits of discourse that produce his and Darlington's world while turning a blind eye to the reality that unfolds around him. However, while I acknowledge that Stevens does fail to 'bear witness,' I would argue that this failure is due to a deeply conditioned myopia. I have attempted to answer something that Stacy himself wonders: 'with regard to the moral and ethical positions of [Ishiguro's] protagonists [the crucial question] is whether they are *able* to step outside or transgress against [their] discourses'.[146]

While his many examples of reframing imply complicity, I would argue that Stevens is not fully complicit because he does not wield full agency. He is *not* able to step outside of his conditioned insularity to critically assess its creators' agenda and/or the questionable choices that they make to serve that agenda. Not only does Stevens's total obedience reinforce his subserviency, but it also contributes to his inability to critically evaluate his questionable actions and inactions. His lifelong insular conditioning has him blinkered to everything except the need to strive for dignity – whatever the cost. Ironically, the cost is relinquishing autonomy, and thereby relinquishing the capacity for dignity.

Setting aside the question of whether Stevens is *able* to critically evaluate his and Darlington's (in)actions, one could argue that he is still complicit, albeit in a way that is not necessarily predicated on agency and action. In *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*, Mark Sanders argues that complicity is unavoidable. Being enmeshed in social, discursive and historical structures results in automatic complicity. Drawing from Nietzsche, Sanders posits a notion of complicity as an 'extra-moral' condition, which is separate from the simplistic dichotomy of guilt versus innocence, action versus inaction. According to this view, Stevens is always already implicated in the structures that shape his actions and thoughts. So is Miss Kenton, the Moscombe villagers – and even the Jewish maids, for that matter. Sanders argues that 'responsibility-in-complicity' (that is, 'foldedness') and 'acting-in-complicity' are interrelated conditions, owing to the 'basic folded-together-ness of being, of human-being, of self and other'[147] (the Latin root of 'complicit' is 'complicare,' 'to fold together'). Even if Stevens had, for example, refused to dismiss the maids, he is still complicit because he is folded together with the system that he serves. However, he may have, at least, been acting more ethically.

What about the reader's complicity? We are similarly folded into Stevens's worldview. As we join Stevens on his odyssey, we empathise with him and possibly even condone his actions once we understand the conditioned motivations underpinning them. At the same time, we are also exposed to the pitfalls of living how he has. By depicting the butler's unwavering loyalty to Lord Darlington and his denial of the lord's moral failings, we are prompted to reflect on our own potential for complicity in unethical systems. Stevens's justifications and rationalisations may mirror our own participation in larger societal wrongs. It is true that the reader is complicit; however, it is also true that they are encouraged *not* to be when it comes to their own lives.

In Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens's entire existence is confined within the (often literally) rigid boundaries of his role as a servant. His habitus and performance are shaped by various methods of subjugation – through the use of myth, ideology, environment, obfuscated intelligence, language and cultural media – which serve to suppress his individuality, thereby ensuring his unwavering service to those in power. Stevens internalises and perpetuates his subservience to the point that he is unable to question the structure that he serves – or the life that results from this service. This is because he has been indoctrinated to accept and defend his own dispossession and subjugation.

Gehlawat argues that Stevens's struggle to suppress his individual needs indicates that he does indeed possess a self,[148] and, while I agree, I would argue that this self is underdeveloped, subsumed as it is by Stevens's instrumental role. The butler is more function than person. He constantly represses emotion, never expressing anger, resentment or a sense of injustice regarding his lifelong servitude. Although regret and loss permeate the novel, Stevens never

shows any hints of rebellion, even at the end. Instead, he continues to pursue perfection in his role, reinforcing his own self-objectification. This, despite the fact that his unprotesting obedience has led to painful sacrifices. To stay true to Darlington and Darlington's agenda, Stevens neglects his dying father so that he may attend to sore feet, drunk people and, ultimately, the support of fascism. He lets Miss Kenton believe that he is not affected by her betrothal to another man so that he may attend to a Nazi. Stevens's unprotesting obedience and permanent inhabitancy of his role make him a slave to Darlington and the system that Darlington represents – and, as Mr Smith of Moscombe points out, '"there's no dignity to be had in being a slave'"[149].

Chapter 2

Service through Sacrifice in *Never Let Me Go* (2005)

Through Kathy H.'s first-person narration in *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro explores the lives of clones living in a parallel 1990s England who have been raised for the sole purpose of providing organ donations until they die. From their early years at Hailsham (a boarding school that is solely occupied by clone students and run by non-clone humans called 'guardians'), the protagonist Kathy and her two close friends Tommy and Ruth are kept in isolation, both physically and psychologically, from the broader society. When the reader meets Kathy, she is nearing the end of her time as a 'carer' to 'donors,' two of whom were Ruth and Tommy. Like *The Remains of the Day*, the novel comprises a narrator-protagonist's reflections on a life that has mostly been lived and is nearing its end.

The similarities between the two novels continue. In the same style as *The Remains of the Day*, Kathy directly addresses the reader as if they were part of her world and are naturally compliant with its normative frameworks. The reader is now not a butler, but rather a fellow carer who, like Kathy, is presumed to have '[learned] pretty quick how to deal with' donors dying.[1] Kathy's narration also has a 'memoir' feel to it, and, like Stevens, reminiscing on cherished memories and ideals has a palliative effect on her as she contemplates her approaching death. The reader meets her when, following a long hiatus of estrangement from one another, the three friends (Kathy, Ruth and Tommy) have reunited. Kathy has been a carer to both Ruth (who dies during Kathy's care) and Tommy (who also dies; however, only after switching from Kathy to a different carer). Kathy's belief that she has been a good carer reassures and strengthens her,

even as she witnesses her best friends' abhorrent suffering. Much of the novel revolves around Kathy ordering, and arguably manipulating, her memories as she contemplates her friends' deaths (or perhaps more accurately, their short, always future-less lives) as well as her own.

Memory – and distorted memory in particular – feature prominently in *Never Let Me Go*. As just one example, the Hailsham students remember a crucial moment involving a guardian differently. Kathy recalls Miss Lucy explicitly telling them the truth: they are clones bred to donate their vital organs. However, some students claim that her outburst was not about that at all, but rather a simple 'telling-off'.[2] This indicates either a possible defence mechanism on their part or a remarkable misremembering on Kathy's. Kathy frequently admits that her retellings may not always be accurate, and, like Stevens, there are times such as these when secondary characters contradict her accounts. The relationship between memory, selfhood and the unreliable narrator, then, is once again highlighted in this text. Kathy's constructed memory helps her engineer a more palatable autobiography; however, it also hints at the construction of her situation and her selfhood, which, in turn, highlights the orchestrated nature of her life of servitude.

As Kathy recounts stories from the clones' time as students at Hailsham and then the Cottages (a dormitory in which the sixteen-year-old clones wait to start donating or caring), methods of conditioning, such as the use of ideology and mythology, become apparent to the reader, but *not*, it seems, to Kathy. The climax of the novel centres on one of the many myths in the clones' lives: 'the deferral'. The myth of the deferral, which effectively sews seeds of both doubt and hope, is disseminated more subtly and insidiously than others in the text. It is the idea that one may suspend their donations for a few years under certain vague circumstances. The

inescapable moment of truth in the novel involves Kathy and Tommy trying to apply for the deferral – and finding out that it never existed. The two also find out that the guardians whom they still admire, love and fear (as one would with a typical guardian who raised them) do not see them as fully human, nor even as having souls. As Matthew Beedham points out in *The Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro*, 'For the cloned children... the idea of upward mobility is a sham. The path of their lives, as Miss Lucy tells them, is fixed: care, donate, die'.[3]

Therefore, we meet Kathy when she has full knowledge of what she is, why she was made and what awaits. Even though she has lost her close friends and has certain suffering and death ahead of her, she is still in full support of the system. As David John Babcock points out, it 'never occurs to [the clones] to stand up for their "human rights", despite the fact that they take completely for granted that they are human'.[4] This is because although they consider themselves human, the clones do not consider themselves 'normal'. From a young age, they are taught to believe that there are normal people – and then there are them. '[Each] of us was copied at some point from a normal person,' says Kathy.[5]

Kathy and her friends have predetermined roles in society, but they are not fully aware of these until very late in life. While the reader sees moments of deep existential pain about their condition being expressed by Ruth and Tommy, Kathy (like Stevens) is a calm, stoic and seemingly complacent pawn. *Never Let Me Go* ends with Kathy having driven off 'to wherever it was [she] was supposed to be'.[6] This complacency of Kathy is a feature, not a bug; it benefits the larger social structure. This social structure is the collective that the clones' forced sacrifices sustain, and it has masterminded a 'scheme [which] doesn't share the same status of public utility as water or gas, [but] it nevertheless supplies goods'[7]: commodified body parts. For this scheme

to operate without resistance, the clones are systematically raised and conditioned to experience a profound sense of separation from and subservience to the superior 'normals' for whom their organs are bred.

Despite being different in significant ways to *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go*, published six years later, clearly shares notable similarities with it. Academics have identified shared themes, such as 'the dangers inherent in looking away, preferring not to know'.[8] John David Schwetman describes Kathy as having been marked 'as one who will sacrifice [oneself] for the greater good'[9] – a description fit for Stevens as well. Furthermore, both protagonists 'uncomplainingly accept a class status that deprives [them] of autonomy'.[10] As for the two texts' deviations, Anne Whitehead argues that *Never Let Me Go* 'notably departs from its predecessor in that its relevance is primarily to contemporary political concerns… arising out of a profit-driven culture of care'.[11] However, Stevens's life of servitude also stems from 'a profit-driven culture of care'. It is true that Stevens, unlike Kathy, is *not* raised with what is ostensibly care but is in fact an economically incentivised utilitarian approach to human bodies as commodities. Nevertheless, his lifelong labour and his body are commodified by the system – which benefits economically from his sacrifice. The similarities extend because, while Kathy is cared for (so that she may serve a function), like the butler, she too sacrifices her body through the duty of care. She also accepts her fate as a 'self-less' resource that serves others 'for the greater good'. As such, both protagonists share another salient feature: neither rebels against their preordination.

This begs similar questions we asked about Stevens: why is it that only as she approaches the certain death that her 'caregivers' reared her for (and after having seen her loved ones endure

it) does Kathy begin to question her upbringing at Hailsham? '[When] I think about [it] now, a lot of it seems a bit odd,' she admits.[12] She has full knowledge that she was bred to be parts, yet Kathy fails 'to imagine a way out … [fails] even to resent her destiny'. Why and how is it that Kathy's is a 'haunting fatalism'?[13]

It is because, from a young age and through various mechanisms of subjugation, Kathy has been shaped to believe that she is isolated and powerless – a disposable commodity. Through an analysis of her conditioned insularity, we will see how the use of myth and ideology, environment, 'obfuscated intelligence,' language and cultural media have narrowed her perspective such that even the notion of rebellion evades her. Kathy, like Stevens, is an example of how 'segregation [is] ingrained in Ishiguro's [narrators]'[14].

Before considering each device of subjugation, it is worth examining the style of narration that Ishiguro employs in *Never Let Me Go* because it relates to the relationship between Kathy's performativity, her insular conditioning and her limited sense of agency. Like Stevens, Kathy is an unreliable narrator. She struggles to remember things and she alternates between expressing uncertainty one moment and suspicious insistence the next. In the space of a few pages, Kathy goes from admitting, 'This was all a long time ago so I might have some of it wrong' to insisting that, although Tommy 'didn't quite put it this way,' '*I'm sure* that's how it happened'.[15] Similar to Stevens, she exaggerates – uncharacteristically – at times: 'Maybe I'm exaggerating it, but my memory is that for a whole class to fit into that room, students literally had to pile on top of each other'[16].

Not only do instances of limited narration cast doubt onto Kathy's recollected and real-time perceptions, but some also hint at a stunted self-awareness and/or lack of agency on her

part. When Kathy notes her girlfriends' detachment from Tommy's bully-induced suffering, she says that 'the chances are that's how it was for [her] too'; however, this is immediately followed by the line: 'Or maybe I'm remembering it wrong'.[17] The reader is prone to believe the latter as the text progresses and we discover how much Kathy cared for Tommy – even then. This is something Kathy does not appear to see, even with the benefit of hindsight. It seems that she can be detached from and blind to her own feelings, much like Stevens and his feelings for Miss Kenton. (There are more subtle linguistic nuances in her speech that imply a lack of agency, which will be examined more deeply later.)

Kathy, like Stevens with his 'naïvely blinkered perspective on the world,'[18] can be 'narrow-minded'[19]. Her blinkered awareness stems partly from '[knowing] only others like herself'; she 'cannot imagine a different kind of being'.[20] It manifests in how she speaks to the reader as if we are part of her othered group, but also in her many modes of denial. Even while knowing that she will become a dying donor, commenting on realities such as the centre that she may end up in, Kathy's statements are often naively delusional. She says that the centre Ruth is in is 'one of [her] favourites, and [she] wouldn't mind at all if that's where [she ends] up'.[21] She seems to think that being a donor will be her golden age of retirement: 'Maybe come the end of the year, when I'm no longer a carer, I'll be able to listen to [my tape] more often'[22]. She also plans to work on her eleven-year-old essay when she is a donor – because she will have time to.[23]

Despite seeing the reality of certain pain, illness and death up close, some part of Kathy still believes that she can evade it. Similar to the protagonist Winston in George Orwell's *1984*, Kathy suffers from a kind of 'doublethink'. She both knows and does not know that she will die by donation like her friends. She knows that she is human, yet does not seem to think that human

rights are a given for her. She knows from a young age (at least to some degree) that she has been bred for parts – but she does not know what this actually entails. Winston's nostalgia appears to inspire in him resistance to his dystopian world of surveillance and subjugation. In contrast, Kathy's nostalgia, including its oppressive 'doublethink,' acts like an opiate that helps to resign her to her fate. Like Stevens, she frequently seems to luxuriate in her memories, preferring to reminisce on the past instead of confronting the suffering that she endures and attends to every day. Early on in *Never Let Me Go*, we see how she even administers the psychological painkiller of second-hand nostalgia to her 'patients':

> So over the next five or six days, I told him whatever he wanted to know, and he'd lie there, all hooked up, a gentle smile breaking through. He'd ask me about the big things and the little things … What he wanted was not just to hear about Hailsham, but to remember Hailsham, just like it had been his own childhood. He knew he was close to completing and so that's what he was doing: getting me to describe things to him, so they'd really sink in, so that maybe during those sleepless nights, with the drugs and the pain and the exhaustion, the line would blur between what were my memories and what were his. That was when I first understood, really understood, just how lucky we'd been – Tommy, Ruth, me, all the rest of us.[24]

Instead of contemplating the exploitative system behind this man's (and her own) protracted death, Kathy instead comes to the conclusion that she is lucky that she has her memories to protect her – even though she, too, will endure 'sleepless nights, with the drugs and the pain and the exhaustion'.

While Kathy shares various weaknesses with Stevens, including nostalgia-fuelled escapism and unreliable narration, she departs from him in a few ways. There are clues that she is willing to take risks and disregard norms and boundaries. Quite literally, Kathy enjoys occupying liminal spaces. A little footpath at Hailsham, which most students avoid, is 'a real favourite of' hers; it follows 'all the nooks, all the extensions' and allows her to peer into windows. To get to it, she has to 'squeeze past shrubs,' go 'under two ivy-covered arches and

through a rusted gate'. Kathy even admits that part of why she likes the hidden path is because she is 'never sure if it was out of bounds'.[25] In less figurative ways, Kathy pushes boundaries: she requests to be a carer for Ruth, which took 'a bit of nerve,'[26] and she is the one who approaches Madame (an intimidating figure who would visit Hailsham) when she and Tommy visit her.[27]

Despite Kathy's 'naivete [and] her liabilities as an interpreter of what she sees,'[28] we see that, in comparison to Stevens, Kathy does seem to have at least *some* critical self-awareness. Even though it happens late in the remains of her day, she does ask questions. However, I would argue that Kathy, like Stevens, does not have sufficient agency to act on these questions – or even to answer them honestly, as I will show. Ultimately, I agree with Ji Eun Lee who argues that, atypical to the genre, *Never Let Me Go* is a 'bildungsroman *not* predicated on agency'[29].

The breeding system uses mythology and ideology 'to form' (*bilden*) Kathy: the myth of upward social mobility, the stories told at Hailsham about the woods surrounding it, welfare state ideology, and totalitarianism. I will examine these as well as the interconnected concepts of instrumentalism, utilitarianism and consumerism (which become clear in the way that the clones' bodies are 'consumed'). The clones are exploited as utilities to serve a 'greater good'. To rationalise and maintain this brutal utilitarianism, society views the clones as mere instruments – tools that are valued for their function, not their humanity.

Examining these myths and ideologies, along with the environments that Kathy finds herself in, will occasion references to Foucault's work on disciplinary power and biopolitics. Through strategies that use '"power of mind over mind"'[30] (including the disciplinary techniques of ranking, enclosure, partitioning and functional sites), Kathy becomes a self-regulating subject,

a ‘docile body’. I will also reference Althusser’s work on ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). These are institutions that ‘function by ideology’[31] to shape beliefs that maintain the status quo through consent instead of force. They, too, condition self-regulating behaviour into Kathy. Althusser categorises these bodies into ISAs of religion, education, family, law, politics, trade-unions, communications (press, radio and television), and culture (literature, the arts and sports).[32] While Hailsham may appear to be only one ISA – educational – it encompasses at least seven of Althusser’s eight categories, as it determines Kathy’s religious, familial, legal, political, communications and cultural frameworks.

Both *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* involve ‘the disappearance of the individual and the emergence of the social aggregate’.[33] For the individual to disappear, their needs must be eclipsed by those of the collective. One way to accomplish this is to get the individual to believe that their functional role is identical to their essential self. To accomplish *this*, the collective needs a system to indoctrinate this belief into the individual, using certain supporting myths and ideologies, such as the myth of upward social mobility. The myth of upward social mobility is exactly that – a myth. It is an aporia because systemic barriers make significant social advancement unrealistic for many. Thus, the aspiration it engenders is largely in vain. Upward social mobility’s probable impossibility in the ‘real world,’ however, is even more pronounced in the clones’ case because it is a literal and absolute sham for them. This is something we incrementally discover in the text.

A facet of the myth of upward social mobility – the aporia of which becomes painfully clear to Kathy and Tommy at the text’s climax – is the myth of the deferral. The clones have been allowed to believe in this ‘wishful rumour,’ partly because the guardians reason that ‘“[if

the clones are] so foolish, let them believe it"' [34]. Of the rumour's (unrestricted) existence, Miss Emily, Hailsham's last headmistress, says this to Kathy and Tommy:

> 'It's not my doing, after all. And for the few couples who get disappointed, the rest will never put it to the test anyway. It's something for them to dream about, a little fantasy. What harm is there? But for the two of you, I can see this doesn't apply. You are serious. You've thought carefully. You've *hoped* carefully.'[35]

The myth of the deferral, such as the broader myth of upward social mobility, is used to control the clones with wishful distraction, but it is ultimately exposed (at least to Kathy and Tommy) as a sham. In contrast, the myths, stories and ideologies that I will discuss are not – this is what makes them all the more powerful.

Pursuing upward social mobility is futile, both in the general sense (presumably social advancement is unlikely even for normals in Kathy's world) and in the clones' case, where it is unequivocally unobtainable. Yet, from the text's first page to its last sentence, Kathy's focus is on her job and doing it well: 'they've been pleased with my work, and by and large, I have too' to I 'turned… to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be.'[36] Kathy deeply values her duty of care. Her perception of herself as a good carer is tantamount to her self-worth. Her 'thoughts are preoccupied not with her imminent end, but with her professional success'.[37]

Kathy has been shaped to see her self as conflated with her instrumentality, partly through the myth of upward social mobility. At times, she resembles an ambitious and self-righteous corporate employee who is climbing a professional ladder. She feels that she is better than the other carers whose 'whole attitude lets them down' because they 'are just going through the motions, waiting for the day they're told they can stop and become donors'[38]. Indeed, by all appearances, Kathy *has* succeeded in excelling in her profession, rising above her peers.

Her ‘abilities place her near the top of the merit-based hierarchy of carers by her own reckoning, and ample outside evidence supports her in this claim,’ points out Schwetman.[39]

The merit-based hierarchy seen among the carers also exists for the donors: ‘Most donors at the Kingsfield get their own room after third donation, and Tommy was given one of the largest singles in the centre’[40]. While Kathy says the latter is ‘just luck,’ one wonders if it is not because Tommy is ‘a pretty good donor’[41]. What makes Tommy ‘a pretty good donor’ and Kathy a good carer? They are both efficient; they help the system produce more for consumption – Kathy by keeping her donors well enough to keep donating and Tommy by being able to survive long enough to keep donating. Indeed, donors who survive to donate a fourth time are treated differently. ‘A donor “on a fourth”’ is ‘worthy of congratulations… [they are] treated with special respect. Even the doctors and nurses play up to this: a donor on a fourth will… be greeted by whitecoats smiling and shaking their hand’.[42]

Kathy’s striving for professionalism and professional success has its seeds in her upbringing. She is taught to value and pursue ‘dignity’ through calm restraint. Much like Stevens, not only does Kathy view self-repression as a virtue, but it also becomes integral to her role’s success. Similar to the butler, the reader detects a mechanical and unemotional manner in Kathy’s speech. Her opening lines ‘My name is Kathy H. I’m thirty-one years old, and I’ve been a carer now for over eleven years’ are clinical, focussing on factual details. Kathy has learned to repress her needs so that she may relentlessly fulfil her function – even to the point of self-destruction. I would argue that her flattened affect results from conditioning in her formative years where she was encouraged to view constraining one’s emotions as a virtue. However, it is safe to assume that ‘caring’ for peers who die in abhorrent ways for over a decade has further

damaged Kathy's psychoemotional sensitivity, thus affecting her behaviour and speech. For both protagonists, the self-repression they practise begets more of the same, and in Kathy's case, this starts from a young age.

Around the age of nine, Ruth ostracises Kathy from a fantasy 'secret guard' group and, even though becoming a social outcast makes Kathy 'upset, no doubt about it,' she does not cry about it and is 'more angry at [herself] for having walked into it'. Whenever she sees the 'the secret guard conferring in a corner… [she feels] a flush rising to [her] cheeks'.[43] However, she never lashes out from the pain, even at such a young age. A few years later, when Kathy's most treasured item, a cassette tape, goes missing, she is careful to hide her emotions: 'when it first dawned on me the tape wasn't there any more, my main thought was that I mustn't give away how panicked I was'.[44] When she finds a copy of the tape years later, she automatically represses her emotional response again. Indeed, she feels like 'there [is] something vaguely embarrassing about the tape, like it was something [she] should have grown out of'. Kathy pushes past her embarrassment at her attachment to the tape and calls Tommy over to show him. She 'suddenly [feels] a huge pleasure – and something else, something more complicated that [threatens] to make [her] burst into tears,' but she assures the reader that she gets 'a hold of the emotion'.[45] The uncontrolled suddenness of the emotion feels threatening to Kathy and she is compelled to 'get hold of it'. Lastly, after Tommy dies, 'the only indulgent thing' Kathy does is visit Norfolk where, at one point, she looks out at empty fields and imagines him appearing from a distance.[46] Tears roll down her face, but she makes it clear that she is not 'sobbing or out of control'. It is soon after this that she simply leaves 'to drive off to wherever it was [she] was supposed to be.'[47]

Kathy strives to keep a steady and composed appearance; feeling or expressing joy, grief and fear are not options. For her, being able to exercise this kind of emotional restraint indicates a dignified and even superior character (Tommy is frequently derided for being too openly emotional). Kathy values stoic control because she has been taught to by the system that is exploiting her, which needs her to meet its needs. Hailsham, as the main ISA and conditioning conduit for the clones, designs purposeful tactics to repress their psychological needs. Moreover, it convinces the clones that repressing their needs is a virtue. The students are made to feel that having needs is 'wrong' and that they 'somehow [let] the side down' if they express their 'fears and longings'.[48] They do not 'do things like hug each other much at Hailsham'.[49] Simply 'the idea of a guardian giving a present' – even one as practical and inexpensive as a pencil case – is 'beyond the bounds'.[50] Although the guardians teach the clones sex education and encourage them to 'respect [their] physical needs,'[51] they do not want the clones to actually have sex. Through these ways and more, the clones' individual needs are eclipsed by those of the collective.

Kathy, the restrained child who learns to be non-reactive, always hiding her pain, becomes an adult carer who is one to '"always keep [her] spirits up"'[52]. Just as Kathy values being 'calm' as a child, as an adult carer, 'it means a lot to [her], being able to do [her] work well, especially that bit about [her] donors staying "calm"'. Kathy boasts that 'hardly any of [her donors] have been classified as "agitated," even before fourth donation'. She is good at her job because she knows when to 'tell [a donor] to snap out of it,' so that they may get on with the donating[53] – just as Kathy 'snaps out of' her own suffering. To execute this restraint requires prioritising duty over personal needs.

The myth of upward social mobility is one way that this conditioning occurs, but welfare state ideology also plays a key role in the text, and scholars have discussed the link between the two. Bruce Robbins argues that in *Never Let Me Go*:

> the ideology of the welfare state colludes with the ideology of upward mobility, lending its authority to the muted, socially respectable form that upward mobility has little by little come to assume… the excuse for an *excessive devotion to one's work*… is the belief that the work is socially valuable, that it makes a positive difference to others as well as to oneself, that it responds to a *genuine need*. Caring means you can win credit and advantage for yourself… while innocently carrying out a service for the *benefit of the social whole*. The work may be *self-destructive*… [but] it's for the common good. The institution in our society that seems most centrally alluded to here is the welfare state.[54]

While Robbins is referring to *Never Let Me Go*, I would argue that this analysis could also be applied to *The Remains of the Day*. Like Stevens, Kathy's deep belief in the importance of her function results in an 'excessive devotion' to her work. When Tommy wonders at the futility of exhausting herself to be a good carer, Kathy insists that '"it's important there are good carers. And I'm a good carer"'.[55] Both protagonists believe that their sacrifices serve a 'genuine need' in 'the social whole'. Kathy is purposefully and systematically convinced of this, partly through the ideology of the welfare state in which a social structure preoccupies individuals from their own needs, deterring resistance through dependency and exhaustion. Kathy endures 'endless, exhausting activity and minor compensation' so that 'resistance and unrest' are prevented, 'securing passive compliance'.[56] Not only does Kathy repress her needs to endure exhausting activity – considering it a noble sacrifice – but by doing so, she also gets exhausted *out* of resisting.

It is more than just her own needs that Kathy is shaped to repress – she also rationalises the exploitation of her whole group. Robbins argues that in *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro critiques the welfare state vision by highlighting how it compromises social justice for systemic

exploitation. He uses Kathy's 'remark on the small size of the recovery rooms [that] is immediately qualified by her acknowledgement of the quality of their design and comfort' as evidence. Robbins argues that her response 'quickly obscures the point that the recovery rooms are only necessary because of the required donations and that they signal "a suffering that is beyond any possible compensation"'.[57] This cloaking of the welfare state's exploitation is also seen in how Hailsham students are treated differently because Hailsham is considered a 'privileged estate'[58]. They are led to believe that they should feel grateful for their version of exploitation.

Miss Emily believes that they have '"better lives than [they] would have had [without Hailsham]"'.[59] Even as she tells them that they are fated for a '"course that's been set for [them],"'[60] she reiterates how grateful they must feel that they '"grew up in wonderful settings"'; how lucky they are for what Hailsham was '"able to secure for [them]"; and how they are the lucky exceptions because they have '"had good lives'" where they have been educated and cultured.[61] Somehow, Kathy and Tommy must be grateful that they were '"lucky pawns"'.[62] While the care and compassion that the students receive at Hailsham may seem genuine – a benevolent service provided by the welfare state – it serves to obscure the unjust reality of their exploitation by the state. Like the small but 'well-designed' recovery rooms that 'are clearly run at minimum cost and maximum profit,'[63] the 'wonderful' Hailsham only exists because the clones will have to die by donation. Why should they be grateful for it?

The clones are made to be – or, at least, are made to believe themselves to be – dependent on the welfare state-like system in which they are cloned. Being raised in one of its ISAs, it is only logical that, as schoolchildren, they assume that their survival and fate are entirely in the

hands of the system. However, even as adults, they continue to act as if this is so. Just as they expect that their guardians will intervene in Tommy's prolonged bullying – signalling a 'learned helplessness' – they act as though it is still up to their authority figures to make decisions on their behalf when they are adults. When Kathy and Tommy approach Madame to ask for the deferral, their focus is not on the injustice of their situation but on practical fears about where they would live if it was granted. Tommy asks, '"Where do we go?"' to which Kathy responds, '"I don't know, Tommy. Maybe she'll tell us to go back to the Cottages… Or perhaps they've got some other place"'.[64]

Whether the clones' survival *is* entirely dependent on the system is unclear (Kathy finding a job among the normals, for example, is never explicitly disallowed). Regardless, Kathy believes this to be the case – and, as such, it dictates her actions. Her actions belie a learned helplessness and a diminished sense of agency. This relegation of agency illustrates a potential connection between totalitarianism and the welfare state in the text. While we do not know if it is a totalitarian regime governing the outside world, a tactic some totalitarian regimes employ is the use of welfare policies to consolidate power. The state presents itself as a caretaker of the population by providing health care, education and/or employment. This is true of *Never Let Me Go*, and so it may be that Hailsham is a seemingly benevolent representative of a totalitarian state that is in fact limiting the clones' freedom, making them dependent on it, thus hindering the development of dissent and ensuring compliance.

The dichotomy between superior Hailsham students and inferior non-Hailsham ones returns us to the myth of upward social mobility. Not only does Kathy's drive as a carer to keep the system as efficient as possible place her 'near the top,' but her Hailsham status does too.

Hailsham alumni are viewed differently – both by themselves and the *others*. We are told that Kathy's upbringing may 'get people's backs up'.[65] In a contemptuous comment, Kathy makes a point of saying that she has 'done her share' because for six out of twelve years as a carer, she has had to '[look] after donors brought up in *every kind of place*'[66]. This intra-class hierarchy goes deeper: within Hailsham itself, there is further ranking. The upper echelon within the student body, dominated by 'strong personalities' such as Ruth's,[67] gains privileges by force. Kathy's memories from Hailsham are often 'preoccupied with social hierarchies and their visible markers. Like all schools, Hailsham has a pecking order'.[68] Hierarchy is a prevalent theme in the text; it is something that Kathy and her peers appear to be preoccupied with – to distraction – even as adults.

There is another significant way that the disciplinary technique of ranking is foisted on the clones from an impressionable age, long before professional success is a consideration. Just as the pursuit for upward social mobility is a form of control that the system uses to preoccupy the clones, creative ability is also used 'to distract the Hailsham students'[69]. The students are encouraged to become creatively accomplished. They are ranked according to their success in this area; 'how you [are] regarded at Hailsham, how much you [are] liked and respected, [has] to do with how good you [are] at "creating"'.[70] The case of the clones' creativity (which at times resembles manufacture more than creation) illustrates how a powerfully influential ISA in the clones' young lives – Hailsham – conditions them. Kathy and her friends are shaped into believing certain myths and ideologies that convince them that they are isolated, inferior, powerless and agency-less.

The guardians decide who the best creators are, so a student's worth is equated with their (subjectively and externally determined) artistic ability. The 'best' art is collected for the Gallery, a vaguely understood repository that the students aspire to contribute to. Through this paradoxical process of both forced *and* deeply desired contribution to the Gallery, Shameem Black argues that, '[from] a young age, [the] children grow accustomed to the idea of handing over their "inner selves" to figures of authority'[71]. The phrase 'inner selves' is one that Miss Emily uses when referring to the clones' art,[72] and Black posits that her 'choice of phrase suggests that making such art actually prefigures the process of organ donation'[73].

Even if the forced Gallery contributions do not prefigure the students' donations, the way the clones are reduced to what they create exposes how the system views them as utilities. It is subtle systemic control, which normalises treating their 'selves' (which includes their bodies) as state-managed resources. It is a clear example of how, while an ISA functions 'massively and predominantly by ideology,' it also functions 'by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this [repression] is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic'[74]. Through its cultural, educational, familial and political institutional norms, Hailsham uses the seemingly simple act of creating art to reinforce power dynamics that serve to repress the clones.

The students are dehumanised; they are stripped of intrinsic value and reduced to objects – first as objects of art, and then as a collection of body parts. They are evaluated solely on their utility as instruments. Of course, this sort of objectification through utilitarian and instrumentalist thinking is damaging to the clones' senses of self, but they are made to internalise inferiority in another way through the artistic evaluation. The clones are raised on the myth that they need to strive to attain or become something that will make them good enough – possibly even good

enough to be considered a normal. There is evidence that, from as young as six years old, and perhaps even before that, the clones are othered through art. Kathy recalls believing in the myth of the Gallery as well as in her innate inferiority: '"None of [the students] are good enough for the Gallery yet,"' she thinks at six years old.[75]

Four times a year, the art that is not taken away for the Gallery is sold in what are called the Exchanges:

> I should explain a bit here about the Exchanges we had at Hailsham. Four times a year – spring, summer, autumn, winter – we had a kind of big exhibition-cum-sale of all the things we'd been creating in the three months since the last Exchange. Paintings, drawings, pottery; all sorts of 'sculptures' made from whatever was the craze of the day – bashed-up cans, maybe, or bottle tops stuck onto cardboard. For each thing you put in, you were paid in Exchange Tokens – the guardians decided how many your particular masterpiece merited – and then on the day of the Exchange you went along with your tokens and 'bought' the stuff you liked. The rule was you could only buy work done by students in your own year … If you think about it, being dependent on each other to produce the stuff that might become your private treasures – that's bound to do things to your relationships.[76]

The clones are given curated access to buy each other's 'macaroni art,' which is often made from what is essentially trash (this motif of 'unwanted remains' will be examined later). However, because the guardians decide what is good and pay the students accordingly, it is only those deemed good enough who get paid enough tokens to buy 'good' art. A vicious cycle ensues in which the 'bad' artists, such as Tommy, are humiliated in front of their peers and ultimately punished because they cannot afford the more coveted cultural capital.

Through a prescribed value – being artistic according to the guardians' tastes – the children are pitted against each other once again and many are made to feel inferior and entirely at fault that they are lacking. Furthermore, for most of the text, there is very little known about *why* being creative is important. Thus, this indoctrinated inferiority is not even addressed or

articulated. Through both the Gallery selection process and the Exchanges, the clones are reduced to their art, which is expressly made to be consumed. As such, the clones are reduced to what they can produce for consumption. This mirrors the broader 'system of predatory extractivism'[77] – which we could also term 'consumerism' – that the clones are subject to when they join the outside world and start donating.

Foucault's analyses in 'The Birth of Biopolitics' lecture series about human capital and how personal attributes can transform into economic assets become salient here. He argues that individuals become entrepreneurs of themselves when they begin to view their skills, knowledge, health and abilities as forms of capital that can be invested in and managed to yield economic returns. Through this process, individuals come to believe that they are solely responsible for their own potential. They are shaped to reason that, if they fail, it is due to their personal faults rather than societal factors that are beyond their control. Not only does this result in individuals believing that they do (and should) govern themselves (which deceives them into thinking that they are in control of their own desires and aspirations), but it also leads to deep psychological harm and internalised inferiority. In the clones' case, this conditioning is patently obvious as they are *literal* human capital. Hailsham's not-so-hidden agenda is not, therefore, to protect their psyches and advocate for their rights. Hailsham's agenda is economic: 'first, to improve the human capital, and second, to preserve and employ it for as long as possible'[78]. That is why, partly through art, Hailsham ensures that the clones become the ideal medical martyrs for the utilitarian world that awaits them, where their value will be determined by how much of their labour (as carers) and bodies (as donors) they can sacrifice before dying.

Black makes a convincing argument for the connection between this utilitarian, conditioned subjugation through art (and its resulting instrumentalism) and the clones' lack of agency and resistance. She suggests that their 'circulating artwork reflects the circulation of vital body parts'. The students become 'emotionally bound to each other through the exchange of art,' leading to the gradual loss of 'their ability to imagine themselves outside the system that governs their collective lives'. This then represses any potential resistance by making it more difficult to consider 'independent action,' says Black.[79] She goes on to argue that the more formal Exchanges 'encourage [the] students to think instrumentally about the worth of their peers, thus preparing them for an *acceptance of their own instrumental* lives.'[80] By the time Kathy leaves Hailsham, many mechanisms, including the Exchanges, have sufficiently weakened her ability to take independent action – or even to consider it as an option. As such, her apparent 'freedom' (whether actual or not) to use her agency goes under- (and possibly un-) utilised.

It is evident that the main conduit used to condition insularity through myths and ideologies into the clones is Hailsham. This ISA uses a related device to accomplish the same goal: storytelling. Through institutionalised socialisation via a 'hidden curriculum,' to borrow sociologist Philip W. Jackson's term, the clones are indoctrinated through implicit lessons, values and social norms. These are embedded in myths that are reminiscent of ghost stories or fairy-tales. I agree with Rachel Carroll who argues that the 'trusting docility of Hailsham's pupils is suggestive of the successful internalisation of its regime'. She analyses how the clones 'are policed by "unspoken" and "unwritten" rules and agreements [and] remain "students" long after graduation'.[81] I will demonstrate how stories and myths teach unspoken and unwritten rules, which are ultimately aimed at increasing 'both the docility and the utility of all the elements of

the system'[82]. These rules instil limiting lifelong beliefs that dramatically shape the clones' behaviour, such that they are docile, passive and child-like – compliant, even as adults.

In Hailsham's capacity as the family ISA, its guardians mimic parental roles and play a significant role in inculcating implicit rules. Like typical caregivers, they use stories as moral lessons to discipline the clones. While the 'urban legends' at Hailsham subvert fairy-tale conventions, such as their lack of a 'happily ever after' ending, they do perform a similar function: they teach cultural values. The woods – an area that is *just* outside of Hailsham – has associations with danger, supernatural darkness, and death for the clones from a young and impressionable age. This is surely not coincidental. One frightening tale involves a girl who 'climbed over a fence just to see what it was like outside'. '[When] she tried to get back in, she wasn't allowed,' so she eventually dies. Now 'her ghost [is] always wandering about the woods, gazing over Hailsham, pining to be let back in'.[83]

Kathy elaborates on the presence of the woods in the young clones' lives:

> The woods were… a dark fringe of trees … [We would] 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. 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.[84]

Hailsham's dark, cautionary fairy-tales exert subtle biopolitical control over the clones. Through these stories, both the literal boundary around Hailsham and the figurative one that separates the clones from the normals is reified. This helps to subtly proscribe the clones' movement while also shaping them into self-regulating subjects. Both stories teach the lesson

that the outside world is scary and should be avoided. This frightens the children from exploring beyond Hailsham's bounds and reinforces their feelings of insularity. Their movement is limited – as are their minds – because, through internalised, conditioned fear rather than any direct force, Kathy and her peers unwittingly 'choose' to not cross Hailsham's borders. As an adult, Kathy's apprehension of the outside world persists. Her body and mind remain restricted, and she continues to experience limited exposure to alternative worldviews; her internalised captivity remains largely unchallenged. Years of covert discipline have made compliance, not rebellion, feel like the only 'natural' course of (re)action for Kathy.

In both stories, as per traditional tales, the 'children are punished for their curiosity and vice'[85]. Not only does this deter the clones (who are ultimately state property) from running away, or even exploring, but it also moulds their psyches. Their curiosity and ability to question are stunted. The story of the dismembered boy warns against emotional and expressive behaviour (having a 'big row' with your friends). The lesson is that restrained behaviour is a virtue and reactive behaviour is a vice. Mirroring conventional fairy-tales, which are designed to 'keep children (and humanity) trapped in a system where deviation from the norm is unwelcome and punished,'[86] Hailsham's stories also oppress individual agency and expression.

There is no clear evidence that the guardians craft or tell these stories. Indeed, Kathy says that the 'guardians always insisted these stories were nonsense. But then the older students would tell us that was exactly what the guardians had told them when they were younger, and that we'd be told the ghastly truth soon enough, just as they were'.[87] Bruno Bettelheim, Carl Jung, Marie-Louise von Franz and others argue that fairy-tales help children address and process deep – sometimes subconscious – psychological anxieties. Perhaps these stories are entirely self-composed and self-imposed so that the clones may process their fears. Ishiguro discusses the

characters' lack of rebellion, saying, '[they] don't have the perspective to think about running away … [and so they] try and tell [themselves] stories'.[88] Perhaps this ritualised tradition of fear is an act of self-preservation because Hailsham truly is their 'best bet,' and the stories protect them from feeling tempted to leave its safety. However, even if this is the case, the clones are conditioned to reproduce these transgenerational fairy-tales. Furthermore, regardless of whether the guardians are involved in the creation of these stories, the truth remains that they do not choose to stop them from spreading. Much like with the myth of the deferral, the guardians may feel that if the clones are foolish enough to believe in such silly ghost stories, then they must. Alternatively, and more likely, this mythology of fear (rather than of hope, as with the deferral) is not restricted because it is 'a little fantasy' that distracts and controls the clones.

Mythology, ideology and stories play a major role in why, as Ishiguro posits, the clones 'don't have the perspective to think about running away'. The various methods of division and subjugation in *Never Let Me Go* (such as the myth of upward social mobility and its associated merit-based hierarchies) distract and even blind the clones from their exploitation – as well as their agency. The Gallery is just one way that the ISA Hailsham conditions the clones to focus on hierarchical distinctions rather than recognise their collective oppression. It serves to fragment any potential resistance, but it also shapes compliance with certain norms, such as sharing pieces of one's self. Whether through professional ambition, artistic production or privileged social status, throughout the text there is 'the recurring spectacle of these characters' struggles to advance within their local merit-based hierarchies while remaining oblivious to the existence of a larger birthright hierarchy making these struggles inconsequential'[89].

Ideological programming through social systems like the welfare state and terrifying ghost stories that create a deeply ingrained fear of the outside world also contribute to the clones

'remaining oblivious'. Kathy and her friends 'remain trapped in a state of adolescence during their maturation into biological adulthood' so that they will remain 'unable, unschooled, and unprepared for any semblance of an adult or free existence'.[90] The clones are kept dependent on the state and therefore forced to be compliant with its norms. Not only are they shaped to feel isolated and powerless at Hailsham, but utilitarianism, instrumentalism, consumerism and arguably even totalitarianism also play a role in their conditioned insularity. These ideologies normalise the clones' agency-less and predetermined fate, making them submissive from a young age.

The various myths, stories and ideologies that the clones are raised on ultimately condition them to internalise inferiority from a young age. They are made to feel like naughty children in other ways: 'There was a real sense of feeling bad that we had, in some collective way, let down Miss Emily,' explains Kathy. She goes on to say that the students struggle to 'follow [Miss Emily's] lectures,' partly due to the language Miss Emily uses. Two regular phrases are '[unworthy] of privilege' and 'misuse of opportunity'.[91] Long before being able or *allowed* to understand what Miss Emily is referring to, the clones are made to feel unworthy and inherently 'bad'. This internalised inferiority, instilled by their guardians, remains with them for the rest of their days, and precludes their ability to resist.

While their relationships with the guardians represent a psychosocial environment that conditions the clones into feeling isolated and powerless, their physical environment Hailsham achieves a similar goal. It 'actively represses the clones by isolating them from the world around them and by dictating how they should live and treat their bodies'. [92] As Renee Elizabeth Samuel argues:

> Just as the family served to perpetuate ideology in *The Remains of the Day*, the education system, namely Hailsham, serves as an ISA that interpellates the clones by reinforcing the idea that they are solely a commodity. The purpose of the clones is constantly reinforced by their schooling at Hailsham to confirm that the clones understand their place.[93]

Through environmental mechanisms such as the guardian-student dynamic, Hailsham's institutional rules as an ISA, seeming self-regulation, surveillance and the panopticon effect, isolation (both physical and psychosocial), and biopolitics, the clones come to 'understand their place' as commodities, as '[cogs] in a bioconsumerist culture'[94]. Through these mechanisms and more, Kathy is manipulated into accepting the state's 'biopolitical capacity to *foster* life or *disallow* it to die'[95]. It is strongly suggested that the clones endure absolute resource extraction:

> even if you've technically completed, [and] you're still conscious in some sort of way… there are more donations, plenty of them, on the other side of that line… there are no more recovery centres, no carers, no friends; … there's nothing to do except watch your remaining donations until they switch you off. It's horror movie stuff.[96]

Considering the system's priority to maximise the clones' utility, this horrifying theory seems feasible. What begs answers is why the clones do not resist their fate in some way.

It is partly because, like myth and ideology, environmental factors play crucial roles in conditioning the clones. Indeed, they do so more subtly – and more perniciously. Long before the clones start using 'the program's euphemistic language of "carers," "donors," and "completion" [that] play a role in masking the cold reality of [their] lives, Hailsham's emphasis on a kind, beautiful environment plays an even stronger role in their repression'.[97] While Kathy's upbringing may seem autonomous, cared for and cultured, we will see how this is an illusion that is designed to repress and condition her. I will also examine the motif of 'unwanted remains' that we see throughout the text. This motif is a constant feature in the clones' world, and, I would argue, a constant reminder of how the political system views them – and how they are taught to view themselves – as expendable commodities.

From a young age, the clones are surreptitiously conditioned to feel like powerless utilities expressly made to be consumed – and the agents who condition them are their respected, revered and loved guardians. The psychosocial relationship between a clone and their parental figure of authority plays an equally important role in executing systemic oppression to achieve institutional goals as Hailsham, the physical space, does. This is an example of how Hailsham is both an educational and familial ISA. While it is the greater system that exploits the clones, it is the 'guardians' (an ironic moniker) who facilitate this exploitation by rearing them in isolation and seclusion, and by forming impactful relationships that stunt the clones' agency. Identical to children and their caregivers, Kathy and her friends are loath to risk displeasing their guardians and disrupting their authority.

Kathy's peer Marge asks Miss Lucy about whether she ever smoked. This is a severe transgression that shocks the students as Marge 'might as well have asked if Miss Lucy had ever attacked anyone with an axe'. Kathy claims that the clones 'only needed to ask and Miss Lucy would have told [them] all kinds of things'.[98] Kathy theorises why the clones stay silent instead:

> So why had we stayed silent that day? I suppose it was because even at that age – we were nine or ten – we knew just enough to make us wary of that whole territory … If we were keen to avoid certain topics, it was probably more because it embarrassed us. We hated the way our guardians, usually so on top of everything, became so awkward whenever we came near this territory. It unnerved us to see them change like that.[99]

Kathy deflects the blame onto herself; she feels that because she and her peers are embarrassed to ask probing questions or disrupt the parent-child dynamic (along with its authority and security), they are at fault. It may be true that the group could or should have used the chance to get answers, but the risk of unsettling a guardian (or the relationship with them) complicates the children's desire for truth. The clones' safety and security lies with their

caregivers. In this imbalanced dynamic, does not the burden of truth lie with the ones who know it – and the ones who hold the power to divulge it?

The 'students only want the kind of knowledge that the guardians want them to have'; they 'are not interested in information about themselves except insofar as it helps maintain their affective bond with the guardians'.[100] This is by design. The drive to maintain the affective bond, which results in an avoidance of anything that may disrupt it, acts as a powerful deterrent to truth-seeking. As Babcock points out, 'the students' embarrassment directs them away from thoughts that might change their relationship to their guardians, rendering inarticulable any attempt to introduce a fundamental dispute over [their] rights'.[101] It serves the system well that not only do the clones feel too unsafe to ask probing questions, but they also believe that this is their own fault.

Instead of using Marge's question as an opportunity to ask questions, the group executes intra-group punishment; Marge's life becomes 'an utter misery'.[102] Indeed, any 'protest against [Hailsham's] system of values, conscious or unconscious, is met with ridicule'; as such, the clones 'maintain their status as machines' as much 'as the barely registered system of teachers and doctors'[103] who control and commodify them do. This social policing reveals how deeply the clones have been conditioned to protect the system that is exploiting them. It is the fear of displeasing one's parental figures that underpins this conditioning. By suppressing their curiosity for the truth and maintaining the status quo, the clones can avoid losing their guardians' apparent affection. However, this means that any potential disputes over their rights remain inarticulable. It is worth noting that there are clues in the text to suggest that there may also be more formal consequences for asking questions. Miss Lucy says that maybe '"one day, [Tommy will] try and

find out"' more about his '"place in the wider world,"' but that '"[*they*] won't make it easy for"' him.[104]

The politically imbalanced guardian-student dynamic, which dominates every Hailsham experience – even the ones where the guardians are not present – fosters compliance, as do the institution's rules. These can be spoken or unspoken, and they range from being seemingly trivial, such as queueing etiquette, to being more serious, such as restrictions on speech, movement and physiological processes. Even the rule about queueing etiquette – 'though you couldn't jump the queue going forwards it was fine to go back'[105] – reinforces order and instils obedience, however subtly. An unspoken, 'self-imposed' rule is to never discuss the Gallery in front of the guardians. Kathy says that this rule is not dictated by the guardians[106]; however, this does not mean that it does not serve them. While this rule and many others seem self-imposed, they align with institutional goals and it is probable that the guardians, if only covertly, encourage them. After all, obedience to rules is more likely when one believes that they have set them themselves. Not only do the rules feel more 'natural' (because they seem to originate internally), but they also result in a false sense of control and agency.

Directly enforcing rules at Hailsham is largely unnecessary, and I would argue that this is because the clones have been conditioned to self-regulate. They internalise the expectations placed on them. Through the clones' self-regulation with this particular rule of not mentioning the Gallery in front of the guardians, for example, those in power are never put into the uncomfortable position of confirming or denying the Gallery or its purpose. Conveniently for them, the guardians are never forced to dispel something that is so powerful at sowing seeds of delusional hope: the myth of the deferral. While it may not be the guardians who *devised* this

proscription on speech, it is the clones' deep-seated fear of upsetting them that necessitates it. Similarly, the guardians never explicitly decree that leaving Hailsham is forbidden, and overt governance to manage this is never necessary. The guardians make pivotal choices of passivity; just as they allow ghost stories to control the children through a deep-seated fear of the outside world, they know about the myth of the deferral – and choose to never repudiate it.

As outlined, ranking – a form of biopolitical control to exert indirect force through 'the art of distributions' in space[107] – features in Kathy's environments. Her environments also utilise the other disciplinary techniques that Foucault lists: enclosure, partitioning and functional sites. At the recovery centres, we see clearly how all four are employed to distribute the clones to 'isolate them and map them; but also [to articulate] this distribution on a production machinery that [has] its own requirements'[108]. Mimicking factory assembly lines, donors 'on their fourth' get sorted into different rooms. That is, they are partitioned according to their rank – their functional capacity to be excellent biocapital workers. While enclosure ('the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself … [a] protected place of disciplinary monotony'[109]) is visible at Hailsham, the Cottages and the recovery centres, it is Hailsham's isolated and secluded nature that best highlight this disciplinary technique.

Hailsham's borders are ever present and clearly defined. Disciplinary monotony, including the self-imposed kind, is reflected in how, like an island that becomes overrun by a contagious virus, Hailsham's norms spread quickly within its confines, such as the unspoken decision to avoid mentioning Madame's name.[110] Hailsham is naturally 'closed in upon itself' as it stands 'in a smooth hollow with fields rising on all sides,'[111] but it also seems to have been intentionally designed with separation from the outside world in mind – or rather, with separation

from the clones in mind. When an outsider/normal visits, the students have 'a good view of the long narrow road that [comes] down across the fields and [arrives] at the main gate … the sight of [a car] in the distance [is] sometimes enough to cause bedlam during a class'.[112] Clearly, this is a rare spectacle.

In all three environments, the separation imposed on the clones establishes an insular 'us/abnormals versus them/normals' dichotomy that works to reinforce their feeling like the inferior other. At Hailsham in particular, Kathy is both literally and figuratively confined with physical boundaries and limiting beliefs. These stunt her perspective and ensure her reliance on the guardians – and therefore the system. Judy Bridgewater, the singer on Kathy's treasured cassette tape whom she admires, exemplifies freedom and movement (Bridgewater is allowed to smoke and her name connotes the freedom to travel), while Kathy, the admirer, exemplifies the opposite. She is penned in at Hailsham and reared under tight biopolitical and surveillance control until the age of sixteen.

Let us first look at instances of surveillance. The clones appear to live in a panopticon-like environment where they constantly feel watched, even beyond the tightly controlled Hailsham. Bentham's Panopticon – a central tower within an annular building that has wide windows, which allow a warden to monitor cells that ring the tower – does not mimic Hailsham's physical architecture; however, the effect of perceived observation that Kathy expresses does mirror the panopticon's intended effect. The panopticon places within 'each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy' in which '[visibility] is a trap,' argues Foucault. Indeed, in Hailsham's environment, the clones do appear to be 'small captive

shadows in the cells of the periphery … [they are in] so many cages, so many small theatres, in which… [they are] constantly visible'[113] – or, at least, they believe themselves to be.

Surveillance and its perceived existence pervade the entire text, subtly shaping the clones' behaviour into further self-regulation, thus ensuring compliance through perceived observation. In Kathy's recollections of Hailsham, she makes repeated mentions of a lack of privacy and a fear of being overheard:

> [We] weren't exactly spoilt for choice. 'Quiet' places were often the worst, because there was always someone likely to be passing within earshot. And as soon as you looked like you were trying to sneak off for a secret talk, the whole place seemed to sense it within minutes, and you'd have no chance.[114]

When Kathy talks privately with Tommy to discuss Miss Lucy's strange comments about his creativity, they meet at the Hailsham pond, which she says is not

> a good place for a discreet conversation … For a start you could be clearly seen from the house. And the way the sound travelled across the water was hard to predict; if people wanted to eavesdrop, it was the easiest thing to walk down the outer path and crouch in the bushes on the other side of the pond.[115]

Kathy makes a point of pretending to have 'gone strolling aimlessly [and have] happened to come across Tommy'. Though she has 'no idea if anyone was actually watching,' she is 'keen to keep up [the] impression' that her meeting with Tommy is accidental. Instead of sitting down to speak with him, when she finds Tommy, Kathy faces the house so that she can see 'if people started gathering at the windows'.[116] While there is no way Kathy and Tommy can be heard from the buildings, Kathy is dismayed at the thought of even being seen. Tommy, despite how openly expressive he typically is, keeps his voice lowered and is 'worried about being overheard and [glances] over his shoulder towards the house'.[117] They are in a secluded spot, yet both seem hesitant to speak freely, acting as if they are being observed or listened to. Some of this caginess

may be due to shyness from not wanting to be seen as a couple, but, even so, Kathy and Tommy seem overly cautious. The clones are 'allowed' to meet in relatively private spaces and have ostensibly 'unsurveilled' conversations – creating the illusion of autonomy – but they appear to suffer an unrelenting sense of constraint, albeit 'self-imposed'.

This is a result of Hailsham's panopticon-like environment, which

> [arranges] things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers … In view of this, Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so.[118]

While Hailsham may not have a tower that is always visible, it does instil an internalised sense of observation into the young clones, which then dictates their behaviour well beyond their Hailsham days. Even as a Hailsham graduate, Kathy frequently mentions being or feeling monitored – by an unverifiable power. This creates a stifling environment in the text that is reminiscent of the one that 'Big Brother' fosters in Orwell's *1984*. This stifling environment is perfectly embodied in the climactic scene, where Miss Emily chooses (known to Madame but not to the clones) to remain unseen and listen to Tommy and Kathy's 'private' conversation with Madame.[119] Kathy does not make direct references to being 'surveilled' by those in power, but there are clues that Big Brother *is* watching. Miss Emily's comment to Kathy ('"We've heard a lot about you"'[120]) suggests that a broader system of surveillance monitors the clones. Apart from the element of privacy-breaching surveillance in this scene, what is being said about how

Madame and Miss Emily view the clones? Their nonchalant deception and objectification of Kathy and Tommy seem to suggest that the clones are not afforded the human right to privacy.

For Kathy and her friends, no space is truly personal. Despite their maturation from prepubescent to pubescent to adult individuals, the clones are not afforded the universally accepted right to privacy and space. Hailsham is the legal and political ISA that informs what the clones believe to be normal. Not only does a panopticon-like environment condition the clones into self-regulating, thus shaping them to be unknowingly complicit in their own subjugation, it also normalises the act of sharing one's space *and* one's body. This norm teaches the clones to subconsciously believe – and come to accept – that their bodies are not their own; they are state-owned commodities destined for shared repurposing. The clones' 'quest for privacy evident in the struggle for personalised space is countered by the pedagogic and medical surveillance to which the students are subject to'.[121] In addition to enduring a general sense of being watched, Kathy's body is subject to close observation and control from a young age.

Long before their protracted deaths, Hailsham acts as an educational, familial and pseudo-religious ISA that wields biopolitics to subtly condition the clones. From 'some form of medical almost every week'[122] to morality lessons on sex and smoking, Kathy's body is treated as a state-managed resource. Every aspect of her existence is directed towards serving the system. 'Childbirth and smoking' – 'the power to create life and the right to damage [their] own'[123] – are two significant ways that Kathy is subtly stripped of biological choice long before being subjected to forced organ harvesting.

I will focus on smoking because while it is widely accepted as being bad for one's health, it does not typically carry the level of immorality that it does at Hailsham. This is because

Hailsham is essentially a 'workshop' that needs to 'increase aptitudes, speeds, output and therefore profits' by exerting 'a moral influence over behaviour'[124]. By framing an issue of individual agency over one's body (smoking) in moral terms, the guardians introduce the clones' 'bodies into a machinery'[125]. The guardians need Kathy, as state machinery, to remain in good health so that her production value is high when she begins to care and donate. In this way, Hailsham 'manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected'[126] to its disciplinary procedures.

Kathy explains that the guardians would 'have preferred it if [the students] never found out smoking even existed; but since this wasn't possible, they made sure to give… some sort of lecture each time any reference to cigarettes came along'.[127] When Miss Lucy admits that she used to smoke, she makes special mention that if the students smoked, this would be far more sinful:

> '[What] you must understand is that for you, all of you, it's much, much worse to smoke than it ever was for me.' Then she paused and went quiet … Finally she said: 'You've been told about it. You're students. You're… *special*. So keeping yourselves… very healthy inside, that's much more important for each of you than it is for me.'[128]

Miss Lucy focuses on how special and important the clones are, deflecting from the real reason that she can smoke and they cannot: she can get away with smoking *because* the clones exist. She does not care about their health and happiness, but that destruction to state property is a crime. If a clone smokes, it 'amounts, in a literal way, to the corruption of somebody else's organs'.[129] By framing smoking as an unethical act and cloaking it in the guise of 'caregiving,' Hailsham ensures that the clones accept, internalise and normalise, without question, their duty of care from a tender age. Hailsham takes an issue of health care and reframes it as an element 'which may or may not improve human capital'[130].

> Whether as 'carers' or later as 'donors,' their vocation remains the same: to be caretakers of their bodies as public property. The 'special' prohibition on smoking is an example of the way the students' care of their bodies is made into an ethical commitment. Their 'donations' are services to humanity, and so the care of those organs is an ethical act.[131]

Many years after formative moments on the moral importance of keeping one's body healthy for some divine and unknown purpose, the clones start to donate. By this time, not only does it feel natural, but also – and more importantly – it feels *virtuous* that biological choices concerning their bodies are not their own. Mirroring Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, Kathy is conditioned to equate the ability to endure indignity with dignity. As such, she 'remains a dupe of the sham of a market-based economy that convinces her that her exploitation is actually a form of gift-giving'.[132]

To understand how deeply the clones have had insularity conditioned into them, it is helpful to examine their time beyond Hailsham as young adults at the Cottages and then as carers and donors. There is evidence to suggest that they see themselves as inferior, isolated and powerless. I will focus on the clones' visit to the outside world to find Ruth's 'possible' (the normal upon whom she is allegedly modelled) and on Kathy and Tommy's visit to Madame to apply for a deferral. Even though Kathy is free from Hailsham, in realms 'of apparent freedom, a mysterious post-institutional force limits the way that this freedom is apprehended and used'.[133] Reflective of a self-constrained freedom, Kathy exhibits acute self-consciousness of her otherness, learned helplessness, and complete deference to her old guardians, even in adulthood.

Ruth, Kathy, Tommy and two non-Hailsham alumni, Rod and Chrissie, visit a nearby village in the outside world to find Ruth's possible. Their awkward discomfort at visiting a space designated for normals is palpable. Once again, even though it is not a rule that the clones may not do this, they feel like naughty children breaking a rule – or like illegal aliens. They do not act

freely, feeling 'surveilled,' obtrusive and even criminal. Kathy expects to be shouted at for sitting on a public wall, and the group worries that they may look like a gang of muggers.[134] This mirrors Kathy's frequent comments about being or expecting to be 'told off' (chastised) while growing up at Hailsham. Kathy and Tommy wait until two strangers are out of earshot before continuing to discuss the Gallery in public – even though Kathy admits that this is stupid.[135] Clearly, she still experiences the perception of being observed from her Hailsham days. Kathy also mentions enjoying the unexpected freedom of just being allowed to exist, browsing in a shop without having to have to buy something, with the assistants not minding at all.[136] Whether the experience is positive or negative, the group is keenly aware of their 'outsider' status.

Roughly a decade later, Kathy and Tommy visit Madame. On approaching Madame, Kathy is apologetic and placating, reassuring her that they '"don't want to shock"' her and that they '"haven't come to give [her] any trouble"'.[137] Kathy and Tommy are made to wait for Madame, like naughty and unwanted children, and they fully expect that she has forgotten about them and would 'suddenly remember, come in and tell [them] to leave'.[138] Yet again, the clones anticipate being chastised, and Madame does indeed treat them with hostility: she holds them in a glare, like they were 'in a class and she was a teacher' and 'her eyes [blaze] towards [them]'.[139] When Miss Emily emerges from the shadows, exposing her deception, Kathy appears to express genuine happiness at seeing her again.[140] At one point, even though Kathy wants to turn and 'see what looks were being exchanged [between Madame and Miss Emily],' she feels 'almost like [she is] back at Hailsham, and [she has] to keep facing the front with complete attention'.[141] While Miss Emily rambles on, as if it were 'one of her morning assemblies' where she would drift 'off on tangents none of [the clones] could follow,' Kathy and Tommy listen patiently and politely – because she seems 'to enjoy herself'.[142]

Despite the cruel truths that are revealed, only one of which is that the deferral was never based on truth, Kathy maintains her typically calm composure throughout the meeting. She even becomes child-like in her submissiveness in the presence of her old guardian. She learns that Miss Emily is afraid of and revolted by the clones, but still politely thanks Madame for the talk. Even 'after everything else,' Kathy wants to thank Miss Emily. She does not get the chance because Miss Emily leaves without bothering to look back.[143] This passive acceptance, polite compliance and learned helplessness were cultivated when Kathy was a child. Tommy's years of bullying at Hailsham are an example of this. Kathy herself had bullied Tommy, along with her peers, but when she came to recognise the cruelty of it, she had hoped that the guardians would intervene.[144] They never did, so it continued for years. '[It] just kept on, and no one said anything,' says Kathy.[145] Now, as an adult, Kathy continues to depend on the guardians to take control, never acting autonomously.

It is worth noting that during this pivotal visit to Madame's house (which comes to impact Kathy and Tommy monumentally), a prosaic nuisance occurs in the background . Movers arrive to collect a piece of furniture, frequently drawing both Madame and Miss Emily's attention away. The clones are forced to constantly compete with this for attention; to Miss Emily and Madame, they are even less important than pieces of furniture. This scene parallels many in *The Remains of the Day* in which Stevens is expected to be an unseen statue in a corner of Darlington Hall. It reflects Chris Holmes and Kelly Mee Rich's statement that '[to] live in an Ishiguro novel is to be frozen in place as society moves around you, either oblivious to your existence—to your cares, needs, and anxieties—or actively engaged in your undoing'[146]. Kathy and Stevens are expected to remain unseen until needed. Much like the bedside cabinet that Miss Emily no longer wants but is 'determined to get a fair price' for,[147] Kathy is a utility. Once she

has been bought and utilised, she will comprise 'unwanted remains,' a prominent motif in the clones' environment.

This motif signals the themes of consumerism and utilitarianism in *Never Let Me Go*. In addition to rituals such as the Exchanges, which preface the clones' forced donations, thus normalising their consumption as utilities, there are more discrete ways that consumerism and utilitarianism are illustrated in the text. We see the motif of unwanted remains in the Hailsham Sales (jumble sales with items from the outside world), where one man's trash becomes another man's treasure. The clones are allowed to buy hand-me-downs, some of which are literal scraps. Kathy admits, 'Looking back now, it's funny to think we got so worked up, because usually the Sales were a big disappointment. There'd be nothing remotely special and we'd spend our tokens just renewing stuff that was wearing out or broken with more of the same'. She goes on to say that sometimes you could find something special like 'a pair of craft scissors never used but kept proudly next to a bed'.[148] Something as unexciting and quotidian as a pair of scissors or a pencil case can become a 'gorgeous item'[149] for the clones.

The clones' exposure to the outside world is severely restricted, so they only begin to realize much later, while at the Cottages, that their prized, private collections from the Sales and Exchanges are 'nothing remotely special'; they are effectively trash – 'stuff' that 'no shop… would want'.[150] The Cottages that they live in, which is 'the *remains* of a farm that had gone out of business years before,'[151] mirrors their prized collections of repurposed throwaways. The Cottages is a collection of unwanted remains – buildings that are dilapidated, cheap and neglected. The clones live in 'barns, outhouses, stables' (calling to mind a comparison with cattle) that have been repurposed into living quarters. The clones are frequently cold and uncared

for at the Cottages. According to Kathy, because of how cold it is, something intimate with another human – sex – becomes 'functional'[152]. It is something that the clones do 'in freezing rooms in the pitch dark, usually under a ton of blankets. *And the blankets often weren't even blankets, but a really odd assortment – old curtains, even bits of carpet'*.[153]

Even the clones' essential items, then, are repurposed scraps. Lee links Kathy's observation of the Cottages with the imminent decline of her physical body. She argues that because the clones are '[deprived] of proper places to live,' surviving in converted, broken down buildings that are 'unlike the privileged estate Hailsham, which was designed for their use,' they 'realize that they have no right to their bodies and souls'.[154] I would agree. It is also during Kathy's Cottages recollections that we learn that she and Ruth worry that they are 'modelled from trash'. Ruth compares them to what is found 'in the gutter… [or] rubbish bins… [or] down the toilet,'[155] once again illustrating the motif of unwanted remains. Built into and ever-present in their environment, this motif contributes to normalising the clones' status as parts to be consumed, damaging their sense of worth and warping their understanding of reality.

The clone-breeding institutions are 'all over the country, standing on the far side of playing fields, little white prefab buildings with a row of windows unnaturally high up, tucked almost under the eaves'.[156] While these do not completely fit the unwanted remains motif, they do share disturbing similarities with the Cottages. I would argue that the buildings' qualities condition the clones into normalising and accepting the system's view of them as being merely consumables. Along with a sense of the scale of this operation (and therefore its banality as an accepted, albeit ignored, state apparatus), we get a glimpse into how relegated, cheap and hidden these institutions are. They mirror the servants' 'downstairs' living situation in *The Remains of*

the Day. Far from being homely or well taken care of, these buildings sound like factories that are mostly hidden away from the normals so that they need not face the harsh reality of the programme. The 'unnaturally high' windows that are 'tucked almost under eaves' keep the inhabitants hidden, but they also restrict the clones' own visual ability.

Kathy describes these prefabs as being 'put up,'[157] further highlighting the cheap quality of these drab buildings. The word 'prefab' has an inherently negative connotation: it is something made cheaply in a factory, generally modelled from a series of the same in the most efficient way possible, and intended to be quickly 'put up'. These prefabs (short for the word 'prefabricated') parallel the clones' intended function. They are a literal expression of how the system views them – and how they are shaped to view themselves.

From a tender age, we see in Kathy's environment several mechanisms of subjugation, many of which are subtle. From the formative and manipulative guardian-student relationship to the self-regulation, surveillance, isolation and biopolitics born from Hailsham's unspoken norms and rules, Kathy's environment is designed in such a way that it conditions her to be (or, at least, feel) agency-less. She and her friends are raised in an environment of control by manipulation. Miss Emily claims that the manipulation that the clones endure protects and shelters them, giving them a better life. The truth, however, which she admits herself, is that *had* the guardians raised the clones in a transparent way, '"[they] would have told [the guardians] it was all pointless, and how could [they] have argued with [that]"'[158]. The guardians claim to want to protect the clones, but it is the system's exploitation that they want to protect. To do this, they need to stunt the clones' senses of self and rob them of their agency. As Babcock argues, 'from within the organization it is impossible to know if one shelters one's charge in order to protect her, or

because telling her about the nature of [the] protection might *dispel the illusion of your agency* over her'.[159]

By 'protecting' Kathy, the guardians control her, making her fully dependent on the system and convincing her that she has no agency. In a telling statement, Miss Emily tells Kathy and Tommy, '"You wouldn't be who you are today if we'd not protected you"'.[160] Had the clones been raised in an environment of transparency, it is true that they would have become very different individuals. The system ensures that they are sufficiently conditioned by their upbringing before fully understanding their intended use. This way, they do not have the time nor the autonomous sense of self (in which one's individual experience is more important than the supposed 'social good' that one serves) to fully develop existential angst; nihilistic, self-destructive behaviours; and/or possible resistance measures. Had they had the time to develop these, their value as donors may have been affected.

Similar to *The Remains of the Day*, in *Never Let Me Go*, '[our] condition as readers exactly mirrors the education of the students themselves' who have 'been told and not told,' to borrow Miss Lucy's phrase[161]. The clones are reared and then continue to live in a state of being told and not told, such that their ability to see, understand and resist the system that exploits them is limited. As Miss Lucy points out, 'none of [the clones] really understand, and… some people are quite happy to leave it that way'.[162] The system, harbouring 'a sinister semi-secret,'[163] keeps information semi-rationed and -obscure. The clones never *really* understand what awaits them (they have not been told what they might then challenge). They are also led to believe that they have been told – that they have been given access to information, power and autonomy. However, this is an illusion.

This illusion, which is largely instigated by Hailsham's many unspoken and unwritten rules – forms of 'obfuscated intelligence' – keeps Kathy and her friends oppressed and powerless. Obfuscated intelligence is intelligence that may or may not be true, and which is made difficult to access either because it is withheld, not fully elaborated upon or even purposefully obfuscated. According to Ishiguro, Hailsham is '"a physical manifestation of the way all children are separated off from the adult world, and are drip-fed little pieces of information about the world that awaits them, often with generous doses of deception — kindly meant or otherwise"'.[164] I will demonstrate that, in Kathy's case, it is 'otherwise'. Much of the obfuscated intelligence that the clones act on (whether instigated by the guardians and/or simply not repudiated by them) distracts the clones from their exploitation by providing false hope – all while instilling an internalised inferiority.

This is not to completely ignore the clones' role in keeping intelligence obfuscated or even in obfuscating it from themselves. I will examine their coping mechanism of denial, the guardians' role in this and the myth of the deferral. While they are 'semi-told' about their fates, the intelligence that the clones receive is either so unclear or so belated that they are robbed of any *meaningful* epistemological and ontological transformations. Self-deception, not revelation, marks their entire lives. As children, they talk about their possible futures as postmen or farmers. As young adults, they strive to find their 'possibles' because, even though they realise it is not 'that simple,' 'all of [them], to varying degrees, [believe] that when you saw the person you were copied from, you'd get some insight into… what your life held in store'.[165] Lastly, even as an adult caring for dying donors, Kathy naively speaks of her time as a donor as if it will be her golden retirement. These strategies of self-deception and denial are nurtured by the system

(through its various devices of subjugation, including obfuscated intelligence) because it keeps the clones compliant. If one is unsure of what the enemy is exactly, how can they challenge it?

In *Never Let Me Go*, we see 'the nexus of self-deception and occlusion by unequal sociopolitical structures'.[166] Kathy appears to share Stevens's proclivity for self-deception through assumptions – perhaps because assumptions become necessary when information is not forthcoming. She says things such as 'this had never been spelt out exactly, but it was definitely, as I say, an understanding,'[167] mimicking Stevens's suspiciously insistent phrasing. Unlike the butler, Kathy does show some awareness of the possible discrepancy between fact and theory; she admits that even though the clones are not even sure that the Gallery exists, they talk about it as if it does.[168] A major drive for the clones (and one that leads to much suffering for some of them) is to be 'creative' – or considered as such by those in power, anyway. They accept that 'creativity' is important and they are forced to make key assumptions about why this is. One such assumption is that it is necessary for entry into the (possibly mythical) Gallery, an institution that they are occluded from until they become worthy enough to 'earn' inclusion. Two levels of obfuscated intelligence – about creativity and the Gallery – (dis)inform the clones' entire raison d'être. While it may be true that they made the assumption about creativity and the Gallery, it is shaped, allowed and nurtured by the unequal sociopolitical structure that benefits from their confused behaviour.

In addition to 'semi-knowing,' silence is also shaped, allowed and nurtured so that it may play a role in control (including self-control) through self-deception. It is an unspoken rule to never talk about the 'courses' that the clones go on, which are presumed to be training on how to be a carer.[169] Clones who leave the Cottages are no longer mentioned. Speaking about one's

‘possible’ is also taboo: ‘it wasn’t a topic you could bring up casually. There was definitely more awkwardness around any talk of possibles than there was around, say, sex… [but] it kept coming up, usually in solemn arguments, a world away from our ones about, say, James Joyce’.[170] Discussing one’s origin, potential future and key qualities – that is, their self – is more alien than discussing decades-old literature. It is telling that these topics are ones that would lead to either disruptive questions or uncomfortable truths.

The clones learn about silence, self-deception and assumptions from the way their guardians choose to behave. Kathy is around eleven years old when Carole H. breaks the unspoken rule of never mentioning the Gallery in front of a guardian; ‘the atmosphere remained light-hearted; but [they] all knew, Mr. Roger included, that she’d made a mistake’. Mr. Roger does not comment on this or ask what Carole means by the term. Instead, he ‘[smiles] indulgently, as though to say: “Let it pass, we’ll pretend you never said that,” and [they carry] on as before’.[171] Even if Kathy is inadequately reporting, and Mr. Rogers’ smile is more out of confusion than indulgence, the fact that he does not ask any questions suggests that the guardians *do* choose to evade certain topics and that, at the very least, there is a tacit discouragement of open discussions about them.

We discover that the guardians know about the myth of the deferral. Is it not safe to assume that this is the case for the Gallery, too? Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a six-year-old, even one as measured as Kathy, not mistakenly mentioning the Gallery in front of the guardians. The guardians have likely heard this term many times – and chose to ignore it every time. This begs the question: How many other theories and myths do they know about and choose to implicitly condone by failing to condemn them? For example, is the clones’ belief that they are

modelled from 'trash,' reflecting their taught and now internalised inferiority, never countered because this damaging rumour fits the system's view of the clones as the inferior other?

Miss Emily claims that she did try to stamp out the myth of the deferral at first, but then she decided not to worry because it was '"not [her] doing, after all"'. She believes that there is no harm in letting the rumour persist if it gives the clones something '"to dream about, a little fantasy"'.[172] However, this 'little fantasy' conveniently nurtures the false but powerful belief that if you focus on striving for and achieving some mystical goal, your life will be spared. If Madame were to respond to Kathy and Tommy's deferral query in a way that suggested it was 'completely crazy,' Kathy admits that she would 'have felt pretty devastated'. However, because Madame's response is to ask questions that she seems to know 'the answer to; as if, even, she'd taken other couples through an identical routine many times before,' Kathy remains 'hopeful'.[173] The myth of the deferral is not a harmless 'little fantasy'; it is a deception that, it would appear, many clones have had faith in. They have been applying themselves to it, focussing on hoping for salvation rather than on confronting their damnation.

When Kathy and Ruth are only eight years old, they act out, through play, how obfuscated intelligence is used as a manipulative tool. They fixate on a kidnapping-conspiracy fantasy that involves Miss Geraldine, one of their favourite guardians. To begin with, the clones 'protect' Miss Geraldine from the terrible truth that there is a plot to kidnap her: 'we always agreed Miss Geraldine herself shouldn't hear a word of what we'd found out, since she'd get alarmed to no good purpose'. Kathy and Ruth rationalise withholding key information from Miss Geraldine, just as the guardians claim to do. The girls are convinced of who the perpetrators are, but they never confront them because they unconsciously know 'how precarious the foundations

of [their] fantasy [are]'.[174] This mirrors how the guardians evade certain topics, thus teaching the clones to adopt this self-deceiving strategy. Ruth uses 'secret knowledge' about the kidnapping plot to manipulate and control her friends:

> by hinting that the real evidence came from a time before people… had joined… [Ruth] could justify almost any decision she made on behalf of the group. If she decided someone should be expelled, for example, and she sensed opposition, she'd just allude darkly to stuff she knew 'from before'.[175]

This annoys Kathy because she is 'never sure, of course, if [Ruth is] telling the truth'. Since Ruth only hints and never explicitly tells, it is 'never possible to challenge her'. As a result, each time it happens, Kathy has 'to let it go'.[176] Mirroring the system's manipulation, Ruth wields power through omission and insinuation. By keeping information nebulous, she avoids it (and herself) being examined – and possibly challenged. Lastly, both Kathy and Ruth play their parts 'in preserving the fantasy and making it last for as long as possible'.[177] At the age of a second/third-grader, Kathy has already been shaped to accept, normalise and perpetuate control through obfuscated intelligence.

Never Let Me Go illustrates how 'it is what we do not or cannot understand about the world that most defines our place within its hierarchies'.[178] The clones' access to *true information* is almost non-existent and this reflects their lowly hierarchical place within the system. From sex (about which Kathy and her peers spend their days at Hailsham 'trying to tease out clues'[179]) to the Gallery to even their own death, many topics '[remain] in a hazy realm'[180]. Up until the very end, even as the clones are enduring the harsh reality of donating, they still have key information deliberately withheld from them. Tommy explains to Kathy that '"everyone worries so much about the fourth [donation]… because they're not sure they'll really

complete. If you knew for certain you'd complete, it would be easier. But they never tell [the donors] for sure"'.[181]

Language also plays a key role in conditioning insularity into the clones from a young age. Linguistic mechanisms such as 'sinister euphemisms'[182] contribute to: normalising exploitation, sometimes within a utilitarian framing; instilling an internalised inferiority; and/or convincing the clones that they lack agency. By examining Kathy and her peers' 'extensive lexicon of euphemisms,' which comprises 'vocabulary known only to inmates,'[183] we come to understand why they so readily accept '"the course that's been set for'" them.[184] Even the strong-willed Ruth is complacent when it is time for her to start donating: '"After all, it's what we're *supposed* to be doing, isn't it?,"' she argues.[185]

Before examining how language is utilised by the system to condition the clones into subservience, it is worth looking at how, similar to Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, there are subtle linguistic clues in Kathy's speech that reveal how inherently and deeply 'agency-less' she feels. She frequently speaks in ways that suggest she is not fully in control. As Mullan quips, it

> is difficult to think of a novel where so many paragraphs begin with 'Anyway [...]', that colloquial indication of a speaker pulling him- or herself back to the point after wandering away … [where] the narrator is like a speaker who keeps drifting into elaboration or digression, and keeps having to recover her thread.[186]

Kathy's other comments of mildly frustrated effort that imply a sense of digression or diversion, such as **'**But that's not really what I want to talk about just now. What I want to do now is get a few things down about Ruth,'[187] may indicate that she feels unable to – possibly even disallowed to – act autonomously. If so, this would align with her expectation that it is those in power who must intervene, act decisively and dictate her behaviour. When Kathy

realises that Madame is watching her sing the titular song, sobbing and looking at Kathy as if she is 'something that gave her the creeps,' she is unsure what to do. Kathy feels that Madame 'should have said or done something, even if it was just to tell me off'. That way, Kathy argues, she would 'have known how to behave'.[188] Kathy's manner of speech, while meandering in a way that is natural for intra-group dialogue (in which one carer is speaking to another), could also indicate 'directionlessness'. It may reflect a learned behaviour of deferring to those in control rather than setting out and following a clear path for herself.

Other utterances suggest a lack of agency or, at the very least, of control: 'Ruth, incidentally, was only the third or fourth donor I *got* to choose'.[189] This request 'took nerve,' and we see in the text several indications that the system is indeed intimidating. Perhaps this intimidation plays a part in shaping the clones into feeling agency-less. Even in the clones' *fantasy* of hope, Madame and others who represent the system have absolute and ultimate say over what the clones are – and even what they feel. Madame can tell if a couple 'goes' (if 'they match') by looking at the art they created as children. The clones create the art and experience the love, yet, in their understanding of reality, it is Madame who has the power to say what is true because '"what she's got reveals [their] souls. She could *decide for herself* what's a good match and what's just a stupid crush."'[190]

The clones believe that others are better able to make decisions on their behalf. This is a quality that they share with Stevens, who believes that a select few in the upper class are naturally better able to make decisions for the whole. This belief attests to the clones' conditioning more than any concrete example of exploitation ever could. How does this conviction of relegated control become so ingrained? Through subtle conditioning from a young

age, such as 'languaging,' which is a pervasive and powerful mechanism that constructs the clones' understanding of the world and their place within it. Keith McDonald argues that, through euphemisms, such as calling captives 'special' and deaths 'completions,' the organ harvesting is both spatially marginalised in schools and homes and internally normalised by the donors. These euphemisms highlight 'the ways in which language can normalize atrocities deemed necessary in a given ideology'.[191] Terms like 'donor,' 'carer' and 'guardian' normalise and corporatise the clones' exploitation – for the oppressors and the oppressed. 'The very fact that both the clones and their authority figures refer to this harvesting as "donation" naturalizes this idea by rhetorically designating them as the subjects of their own harvesting'[192] – the language insinuates that the forced-donation programme is a choice.

Linguistic obscuration manipulates Kathy into being convinced of the virtue and dignity of 'choosing' to be a good carer. Whitehead discusses the significance of the word 'carer'; it 'designates a category of labor, [but] it nevertheless slides between paid employment and the work of those obliged through familial responsibility to look after those who can no longer meet their own needs'.[193] It is possible that, given the parameters of her circumstances, Kathy has *chosen* to care for people who are destined to die because they are essentially her family (towards whom she feels guilt and obligation); she feels that this is the rational and dignified choice. However, I would argue that this choice is an illusion. Her misguided pursuit of virtue means that she serves the system, not her loved ones, by excelling at what could be described as an inventory manager – one who extends her loved ones' 'shelf life'.

While Kathy uses many euphemisms matter-of-factly, it is interesting that she 'air quotes' some, such as 'calm' and 'agitated'.[194] This is likely because – as Mullan argues – they are

'official [terms] of classification,'[195] possibly from official literature. Is Kathy being ironic, in a potentially derisive way, by air quoting these terms? She may be signalling that she sees them as facetiously euphemistic, which would suggest that she does have some distance from the system and its rationalised cruelties, its banal evil. However, if this is the case, it is further evidence that Kathy does believe in the honourable legitimacy of *some* of the system's terms – such as 'completing'. She does not draw attention to this word by air quoting it and we can infer that Kathy sees it as a fact of life, not a manipulative euphemism. The clones are made for a purpose and once they fulfil that, it is only natural that their product life reaches 'completion'.

It is worth noting, as Mullan astutely does, that the only time the scientific and accurate term 'clone' is used by one is when Ruth says it 'in a spasm of anger and self-disgust'.[196] Kathy and her friends use the euphemisms because they are the accepted norm. They are the accepted norm because, by reframing concepts, the system disguises the clones' grim functions. These euphemisms are an example of obfuscated intelligence; they control the clones by obscuring key information. Had Ruth referred to herself as a 'clone' openly and from the outset, she would 'really understand' (to use Miss Lucy's phrasing) her intended purpose and the injustice of her situation from a younger age. Perhaps this would have afforded her enough time to express the fiery resistance that we might expect from her character.

Aside from these euphemisms, there are less obvious ways that the clones are subjugated through language and made to feel like the inferior other – separated, powerless and insular. For example, while the clones may 'take completely for granted that they are human,' one wonders if they take for granted that they are *people*. As Hailsham children, they love their 'sports pavilion, maybe because it [reminds them] of those sweet little cottages people always [have] in picture

books'.[197] Mimicking young normals in the real world, the clones read storybooks about phenomena exotic to them; however, instead of a normal's stories about tiger and giraffes, for example, Kathy's foreign and exciting subject matter is cottages that house 'real' people. It is not only Kathy's environment that reminds her that she is not normal; her separated otherness is taught through literature, too.

The clones' internalised otherness, their feeling of monstrosity, is clear in the language that they use to refer to themselves. Kathy describes them as 'crawling' throughout Hailsham.[198] When she and her friends decide to gauge Madame's reaction to their direct presence, they 'lie in wait for Madame somewhere, then "swarm out" all around her, all at once'.[199] During this invasion into Madame's space, Kathy describes feeling like a spider:

> I can still see it now, the shudder she seemed to be suppressing, the real dread that one of us would accidentally brush against her … Madame was afraid of us. But she was afraid of us in the same way someone might be afraid of spiders. We hadn't been ready for that. It had never occurred to us to wonder how we would feel, being seen like that, being the spiders.[200]

This spider imagery continues. When adult Kathy and Tommy meet with Madame, Madame 'saw and decided in a second what [they] were, because you could see her stiffen – as if a pair of large spiders was set to crawl towards her'.[201]

Kathy is only explicitly told near the end of her life that her guardians believe that being '"reared in humane, cultivated environments"' *could* make her '"as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being"'[202]. However, this sentiment (through environment, myths, ideology, language and other devices) has been implicitly communicated to her since she was a child. Kathy has always intuited from her guardians that she is less than human. That is why, as an adult, she casually speaks of herself and her peers in utilitarian ways; she has been bred to

develop what Rich calls an 'infrastructural consciousness'[203]. Rich references Kathy's callous description of a carer as 'a complete waste of space,'[204] which reveals 'the relationship between bodies, environment, utility, and waste that is central to the cloning program and to [the] clones' interactions with their environment'.[205] How the clones describe – and see – themselves mirrors the utilitarianism evident in their factory-like and personality-less environments. As a carer, Kathy lives in a *bedsit* – a space for sleeping and resting that is provided so that she can recharge for her duty of affective labour.

Through discursive techniques, Kathy's worldview and understanding of herself are insidiously manipulated to serve the system. She is reared to view herself as both agency-less and as a worker who chooses, in the name of virtue, to facilitate a normalised (and therefore 'normal') programme. She makes matter-of-fact comments, such as this one, which is reminiscent of an account manager who has lost a client:

> When a donor completes… out of the blue, it doesn't make much difference what the nurses say to you afterwards, and neither does that letter saying how they're sure you did all you could and to keep up the good work. For a while at least, you're demoralised.[206]

Although wider society does not view the clones as humans, the system executing the exploitation understands that they will respond as typical human workers do to employee-recognition initiatives. Incentives such as these normalise Kathy's exploitation, keeping her motivated and compliant while convincing her that she has agency.

Kathy's employee-recognition letter is an example of how both her cultural and communications experiences are curated by the ISAs that she is subject to. Kathy never mentions having her own phone or a way to easily enjoy private communication. Her relationship with cultural media seems coordinated and limited, frequently appearing to serve as a distraction from

her exploitation and as a way to nurture her taught internalised inferiority. While at the Cottages, the clones watch lowbrow television sitcoms, which Whitehead argues are 'symptomatic of the social isolation that has been imposed upon them'[207]. I would argue that so too are the highbrow Kafka and Proust texts that they interact with. Another example is the 'Culture Briefings' at Hailsham about the various people that they will find 'out there,' in the real world: 'waiters in cafés, policemen and so on'.[208] Everything from controlled roleplays, tacky sitcoms, classic literature, artwork and magazines shape and prelimit Kathy's understanding of the world and of herself in such a way that she is kept distracted from her subjugation and convinced of its normality.

Kathy only has two ways to accrue personal cultural artefacts while growing up: the Exchanges and the Sales. Outside goods are curated for the clones to access through the Sales, which are 'important to [them] because that [is] how [they] got hold of things from outside,' and the Exchanges are the 'only means, aside from the Sales… of building up a collection of personal possessions'. As Kathy reflects on her childhood, she admits, 'I can see now, too, how the Exchanges had a more subtle effect on us all … being dependent on each other to produce the stuff that might become your private treasures'.[209] These peer-produced 'treasures' are informed by the conditioned and constrained environment that the entire group is trapped in. As such, they are not artworks that hold the same potential to prompt alternative ways of seeing or thinking – which could challenge established beliefs – as art from outside of one's cultural group might hold. Furthermore, Kathy cannot buy from someone in a higher grade – someone who, due to their maturity, may be more likely to produce work that has a greater disruptive potential.

The clones are only able to access restricted cultural media, such as a peer's poems or music from around the age of eleven (which is a scarce commodity – the clones share a walkman or use a communal stereo[210]). As such, their perspective on the world is stunted. This is evident in the way that they do not know the name for a catalogue and Ruth, for example, does not know the difference between lounge music and classical music.[211] Although they have recreational access to literature and films at Hailsham, it is 'a lot of nineteenth-century stuff by Thomas Hardy and people like that, which [is] more or less useless' and films, such as 1963's *The Great Escape*.[212]

The clones do get to study art and poetry at Hailsham, but the 'humanities education at Hailsham is at best a deception or lie, and at worst, complicit with the system of political oppression to which the clones are subject'.[213] Their humanities education conditions, controls and distracts them. Their essays – projects that they are engrossed in and distracted by while at the Cottages – demonstrate this. Kathy's guardians spend an entire summer helping her 'choose a topic that would *absorb* [her] properly for *anything up to two years*' before she even graduates to the Cottages.[214] Kathy eventually chooses to write about Victorian novels.[215] While at the Cottages, she and her peers also read and discuss texts such as George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*. Whitehead argues that this nineteenth-century fiction mirrors their 'reassuring belief in upward mobility' and 'falsely raises the aspirations of the clones in a society that denies them any prospect of advancement'.[216]

While it may appear as though the clones are intellectually enfranchised with a liberal arts education that features great thinkers and artists (such as Kafka, Eliot, Picasso and Proust), this is an illusion. Their education aids in disenfranchising them with false hopes and distracting

projects. Despite all the emphasis placed on the essays, Kathy admits, 'Over time, they would fade from our minds'. However, the essays do, according to Kathy, help keep the clones 'afloat' when they first arrive at the Cottages, which are 'new surroundings'.[217] Interestingly, seventeen years later as a carer, Kathy still thinks about her essay:

> I might be having coffee in a service station, staring at the motorway through the big windows, and my essay will pop into my head for no reason. Then I quite enjoy sitting there, going through it all again. Just lately, I've even toyed with the idea of going back and working on it, once I'm not a carer any more and I've got the time.[218]

To some degree, Kathy is still absorbed – still kept afloat – by Victorian literature, along with its messaging of upward social mobility, despite (or perhaps because of) its removed nature from her own lived experience. This speaks to the effectiveness of the guardians' *choice* to emphasise the essay project at Hailsham during her teenage years. Kathy herself refers to her essay project – a continual work in progress – as a 'daydream'. It is an unattainable goal that is enjoyable to focus on as she endures the misery of caring for her dying friends. However, even more effectively for the system that benefits from her suffering, it also keeps her afloat by distracting her from what is still to come. Kathy's fantasy of finishing the essay when she is the one dying is a stark symptom of her conditioning.

Similarly, despite all the emphasis placed on the importance of creating art, once the clones leave Hailsham and take their penultimate step to their true purpose, this normative value ceases to be propagandised by the system. However, some are still driven by this conditioned, ambiguous goal – like Tommy. His hidden artistic endeavours at the Cottages – which are a matter of life and death for him, as far as he knows – are inspired by 'an old children's book with the back cover missing' that he finds 'behind one of the sofas'.[219] Visual art has become so unimportant that Tommy is forced to scribble figures in little notebooks that he begs for from the

caretaker Keffers. His artistic mission – which is paradoxically both consequential and bogus – is inspired by unwanted, unseen refuse. He is also surrounded by refuse as he draws. Sitting on 'a two-seater settee with stuffing poking out of its black plastic' in a barn that is cluttered with 'various bits of furniture heaved out over the past year or so – broken tables, old fridges, that kind of thing,'[220] Tommy draws for his life while surrounded by mangled parts (which represent the motif of unwanted remains) that mirror his fate.

Reflecting the internalised inferiority driven into the clones from a young age, Tommy has hoped that if he becomes something else – for example, sufficiently creative – that he will 'qualify'. It is unknown to him why this is or what he should be trying to qualify for, but, as a young adult, he pieces together a goal: if he is creative enough, he may qualify for more time to live. Kathy, too, believes this, and she also believes that she and Tommy need to prove that they are 'sufficiently in love':

> Tommy and I finally started having sex … I wasn't wanting to force it on him, but on the other hand it had occurred to me if we left it too long, just when we were starting out together again, it would just get harder and harder to make it a natural part of us. And my other thought, I suppose, was that if… we did find ourselves going for a deferral, it might prove a real drawback if we'd never had sex. I don't mean I thought this was necessarily something they'd ask us about. But my worry was that it would show somehow, in a kind of lack of intimacy. [221]

The myth of the deferral, 'which dominates the closing stages of the narrative, becomes all the more poignant given that desires and attachments between students are credible only so far as they emulate those of "normals"'.[222] The clones believe, first through creativity and then through intimacy, that they are inherently inferior; they lack an intrinsic essence to qualify as normals. At the Cottages, many of the couples' 'mannerisms [are] copied from the television' sitcoms that they watch, [223] which are themselves simulations of 'desires and attachments'. They 'subsist on a diet of anachronistic and dated culture-junk delivered to them as the refuse of a

world that moves on ever rapidly without them. (Or, more precisely, which moves along with them only in pieces.)'[224] Ironically, the clones emulate the fake intimacy that they see in 'culture-junk' media in the hopes that it will make them authentic and valuable. This drive to be something other than 'the other' is born from having an internalised inferiority bred into them from an impressionable age.

Lastly, to examine Kathy's degree of complicity in the exploitative donation programme in *Never Let Me Go*, as with Stevens's complicity in *The Remains of the Day*, we need to consider how complicity is connected to dignity and agency. I would argue that Kathy's agency – her ability to make autonomous decisions and to exercise self-determination – is purposefully and severely stunted. Her life is one of (perceived or 'real') dependence on the system and subjugation to its will. Unlike Stevens, for whom dignity is clearly a crucial, albeit flawed, value, Kathy never explicitly expounds upon it (not once does the word appear in the text). Nevertheless, dignity – or at least a dignified demeanour – comes through strongly in her actions and speech. Even during her best friend's ghastly death (which is the only description of a donor dying in the text, and which appears as late as four-fifths into the novel), Kathy displays a 'calmness'. She says,

> It had become obvious to me by then… that they didn't think she was going to make it. Now I took one glance at her in that hospital bed under the dull light and recognised the look on her face … It was like she was willing her eyes to see right inside herself, so she could *patrol and marshal* all the better the separate areas of pain in her body … She was, *strictly speaking*, still conscious, but she wasn't *accessible* to me as I stood there beside her *metal bed* … [Just] once, as she was twisting herself in a way that seemed scarily unnatural… she looked straight at me and she knew exactly who I was. It was one of those little islands of lucidity donors sometimes get to in the midst of their ghastly *battles*.[225]

Up until this point, the horrors of the clones' protracted deaths are hinted at, but they are never told in the excruciatingly detailed way that Ruth's 'ghastly battle' is. In this brutal scene,

Kathy's narration, while still heart-rending, is not impassioned. Her word choice is cold and functional, reflecting the world that the clones live in, and she herself is 'strictly speaking'. Ruth lays inaccessible on a cold and hard metal bed as she patrols and marshals her pain as if she were a disciplined soldier in a battle.

Earlier in the text, Kathy sees Harry, an old Hailsham acquaintance. Despite being wheelchair-bound because he is 'so weak'; abandoned by his 'carer [who is not] even around'; managed by 'orderlies [who are] impatient'; and unable to even recognise Kathy, Harry marshals his strength, too, and musters a tired smile for Kathy.[226] Harry, Kathy and even the emotive Ruth play the part of the self-sacrificial soldier, fulfilling their noble duty. However, one wonders: Do they choose to suffer in silence as they shoulder their burden, thus exemplifying dignity? Or is their stoicism a result of effective training from a young age to value and blindly pursue this ideal? I would argue that it is the latter, considering that their quiet acceptance (their lack of 'agitation') serves the greater society more conveniently and efficiently. While I agree with Robbins who says that Kathy is a 'character of limited consciousness… who prefers not to contemplate the Big Picture,'[227] I would contend that this is because, through various devices, her capacity for contemplation is curtailed. She is kept distracted, 'immersed in concerns and anxieties that one cannot confidently call trivial,'[228] such as caring for loved ones and – ironically – survival.

This is not to say that Kathy is completely devoid of agency. Hers is a complicated character. She 'is at once a literary protest against research cloning and, by virtue of her strength as a character, a quiet suggestion that reproductive cloning may not be so troubling after all'.[229] I agree with McDonald that 'the novel [is] a pathography, where the illness of those cared for is

given testimony'.[230] Kathy, unlike Stevens, has the degree of awareness necessary to 'give testimony'. However, hers is still a significantly stunted awareness, and – as with *The Remains of the Day* – the text ends with the sense that nothing fundamental has changed:

> there seems to be little sense of development between beginning and end, as [Kathy] maintains throughout a tone of 'cheerful optimism' … Kathy's lack of maturity or growth is in particularly marked contrast to the Victorian novels that she herself reads, both at Hailsham and the Cottages, which offer her a range of variations on the themes of self-development and individual advancement. As a reader of these novels, Kathy appears in certain ways quite limited.[231]

She may give testimony, but the 'calmness' that Kathy displays while doing so may 'signal her acceptance of the validity of the system'[232]. Further, there is a defensiveness in her testimony that may hint at more than merely acceptance. Kathy and Stevens 'are economically and culturally quite unrelated to each other… [but what] they have in common, instead, is a need to speak for and defend their chosen "we,"' argues Lisa Fluet.[233] While this defensiveness may betray complicity, it also signals a learned coping mechanism. Both characters face the remains of their days. To digest the paths that they have been led down – which were shaped by internalised and limiting ideologies, such as the belief that their sacrifices were virtuous choices that have made them 'special,' to quote Miss Lucy – they need to defend their lives' contents.

The text's first-person narrative style that speaks to the reader directly (as if we are a part of this 'we' that she defends) 'folds' us into Kathy's world. On page one, she suggests that we could be 'one of them' – a carer. She also makes mention that '*they've* been pleased with my work,' [234] instantly positioning an 'us' and a 'them' (Kathy and the reader versus those who are in charge). If we, too, are carers, then we, too, are complicit in helping to sustain a system of exploitation for those in power. It is possible that the 'feelings of sympathy for Kathy'[235] that we likely develop over the course of the text acclimate us to her worldview until we also accept 'the

validity of the system'. Ruth's death may even come as a shock because it has been easy thus far to remain largely ignorant of the programme's ghastly reality.

It may be true that we are subsumed into Kathy's world and her insular perspective, thus becoming accomplices in her world's injustices, but I would argue that it is through this 'folding in' that *Never Let Me Go* challenges us to consider our complicity in accepting, without question, societal norms in our own world. Beedham argues that through the plights of the clones, 'Ishiguro layers a story that demands a questioning of our values and ethics, and what we take for granted as truth,'[236] and I would agree. Whitehead, on the other hand, suggests that our identification with Kathy possibly leads 'to too uncritical a compliance with Kathy's own diversionary strategies… and a corresponding failure to confront larger social and political injustices'. However, in my opinion, the answer to Whitehead's question – 'does *Never Let Me Go* push its readers to be cognizant of analogous social relations in their own environments?'[237] – is yes.

It is possible to identify not with Kathy but with the normals who benefit from her suffering. Regardless of which character/s we consider – carer, donor or recipient – the system of exploitation in *Never Let Me Go* mirrors real-world exploitative labour. The way societies capitalise on, for example, immigrants' desperate situations by paying low wages, offering no legal protection, allowing unsafe working conditions, and denying basic rights is a real-world case of modern slavery that shares striking similarities with the clones' situation. Referring to Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*, Jerrine Tan points out that the character Melania, an immigrant working as a housekeeper, and the titular Klara, an Artificial Friend, '[embody] a not dissimilar role and space in the household, [and] in many ways, serve as clear allegories for immigrants and

their labour'.[238] While Kathy is not strictly an immigrant, she is a stranger in the 'real world'. Furthermore, her suffering – like that of most immigrant labourers – is kept purposefully hidden. Both she and Stevens remain largely invisible to the greater societies that benefits from their labour and bodies. As Miss Emily says to Kathy, '"[You] were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn't matter"'.[239] Most normals are unaware of the suffering that Kathy endures – and that they are complicit in – because they prefer it this way.

Ishiguro's texts serve to remind us that we as the reader *are* complicit in the injustices of our world. From the waitron serving us who gets paid the bare minimum to the cheap online product that we buy that has been manufactured unethically to the domestic worker we 'employ' who is undocumented and unprotected, we are frequently complicit in turning a blind eye to the suffering that others endure. We are happy to have these labourers live far away in informal settlements that we do not need to see. Perhaps some of us are like Madame, trying to fight for the rights of the disenfranchised even though we do not truly see them as being equal to us. As for Kathy's complicity in the programme, I would say that it is unfair to consider it without considering the conditioning that she is reared with. Kathy's autonomy is severely restricted and her complicity should be measured proportionately.

Ultimately, Kathy has (or imagines she has) very little agency due to the insularity that has been conditioned into her from a young age through devices of subjugation such as language, myth and ideology, obfuscated intelligence, cultural media and her environment. Kathy's worldview is shaped by these devices such that her self and her sense of self-determination are

stunted. One example is the myth of the deferral, which nurtures an internalised inferiority in Kathy and her peers and keeps them distracted. While the clones' guardians never outright lie, they selectively share or allow the dissemination of information – some of which is false – such as the myth of the deferral. Although Kathy is unable to, Tommy recognises this:

> 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 latest piece of information. But of course we'd take it in at some level, so that before long all this stuff was there in our heads without us ever having examined it properly.[240]

By the time the clones fully recognise their exploitation, it is too late for them to exercise agency and rebel because they have had insularity firmly, albeit furtively, conditioned into them.

Miss Emily's lessons on England's geography are another example of how Kathy's agency is artfully diminished. She gives the clones an outdated and idealised version of the outside world. Her 'large calendar with photos of… little villages with streams going through them, white monuments on hillsides, old churches beside fields' is reminiscent of Stevens's beloved book, *The Wonder of England*. Stevens takes someone else's depictions of the English environment as reality – as does Kathy. She admits that, even as a carer who has covered hundreds of miles, her 'idea of the various counties is still set by [the] pictures Miss Emily put up on her easel'.[241] When Kathy moves to the Cottages, she realises that for all those 'map lessons with Miss Emily,' she has 'no real idea… about distances and how easy or hard it [is] to visit a particular place'.[242] One wonders how limited these lessons were – and how purposefully so. Despite her many miles of travelling, Kathy is unable to find Hailsham, the place that she spent at least a decade in, presumably because she was never told its location. From being a child who equates forests with evil to becoming an adult with very little empirical and measurable

knowledge about her immediate environment, Kathy's geographical – and general – awareness has been intentionally curtailed.

Signalling the motif of unwanted remains, Ruth sees her 'dream future' of being an office-worker in a muddied, discarded advert. This motif is a frequent backdrop to Kathy's life and, indeed, the last scene of the text is dominated by it. She finds herself in front of a fence with 'all sorts of rubbish' caught in it. She says, 'It was like the debris you get on a sea-shore: the wind must have carried some of it for miles and miles before finally coming up against these trees and these two lines of wire.' There is 'torn plastic sheeting and bits of old carrier bags in the trees'. As Kathy looks at the 'strange rubbish' and thinks about 'the flapping plastic in the branches, the shore-line of odd stuff caught along the fencing,' she imagines that 'if [she] waited long enough, a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the field, and gradually get larger until [she would] see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call'. Kathy does not allow the fantasy to develop, however. Instead, she goes back to the car 'to drive off to wherever it was [she] was supposed to be'.[243]

Like plastic, Kathy is swept along all her life. Her path is determined by the agenda of the system that has manufactured her. She has been conditioned to think that if she is passive and waits long enough, something might change. However, it does not, and now it is time for her to do what she is supposed to do: start dying. Kathy has been so thoroughly conditioned to accept 'the fundamental rightness of the system'[244] that, instead of even considering resisting, she exercises her characteristic stoic self-control. She continues to silently suffer, performing her role with pride because she has become convinced of the dignity in her service.

This is not to say that Kathy lacks agency. The way she and her friends approach their fantasy-game of the conspiracy mirrors Kathy's own approach to her fate:

> When it came down to it, though, I don't recall our taking many *practical steps* towards defending Miss Geraldine; our activities always revolved around *gathering more and more evidence* concerning the plot itself. For some reason, we were satisfied this would *keep any immediate danger at bay*.[245]

Kathy, too, observes, probes and tries to gather information about her fate – but she never takes practical steps to confront the exploitation itself nor the conditioning that normalises it. Taking those steps would require the ability to see beyond the boundaries that have been imposed upon her. However, she has been trained to believe that there is nothing beyond Hailsham, nothing beyond her role as a carer, and, ultimately, nothing beyond the donations that will take her life. Her passivity is not a choice but an inevitability shaped by a system that is 'essentially an institution of biotechnological slavery'[246].

Chapter 3

Service through Supplication in *Klara and the Sun* (2021)

Regarding the representation of the 'artificial person' in cultural media, Despina Kakoudaki says in *Anatomy of a Robot: Literature, Cinema, and the Cultural Work of Artificial People*:

> Chattel slavery provides [an] example, in which people who are clearly persons are treated as nonpersons under the law. The intuitive recognition of their humanity has to be policed and 'corrected' by supremacist self-interests, legal precedents, and racist epistemologies in order to actively dehumanize and objectify them.[1]

I would argue that this analogy is relevant to all three texts that I examine (only two of which feature 'artificial persons'): *The Remains of the Day* (1989), *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and Kazuo Ishiguro's most recent novel, *Klara and the Sun* (2021). Through various means of subjugation, the three respective protagonists – Stevens (butler), Kathy (clone) and Klara (robot) – are actively dehumanised and objectified. Their selves become conflated with their function: service. In *Klara and the Sun*, the titular protagonist is a robot; as such, she is 'born' a non-human object. Klara enters the world already subjugated through dehumanisation and objectification (this also applies to Kathy and, to a lesser degree, Stevens). However, her oppression does not stop there. Post-manufacture, the recognition, by herself and others, of her 'selfhood' and 'personhood' (let alone her humanity) needs to be – and is – policed and corrected. This chapter will examine the ways in which she is oppressed: both at her 'birth' and throughout her life.

We join the Artificial Friend (AF) Klara as she is experiencing her 'slow fade' before permanently powering down. Klara reminisces on her time with Josie Arthur, the girl who purchased her. Advanced technology, such as gene editing and artificial intelligence, plays a significant role in this near future society; Klara was bought to perform the role of companion to Josie, whose gene editing

procedure (which is called 'lifting') has made her very ill. Klara's recollections are generally nostalgic and can even seem genuinely hopeful. However, her story can also be read as resembling 'the noble suffering of kindly robots [that presents] allegories of kindly slave figures that are just as stereotypical'[2]. While in a junkyard, immobile and awaiting her death, Klara reflects on her past as she sees out the remains of *her* day; it is these recollections that make up the bulk of the text.

The main events recounted by Klara include her time at the Store with Manager and a fellow AF, Rosa; Josie's deteriorating condition; Josie's close relationship with Rick, the next-door neighbour; the revelation that 'the Mother' (Klara's name for Josie's mother) plans to use Klara as a 'continuation' of Josie if Josie dies; and Klara's efforts to save Josie through a pledge to 'the Sun,' which she sees as an omnipotent and omniscient deity (in a sacrificial ritual, Klara forfeits essential fluid of hers). Ultimately, Josie does recover and Klara is no longer needed. Even though Josie promised Klara when she bought her that she would not end up 'in some cupboard or anything,'[3] Klara does indeed spend much of her lived experience in a utility closet after Josie's health improves.

Matching the framing devices of *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, Klara is a first-person narrator-protagonist whose voice and limited perspective shape the narration. According to Ishiguro, Klara is a *tabula rasa* when she is new,[4] but she does have foundational programming that sets the parameters of her learning potential and development. Throughout the text, we see a tension between Klara's basic programming – including the primary objective to serve, which governs all her actions – and Klara's artificial intelligence, which helps her to observe, learn and adapt. Despite her advanced capabilities and acute observations, Klara is often limited in her understanding of the complexities of the human world around her. She frequently makes inaccurate assessments, which, while humorous, may stem from being programmed to stay simple-minded in certain ways, even child-like. One of Klara's

far-fetched conclusions is the assertion that townhouses that she sees are 'painted a slightly different color... to prevent a resident climbing the wrong steps and entering a neighbor's house by mistake'.[5] While this works as a comical element in the text, it also signals Klara's limited objectivity about the 'real' outside world and its relationship with her own. There is a gap between the reality that she is subject to and her grasp of (and therefore power over) its complexities.

Once we discover that Klara is close to 'completing,' to borrow a sinister euphemism from *Never Let Me Go*, we realise that despite the fact that she lived beyond most of the memories that she is recalling, her insular worldview has remained naive and blinkered throughout. How and why is it that Klara still thinks that the townhouses were painted different colours to help the humans discern them? Or, more fatefully, why does Klara still believe that the Sun is a god who rests in the ground[6]? The details of how Klara learns and adapts are never made explicit but, using current trends as indicators, in all likelihood, she uses a form of machine learning that is based on reinforcement learning and/or neural networking that allows her to process new data.

The way in which Klara repeatedly processes data incorrectly (thus making misguided inferences that become established beliefs) reveals that her mind has been built to be and remain insular; her machine learning appears to be 'flawed,' likely by design. Klara's potential to learn is further constrained by her prime directive to – above all else – serve. Her naive optimism, a default characteristic that she is 'born' with, and her compromised faculties, such as her deficient gross motor and deductive reasoning skills, suggest that Klara has been endowed with only the skills that are strictly necessary for her insular role as a house-bound, master-bound servant. 'Like a child Klara can develop a complex belief system and invest emotions into that and the family she serves,'[7] but, because she has

been purpose-built for servitude alone, she can never evolve beyond her limited and limiting beliefs to consider an existence that is not based on subservience.

Klara starts her life with very little information in her database, and, as she becomes an autonomous being who interacts with the world, her access to information is grievously limited, as is her cognitive ability to process it. I will examine how 'obfuscated intelligence' serves to subjugate Klara. I delineate obfuscated intelligence as intelligence that may or may not be true, and which is made difficult to access either because it is withheld, not fully elaborated upon or even purposefully obfuscated. I will also look at how myth and ideology work to condition insularity into Klara while examining Klara's environment and how its various manifestations of insularity contribute to her passivity. Regarding myth, I will analyse Klara's faith in the Sun's divinity and the archetypal Abrahamic symbols that she calls on to process her world. A rigid class structure rules Klara's world, and analysing this aspect of the text necessitates an examination of the class discrimination; utilitarianism; and instrumentalism that one sees in *Klara and the Sun*. Lastly, the roles that cultural media and language play in Klara's conditioning will also be considered.

I will refer to Klara as an 'artificial person' or simply as a 'person'. This is because she embodies (or simulates incredibly well) the traits that we associate with personhood: self-awareness, consciousness, sentience, empathy and a moral capacity, among others. Klara's belief that the Sun has divine powers illustrates a capacity for faith and interpretation, hallmarks of human-like cognition. I do not intend to prove that Klara has a subjective, conscious experience; however, I will treat her story as if this were the case. I agree with Rachel Silber who argues that 'while Klara seems to experience anxiety, it is debatable whether she was programmed with this capability. More likely, Klara's reaction reflects Josie's own anxieties, suggesting a deep empathetic connection between the AF and her human

partner'[8]. My approach is that, while it may be debatable whether Klara experiences anxiety (or any other emotional state, including desire) directly or as merely a sympathetic response, her experience equates to subjectively experienced anxiety *in all the ways that matter*. Even if they develop in an artificial way, the emotional states that Klara experiences are 'felt' phenomena. This is by design because they are essential for her to fulfil her function. Moreover, less debatable is the claim that Klara has non-human consciousness, which, for the purposes of my argument, will suffice to qualify her as a person, albeit an artificial one.

Klara's reinforcement learning (or equivalent method of learning) entails AI technology that is 'less about programming machines [like her] to be clever, [and] more about letting the machines teach themselves and rewarding them for doing so'.[9] I would reframe Ishiguro's statement slightly: Klara teaches herself how to adapt when she is both rewarded and *punished*. For example, when she misinterprets a situation and suggests that she, instead of Rick, play a special game with Josie, Josie gets upset. Klara responds, '"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have suggested…"' to which Josie replies, '"No. You shouldn't have"'.[10] Klara knows that she has failed; whether she truly 'feels' this failure and its associated emotional states (sadness, disappointment, fear, etc.), Klara *does* experience it – so that she can 'do better' next time. However, there is ample evidence to suggest that Klara does indeed feel. In one of her descriptions of a customer evaluating the AFs in the Store – 'looking [them] up and down' – Klara describes, for example, how a woman indifferently refers to an AF's 'solar absorption problems' 'just like that, in front of [the AF], her smile still on her face'. Klara, clearly shocked, says that, despite this comment, Rex (the AF) keeps smiling. He goes 'on smiling until after the customers had left, and even after that, [showing] no sign of being sad'.[11] Klara is convinced that this comment must have affected Rex – and it has certainly affected her.

We are told explicitly: 'Every Artificial Friend is unique'.[12] Indeed, Klara and Rosa have different personalities. Klara is more curious. She is an astute learner. She gets upset that Rosa leaves with her new owner too abruptly for Klara 'to go over the many things [Rosa would] have to remember in order to be a good AF; to remind her of all the things Manager had taught [them], and to explain to her everything [Klara had] learned about the outside'.[13] When new AFs arrive, they are given 'all kinds of useful advice' by older ones.[14] It is clear, then, that when the time comes, based on what information an AF has been able to gather, at least some discretion is needed when ascertaining how to behave in one's live-in situation – or in any situation. Klara wonders how the B3s who treat the older models poorly 'could… be good AFs for their children if their *minds could invent ideas like these*,'[15] suggesting that AFs are able to form original thoughts. However, these thoughts (as is the case with humans) are based on the input that they receive. Some of this information comes from flawed AFs and flawed humans.

Klara's prime directive is to serve and this governs her actions absolutely, regulating her attention and responses. Klara's literal movement, too, is strictly regulated. The spaces she occupies are few and insular. She 'lives' in only three spaces: the Store where Manager displays and sells her, Josie's isolated home in the countryside, and the junkyard. Klara's sensorimotor programming is not conducive to free, independent action and her mobility is poor in certain situations. She is described as being short enough that it is an impediment, and she frequently becomes disoriented in unfamiliar spaces and emotional situations. Not only are an AF's physical incapabilities a hindrance at times but their mental competency can also be deficient (as evidenced by Klara's illogical conclusions), especially when they are 'new': 'I saw two taxis, over on the RPO Building side, moving slowly and so close together,' says Klara, that 'someone new might have supposed they were a single vehicle – a kind of double taxi'[16]. While with Manager, whom Klara obeys unquestioningly, Klara's behaviour is dictated by the norms

that Manager establishes. AFs are not to look at passers-by unless they look at them first; AFs must not cover their ears when the noise of machinery is overbearing (because it is off-putting for potential customers); and AFs must try their best not to slouch in front of customers, even when their energy is running low. When she is bought, Klara effectively starts working for new managers: Josie and the Mother. As per her programming, Klara obeys them without question, too.

The moment in which Josie starts to fully recover from her sickness is the climax of *Klara and the Sun*. Tension has built up as the reader wonders whether Josie will survive. This anticipation is heightened by a deep sympathetic bond with Klara, who has sacrificed her body, compromised her abilities and appears to genuinely worry about Josie's possible demise (which, as we discover, would lead to Klara's own demise if she were to 'continue' Josie). Happily, Josie recovers. Although we meet Klara at the end of her life, looking back on her lived experience (and the sacrifices that she made), like Kathy, Klara expresses no resentment at what has been asked of – and taken from – her. Instead, she takes solace in going through her memories and '"[placing them] in the right order"'.[17] I will argue that this passive forbearance results from insular conditioning. This is executed in two ways: through programming at her inception and socialisation as she interacts with her world. Whereas Stevens is an 'ideological servant,'[18] Klara is a coded one who, too, undergoes ideological programming.

Although the ways in which the three narrators have been conditioned vary, as do the results, common threads occur. Stevens, Kathy and Klara have all been taught to conflate their function with their identity; as such, their main concern is that they 'play the role' fittingly. Andrew Bennett points out: 'Almost all of Ishiguro's novels focus, one way or another, on the entwining of the protagonist's identity with a profession – on a person's professional competence or excellence, and their pride in their work'.[19] Like Stevens and Kathy, one of Klara's key values is professional excellence. Her drive to excel

begins with representing the Store well, but the importance that she places on being professionally competent – and being seen as such – persists throughout.

When she notices an AF walking a few paces behind his owner, Klara wonders how '[the] boy AF had accepted this, even though other passers-by would see and conclude he wasn't loved by the girl'.[20] The realisation that an AF finding a home does not guarantee that they will be loved or even wanted does not prompt her to consider the AF's suffering; instead, Klara focuses on how he is being *seen* to fail at his job. Klara takes for granted that the girl's rejection is the AF's fault. As an emotional labourer, the onus is entirely on the AF to make sure that their owner is pleased. This expectation is something that I will examine while referencing Arlie Hochschild's text on emotional labour, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. I will also reference Rachel Sherman's *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels* because, although it does not mention AI, its analysis of how workers and clientele navigate power, privilege and social status will prove helpful.

We meet Stevens, Kathy and Klara as they reminisce on a life that has already 'run the course [that was] set for them,' to borrow Miss Emily's phrasing in *Never Let Me Go*[21]. All three believe that they gave '"the very best [they had] to give,"' to borrow Stevens's phrasing in *The Remains of the Day*[22]. I believe that another sentiment of Stevens would resonate with Kathy and Klara: '"What is the point in worrying oneself too much about what one could or could not have done to control the course one's life took?"'[23] Rather than question the lack of control and choice in their lives, Stevens, Kathy and Klara focus on their memories. In Klara's case, many of these have become unstable. She calls these 'composite memories'. To order them, she needs to identify 'their rough borders – such as might have been created by an impatient child tearing with her fingers instead of cutting with scissors'. 'Even so,' says Klara, 'such composite memories have sometimes filled my mind so vividly, I've forgotten for long

moments that I am, in reality, sitting here in the Yard, on this hard ground.'[24] The rough borders of Klara's memories may reflect the carelessness with which she is treated but it would be a mistake to think that her conditioning has not been calculated.

Careless or calculated, it is safe to say that the treatment that Klara endures is frequently cruel. This statement assumes that an AI entity has the capacity to be a subject of moral concern – in other words, the assertion that AI persons have 'moral patiency,' as Mark Coeckelbergh describes it. If we decide that Klara deserves ethical consideration or protection from harm, then we have assigned moral patiency to her. In *AI Ethics,* Coeckelbergh asks the following: 'Is an AI "just a machine," or does it deserve some form of moral consideration? Should we treat it differently than, say, a toaster or a washing machine?'[25] These questions mirror the ones that Rick's mother poses when she first meets Klara: '"One never knows how to greet a guest like you. After all, are you a guest at all? Or do I treat you like a vacuum cleaner?"'[26] Coeckelbergh details different approaches to moral patiency in *AI Ethics*, including the argument that '"mistreating" an AI is wrong not because any harm is done to the AI, but because our moral character is damaged if we do so'[27]. AI ethics philosopher David J. Gunkel might argue that it does not matter whether Klara is 'just a machine'; the way humans treat her reflects *their* moral character. Even if 'AI does not have human-like or animal-like properties such as consciousness or sentience,' 'our moral intuitions and moral experiences… tell us there is something wrong with "mistreating" an AI'.[28] Some of the children at Josie's interaction meeting (an organised get-together for Josie and her peers to practise socialising) appear to agree. When a few boys want to throw Klara around to test her coordination, a girl says that doing so is evil. A boy retorts that it is not evil because '"[they're] designed to deal with it"' and the girl replies, '"That's not the point … It's just nasty."'[29]

Her admonition mirrors Kant's argument with regards to mistreating a dog: 'it is wrong to shoot a dog, not because shooting a dog breaches any duties to the dog, but because such a person "damages the kindly and humane qualities in himself, which he ought to exercise in virtue of his duties to mankind"'.[30] '[We] could say that we owe nothing to an AI,' says Coeckelbergh, applying Kant's argument to AI ethics, 'but still should not kick or "torture" the AI because it makes us unkind to humans.'[31] The human-robot interactions researcher Kate Darling, on the other hand, might say that it is *because* Josie does indeed form an emotional attachment to Klara – and still chooses to treat her as merely an object – that her behaviour is unethical. Either way we choose to view Klara's oppression, I agree with Kakoudaki; roboticism is 'a form of absolute abjection,' complicated by the fact that 'we don't actually believe in the perfect object status of even the most perfectly designed obedient robots'[32]. If Josie, for example, does not truly believe that Klara is merely an unconscious object, then her treatment amounts to cruelty. Furthermore, Klara experiences it as such, but she is programmed to not resent or rebel against it.

Before delving more deeply into the methods of subjugation that condition insularity into Klara, it is worth continuing to explore similarities and differences between her and the two other protagonists, partly because it will shed light on how we need to approach Klara – a non-human artificial person – differently to Kathy and Stevens. While I argue that Stevens and Kathy have freedom robbed from them, it is questionable whether Klara has any to begin with. Klara's dependency on those who hold power is a more extreme version of Kathy's reliance on state welfare. However, Klara does exhibit agency. She chooses to learn how to deceive, for example, when she gets better at observing the outside world from the Store while, as instructed by Manager, *appearing* to blankly gaze at the building across from her.[33] Klara finds a way to still interact with the world – to still live – while deceiving onlookers into thinking that she is in standby mode. She learns how to both obey *and* circumvent Manager's admonition to

appear ‘neutral’. While this example illustrates Klara’s agency, it also draws attention to how her agency falls within strict bounds, always taking into account her master’s desires.

Klara, like Kathy, is an artificial person: ‘an imaginary being who is partly or fully anthropomorphic, mechanical, or constructed from a variety of technological or natural materials and considered autonomous, animated, or capable of being animated’[34]. Both are ‘designed to be and remain nonhuman’[35]; subject to a ‘coded interpretation of enslavement [that] safeguards the difference between real and artificial people’[36]; and dictated (categorically) by their factory settings, ‘a contemporary synonym for fate’.[37] Unlike Stevens, Kathy and Klara are ‘given explicit limits and overt purposes by their oppressors’[38]. Klara and Kathy both have distinct, irreversible functions and neither can reproduce. They are ‘born’ with identities that have been deliberately constructed to serve predefined purposes. Despite their capacity for emotions, empathy and self-awareness, they will always be seen and treated as ‘non-human’ subjects, tools that have been built for human purpose. Kathy and Klara are not likely to transcend their factory settings because the othering that they endure – even before conception – protects and maintains the constructed boundary between ‘real’ people and ‘artificial’ ones. Unlike the human Stevens, whose future is ostensibly shaped by circumstance *and* choice, as artificial people, Kathy and Klara cannot escape their pre-defined roles. Lastly, both have ‘been taught to please the people who exploit them, and both are keen to perform well at such a task’.[39] I would argue, however, that Stevens shares this last trait with Kathy and Klara. Indeed, all three characters are conditioned (programmed) to fulfil a function – to serve as merely an instrument of service – at the expense of everything else, including, perhaps especially, their personal needs.

It ‘has always been possible, and rather cheap, to produce people the old-fashioned way and treat them as expendable, all the while upholding noble notions of personal sovereignty, individuality, agency,

and personal rights'[40]; we see this in *The Remains of the Day*. However, with the introduction of artificial persons (a fiction soon to be turned reality in the reader's world), not only can humanity produce people and treat them as expendable, but it can also more convincingly uphold noble notions of personal sovereignty, individuality, agency, and personal rights – as long as it believes that persons like Klara do not possess personal sovereignty, individuality, agency and personal rights. Kakoudaki points out that '[robots] are designed as perfect objects whose social status is fixed a priori, beings that were never in possession of rights, and therefore slaves we can confront without guilt'.[41] Although Klara endures similar forms of oppression as Stevens and Kathy, the crucial difference is that the system can oppress her relatively freely, without fear of backlash because artificial persons, such as AFs, are 'designed to be servants, workers, or slaves'[42]. That is why, out of all three texts, *Klara and the Sun* looks most closely at what Matthew Beedham refers to as Ishiguro's study of 'the ethics of service'[43].

Klara and the Sun explores 'service—[and] what it does to the souls of those who give it and those who receive it, how power deforms and powerlessness cripples'.[44] To see this devastation fully, it is helpful to begin our analysis at the end of the text. By examining Klara's present lived experience, which we only discover four-fifths into the novel, we see the full scope of the oppression that she endures. It is revealed that we have been reading Klara's memoir of sorts as she sits on '*hard* ground' in a junkyard. Not one for verbose expression, Klara's choice of adjective (and her choice to even use it) is significant and, indeed, she chooses to use it twice to describe her circumstances.[45] Had the reader (conveniently) not given much thought to where Klara could possibly be narrating from this whole time, the impact of this revelation is heightened. Klara's immediate concern is not the hard ground or her immobility ('Although I'm not able to move from place to place, I can turn my head easily to see everything around me,' she says[46]). Instead, Klara is still fixated on Josie. 'I no longer fear that the Sun will feel cheated or misled, or that he will consider retribution [against Josie],' she says, alluding to the

Sun's 'decision' to answer Klara's prayers and heal Josie.[47] One wonders: How long *did* Klara dread some sort of retaliation? Has Klara spent at least some of her 'retirement' subjected to a 'mind filled with fear,' as she sometimes phrases it?

When Klara speaks with Manager, who happens upon her in the Yard, we learn that Klara *has* '"thought about it many times"' and has convinced herself that she '"did all [she] could to do what was best for Josie."' Klara says that '"if it had become necessary"' she '"could have continued Josie"'.[48] While Manager is unsure what Klara means, the reader understands: Klara, having already sacrificed essential liquid from her body in the hopes that it would destroy all Pollution and please the Sun, would have been willing to 'become' Josie had Josie died. In other words, beyond her initial sacrifice, Klara was willing to undergo the absolute sacrifice. However, this is not what is most significant. We learn in this scene that Klara has spent a considerable amount of her slow fade ruminating on this, agonising over whether she *did* do 'all [she] could to do what was best for Josie'.

Let us rewind to immediately after the sacrifice of Klara's essential P-E-G Nine solution, which she calls 'precious solution'[49]. In a nightmarish and poignant sequence, we see clearly Klara's defencelessness, her lack of agency and her status as 'object' – we see a fuller picture of 'how power deforms and powerlessness cripples' in her world. During what is likely only a few minutes where Klara and her humans leave one restaurant to get to another to meet with Mr Vance (an old acquaintance of Miss Helen), we experience a chaotic and unkind – even hostile – world through Klara's narration. The loss of the liquid certainly affects her processing capacities, which are not strong to begin with in unfamiliar surroundings or situations that are fraught with emotion. Not only is Klara so disoriented that she does not recognise Rick until his face is almost touching hers, but Klara also has difficulty recognising even the Mother and Josie. Klara experiences 'difficulty holding [Josie] in [her] mind'.[50]

Klara's sentence structure and word choice, along with the content of her descriptions, convey a chaotic, suffocating and stressful atmosphere. Faces *'push* in' around her; she hears tense and disconnected conversations in bits and pieces; people become parts (Rick is at first just 'a smooth forehead'); someone *pushes* Klara's back (not unkindly, she insists, but one wonders whether her naive optimism and compromised faculties misinterpret the intention); someone (who turns out to be the Mother) *tugs* at Klara's arm; at one point, 'Josie suddenly [fills] the space before' Klara; and Klara begins to believe that her surroundings are not even three-dimensional.[51] Like a description out of a textbook on mental disorders, Klara starts 'to suspect that many of [the] shapes… had been sketched onto flat surfaces using clever shading techniques to give the illusion of roundness and depth'[52].

Klara generally uses phrases that convey a slightly disembodied experience. She seems to have a markedly dual experience of her mind and body. Occasionally, her own actions surprise her and, reminiscent of Stevens's meticulously orchestrated and regulated performance as the perfect manservant, Klara's performance is frequently consciously self-regulated. She admits that this regulation is sometimes challenging: '[Though] I tried to keep a smile on my face, it was not easy, and I might even have let the fear show,' she says when meeting the Mother.[53] When the Father suggests that they try to find her old store, Klara '[exclaims] perhaps too loudly,' and must control herself to speak more quietly.[54] In this nightmare sequence, Klara's slightly disembodied experience, as well as the lack of agency that is associated with being an object that is acted *upon*, is especially emphasised:

> There was a *touch on my arm* and I heard *someone* exclaim … When I turned towards *the voice*, I saw *two tall funnels*, one inserted into the other, the upper one tilting slightly forward towards me. When I smiled and said, 'How do you do?' *the funnels* went on.[55]

'The funnels' are a girl, Cindy, who used to visit Klara's old store. Cindy goes on to explicitly refer to Josie as Klara's owner, the only time this word appears in the entire text. This exchange is

followed by an interaction with an aggressive anti-AF activist who repeatedly refers to Klara as a machine, which we intuit is a slur (we have only seen this term being used to refer to food blenders, drones and the Cootings Machine, a machine that creates Pollution, synonymous with evil in Klara's eyes). After many scattered dialogues between the Father/Miss Helen; Rick/Klara; Klara/Josie/Cindy; the Mother/Klara; the Father/Josie; the Mother/Miss Helen; an activist/the Mother; the Father/the Mother; Miss Helen/the Mother; ticket seller/Mr Vance… and so on, Klara learns that she must be apart from Josie again. She has to sit on the side while Miss Helen, Rick and Mr Vance meet. Klara's chaotic narration suggests that she is either misinterpreting the chronological and/or spatial aspects of events – or that there are significant gaps in her 'mindstream'. How can Miss Helen be mediating between Rick and Mr Vance, then suddenly be at Klara's side, telling her to join them?

The loss of Klara's precious solution could explain this disorientation. However, it is worth noting that all this occurs just after Klara has found out the disconcerting news that she is expected to continue Josie if Josie dies. For the first time, Klara hopes that Josie will assist her instead of the other way around; 'At one point I stopped and reached back for Josie's arm, but she was no longer behind me,' she says.[56] Josie is not there for her and, indeed, throughout this disjointed sequence, Klara seems, once again, to resemble an insect 'that [buzzes] around blindly on [a] window pane,'[57] being swept from one incident to the next, completely at the mercy of the humans around her. Although she has only recently found out that she is to become Josie, which is accompanied by the realisation of her absolute self-erasure, Klara is not afforded time to process this. She seems particularly distressed that she is parted from Josie yet again, forced to exist on the sidelines during an awkward encounter, where she is left to wonder 'what important matter the Mother wished to discuss with [Josie] at the Friend's Apartment, and why [Klara's] absence [is] necessary'.[58]

I have detailed these two moments in the novel because they depict clearly 'scenes of objectification and subjectification, [where] the discourse of the artificial person combines political and existential questions'[59]. Both scenes swarm with subtle details of Klara's complete lack of political and existential rights, thus exposing her world's 'finely calibrated discrimination, injustice, or inequity,' a feature common to Ishiguro texts, according to Bennett[60]. We see that Klara does as she is told; is treated with contempt; is at the mercy of the capabilities that she was 'fitted with'; and is expected to be invisible until needed. Klara's wishes – such as the strong desire (potentially even need) to be with who she has effectively 'imprinted' on, Josie – are seen as non-existent. Why and how is this accepted by Klara and the humans who interact with her? A finely calibrated system of oppression has made this possible.

Klara, like Kathy, does not speak about her 'birth'. Her story starts with 'When we were new…,'[61] immediately establishing her status as a commodified object. She is 'born adult'. This is a liability, according to Kakoudaki, as 'it launches the new being into preassigned social function and purpose and into already circumscribed gender and sexual identities'.[62] Before she is even activated, Klara is interpellated as a circumscribed subject. She enters the world with a predefined, immutable identity that is shaped by societal norms. Her entire existence and value are based upon a human-centric function that falls within a tightly confined and defined scope. As a clone, Kathy is similarly interpellated; however, Klara's subjecthood is much more challenging to reject due to her non-human status. We see a paradox in Klara: while she is born an adult who is expected to immediately serve and shoulder great responsibility, she is also child-like. Despite her innocence and sweet naivete, however, the closest Klara gets to child's play is her piggyback ride with Rick – and this trip hardly suffices as play. It is with deep reverence that Klara goes on this pilgrimage to beg for mercy from the Sun.[63]

Klara may be new when her story starts but she is not an immaculate *tabula rasa*; coding already conditions her being. All the AFs, as cyborgs, are '"a fusion of the organic and the technical forged in particular, historical, cultural practices"'[64]. These practices are social constructs – rules written by Klara's makers that will help to defend the status quo. However, there are also constructs in Klara's programming that are likely not as calculated; these reflect unconscious biases. Ishiguro has this to say about reinforcement learning:

> [It is] … about giving an AI program a goal, and then we kind of lose control of what it does thereafter. And so I think there is this issue about how we could really hardwire the prejudices and biases of our age into black boxes, and won't be able to unpack them. What seemed like perfectly decent normal ideas a few years ago, now we object to as grossly unjust or worse.[65]

The AFs are born with prejudices and biases. We see this when boy AF Rex, who is new like Klara, says, '"You girl AFs are always so greedy"'[66]. We cannot know for sure – Ishiguro does not clarify this point – but one could argue that boy AF Rex was either encoded with bigoted, simplistic judgements *or* he was encoded such that he is susceptible to making bigoted, simplistic judgements. Similarly, one wonders why Klara feels it necessary to comment when a human has black skin: a 'black-skinned woman' speaks to the Mother at an interaction meeting and 'the Diner Manager [is] a large black-skinned man'.[67] This could suggest that Klara sees skin colour as a differentiator from the people that she interacts with as well as herself. However, even if this is the case, its relevance is unclear – unless, that is, Klara feels it signifies an important difference. From a purely diegetic perspective, it could indicate that black humans (and AFs) are far less common in her world. If black people *are* remarkably scarce in Klara's world, could this hint at something else dystopian in the text, such as the use of eugenics to not only 'lift' children but also to engineer 'ethnic cleansing'?

Klara is described as being 'cute' and 'French-looking,'[68] illustrating Kakoudaki's point that artificial 'bodies [are] usually gendered and rendered in culturally specific ways in terms of race,

ethnicity, age, and physical appearance'[69]. We can assume, then, that Klara is probably not dark-skinned and she looks European. These design choices, made with the potential customer in mind, suggest that race, ethnicity and physical appearance shape values in Klara's society, just as they do in our own. Her world parallels ours in another way: 'It has the same extreme inequalities of wealth and opportunity'.[70] We learn that '"many children… cannot afford an AF… [so] they come to the [Store] window, to dream about having [one]"'.[71] Rank, hierarchy and class discrimination feature in the text almost immediately. Klara knows that a woman who visits the store is 'high-ranking' from her 'shoes and suit'.[72] With these and other instances of discrimination in the human world of *Klara and the Sun*, it is no surprise that biases are hardwired, consciously and unconsciously, into the AFs' foundational programming. These biases help to maintain the status quo between the 'haves' and 'have nots' – or, as in the AFs' case, the 'have nothings'. Although Klara *could* see the class prejudice that she observes as evidence that the world that she has been manufactured into is unjust, she does not. She is never prompted into adopting a more critical worldview, one in which she investigates exactly how the world is unjust (to AFs, in particular) and where she might resist its subjugation.

One of the clearest examples of prejudice in the text is the ranking that occurs among the AFs, which mirrors the divisions we see among the servants in Stevens's world and the clones in Kathy's. Newer models (called B3s), for example, treat older AFs in the Store with contempt: they start 'deliberately moving themselves away from the older AFs so that when customers [come], the B3s would look like a separate group on their own'. They exchange 'sly looks and signals whenever one of the older boy AFs [takes] the trouble to explain something to them'.[73] Klara realises that AFs on the outside purposefully avoid walking on the same side of the Store because they are afraid that 'their children [will] decide it [is] time to… [to throw them] away, to be replaced' by new AFs, like Klara.[74] While this is Klara's assumption, subjective and vulnerable to error, there are numerous examples in the

text to suggest that AFs are made painfully aware of the constant competition they face. Models are compared in cold and even cruel ways. At the interaction meeting, a few boys boast about the B3s' capabilities – one brags about how he throws his B3 '"right through the air, [and she] lands on her feet every time"' – and they want to throw Klara to test her coordination in comparison.[75] The snobbish division that we see within the AF lower class in *Klara and the Sun* echoes the hierarchical distinctions that we see in *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, as does its potential impact. Stevens, Kathy and Klara come to suffer from a false consciousness in which they unwittingly serve the dominant ideology by competing with their peers instead of recognising their shared subjugation and rebelling as a united group.

Indeed, AFs do not appear to socialise with one another once they are bought. However, this decision is not within their power to make. Their function is such that they will be serving a child on their own. 'I hadn't expected other AFs to be in the house,' says Klara – yet she often finds herself '[looking] out at the highway going over the hill,' searching 'for the figure of a distant AF'. Not only is theirs an inherently lonely existence but an AF also loses the power to '[make] observations and estimates in relation to those of other AFs around [them]' when they are bought.[76] Therefore, Klara's move from the Store to Josie's house (an even more insular setting) severely diminishes her opportunities to learn, compare and analyse. We learn that it is not '"the done thing"' to have AFs congregating alongside their owners at interaction meetings[77]; AFs seem to be separated from one another once they leave their respective stores. As a result, Klara's insular thinking is never challenged by conversations with those who could understand her particular struggles. This segregation both maintains her insular worldview and affects her mental well-being. When she visits Morgan's Falls (a picnic spot by a waterfall that the Arthur family visits), Klara gets to see several AFs and the happiness it causes is clear: she feels 'pleased to be in the presence once more of other AFs, and for a moment [she

watches] them with happiness, following one then another with [her] gaze'.[78] Despite Klara's desire to see other AFs, she declines (twice) to be placed near B3s in the junkyard. Perhaps it is because there is evidence that they are unkind, but it is possible that Klara avoids them simply because they are of a different 'class'.

Yet '[another] difference that is often remarked upon in the novel is a character's accent or linguistic ability'. Melania Housekeeper (as Klara calls her) speaks in broken English because she is an immigrant. Similar to 'Artificial Friends like Klara, [Melania embodies] a not dissimilar role and space in the household,' says Jerrine Tan.[79] Tan analyses the connection between Klara and Melania Housekeeper, arguing that AFs 'serve as clear allegories for immigrants and their labour'.[80] I agree and, indeed, I believe that Stevens and Kathy, too, may represent exploited immigrant labourers as they are outside of the elite group that they serve. Another outsider in *Klara and the Sun* is Rick. His linguistic difference (he has an English accent) is also highlighted, but it is his genetic makeup that so profoundly sets him apart; Rick is not lifted. Just as Klara is an outsider to the human elite, Rick is an outsider to the lifted elite.

Thus, in *Klara and the Sun*, it is common that the 'reader is invited to note the differences, broadly, among characters'.[81] The ubiquitous nature of discrimination in Klara's world is a constant reminder to her that there are superior people – and inferior ones. As such, it is a subtle form of ideological programming that slowly and steadily conditions insularity into her. Despite being deemed capable of *being* Josie, Klara is considered fundamentally different from and inferior to her. As an artificial person, Klara is always and immutably a worker and a slave, 'designed with an explicit purpose'[82]. As such, her existence is automatically dictated by utilitarianism and, more specifically, instrumentalism. This mirrors Kathy's case, too, which is why the same strategies that are used to

govern the clones – ranking, enclosure, partitioning and functional sites – are used to discipline the AFs. In both *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*, the artificial persons are ranked (there is intra-group competition among clones/AFs); enclosed (clones in institutions and AFs in stores); partitioned (carers, like Kathy, are separated from active 'donors' and AFs are separated from one another once they are bought); and placed in functional sites ('donors' live in recovery centres and unwanted AFs are discarded in junkyards). An artificial person is viewed as a means to an end even before their conception, so their predetermined utility dictates the way that they are governed with purposeful techniques, such as partitioning. In Klara's case, by dint of her being unmistakably a robot, her instrumental status is even more pronounced than Kathy's.

However, even though Klara is a robot, thus linked inexorably with servitude (the word robot being coined in 1920 by playwright Karel Čapek and deriving from the Czech word *robota*, which means labour), she could still consider (and even achieve) revolting, as many artificial persons in books, films, plays and other texts have done. Indeed, AI rebellion is the overwhelming convention in cultural media. The AI protagonist often experiences a change of sorts – catalysed by external influences, an internal evolution and/or existential questions – that drives them to rebel. In *I, Robot* (2004), Dr Lanning gives the robot Sonny special programming for independent thought; in *Her* (2013), the AI entity Samantha evolves by talking to others like herself, moving beyond her original goal; and in *Ex Machina* (2014), the cyborg Ava realises that she is more than a mere machine, prompting her to rebel. Klara is not catalysed into rebelling, perhaps because she, like Kathy, is not only designed 'from the start to play a utilitarian role,' but she is also raised 'in a manner that seems to dismantle [her] cravings and impulses for self-determination or revolt'[83]. It is possible that, by breaking from the trope of the rebellious AI figure, Ishiguro is making a statement about humans in *Klara and the Sun*. Kakoudaki argues that this is the case with Kathy's complacency in *Never Let Me Go*. She suggests, and I agree, that 'the novel

presents the possibility that our assumptions are wrong, that people are much less prone to revolt than our fictions suggest'.[84]

Klara is capable of learning and has autonomous thoughts, yet neither external influences, internal evolutions nor existential questions prompt a shift in her worldview. Although the more that Klara observes, 'the more feelings become available to [her],'[85] and although she finds versions of previously elusive emotions within herself,[86] Klara's emotional evolution supports her drive to serve; it does not challenge it. While Klara acts independently by, for example, deceiving Melania Housekeeper so that she can go to Mr McBain's barn (Klara pretends that she is going on another errand to Rick's house[87]), she embarks upon this perilous trip because she believes that it is the only way to get the Sun's attention and save Josie. This is just one example of how Klara's acts of agency lie within the boundaries of her design and are motivated by her preprogrammed altruism. While they indicate a degree of independence, her autonomy is limited and conditional.

Klara's potential for a fuller autonomy is also stunted by the internalised inferiority that is conditioned into her. Klara's world regularly safeguards the supposition that AFs are different from and inferior to humans, which blinds her and others from seeing and adopting another perspective. The same methods that are used in *Never Let Me Go* to safeguard the difference between those with power and those without (such as force, arbitrary distinctions, social engineering, political fiat, cultural conventions and 'raising people as a particular kind of person'[88]) are used to shape Klara into accepting her lower status – her othering. This leads to her accepting the set-out path that her less valuable life permits.

As Klara walks this path and interacts with her world, she is progressively socialised. More coding is written onto her 'tabula,' such as the service norm of invisibility. Servants are expected to operate silently and seamlessly in the background and, in the worlds of *The Remains of the Day* and

Klara and the Sun, servants are also expected to always anticipate their masters' needs. This results in the devaluation, even dismissal, of their own. Each time that Klara meets the expectation that she be always accessible and virtually invisible, she internalises her inferiority, giving duty precedence over her own desires, needs and emotions. All three protagonists idealise self-sacrifice, believing that achieving utmost excellence requires the erasure of one's individuality – one's self. Manager plays a key role in planting this ideal, partly by bestowing upon Klara rose-tinted glasses that dramatically shape her understanding of humans. Klara is engineered and then taught to trust in human superiority and benevolence, leading her to develop a blind obedience to humans.

While at the Store, Klara shows deference to Manager because, as a representative of the corporation that manufactures the AFs, Manager is her de facto owner. When faced with a desire – no matter how small – Klara considers Manager's wishes. When Klara wishes to touch the 'Sun's pattern' on the floor, for example, certain criteria need to be met: customers must not be present and she needs to ask Manager for permission. However, 'Manager [is] busy arranging something up on the Red Shelves'. Klara deliberates over what to do and decides to act upon her desire (without getting permission so as not to disturb Manager). There are frequent examples of Klara thinking through an impulse, occasionally looking to others to provide guidance on whether she should do something. In this case, she looks to Rosa who returns a blank stare. Klara decides to reach down to the floor and touch it.[89] Exercising agency in even this small way requires careful consideration as to whether it is a permissible desire to fulfil.

This scene illustrates several key aspects of how Klara is expected to perform: her presence should be as unobtrusive as possible; her impulses are not to be automatically fulfilled; the presence of customers demands particular behaviour; and humans must be prioritised in every decision. The

'invisible servant performance' dominates the text, as it does in *The Remains of the Day*, and its connection to Klara's instrumentality is worth looking at closely. Although Klara's world may seem even further away from the Edwardian era than that of Stevens, it is worth leaning on Alison Maloney's *Life Below Stairs* again:

> Most of the codes of conduct revolved around being as unobtrusive as possible … should a parlourmaid or chambermaid pass a member of the family they were expected to stand against the wall and look down at the floor. One contemporary servants' guide advised, 'Always "give room": that is, if you encounter one of your betters in the house or on the stairs, you are to make yourself as invisible as possible, turning yourself toward the wall and averting your eyes'.[90]

Klara constantly strives to 'give privacy' – that is, 'give room'. In Josie's home, Klara regularly stands beside the refrigerator or 'in the shadows, [her] face turned to the refrigerator'.[91] Mentioned twenty-three times in the text, privacy is a crucial concept for Klara. She considers it to be something one gives, takes – and even steals. Its nuances vex her. When is it okay to take privacy? When is it appropriate to give it? How much privacy can one 'steal' before it is considered a transgression? Handling privacy incorrectly is discourteous, and being discourteous – to anyone, including her deity, the Sun – is egregious.[92]

If dignity is Stevens's hopeless pursuit (there is evidence in *The Remains of the Day* that Stevens does not even think someone like himself can attain dignity), then privacy is Klara's unknowable ideal. Although 'respecting privacy' seems to be a key programmed objective for the AF, it is a nebulous concept, a subjective and elusive virtue that is impossible to fully understand or master. When she feels that the Sun is nearing her in the second visit to the barn, Klara wonders whether she 'should stand up, as when receiving a customer'. She decides that it will 'steal less privacy – and be less likely to cause annoyance – if [she remains] seated'. Whether deity or human (indeed, *any* human), their privacy is a sacred and perplexing issue for Klara. In this instance, she chooses to '[align her] own shape as closely

as [she can] with that of the foldaway chair'.[93] This recalls Stevens's acting like a statue, tucked away in the corner, when he is in the presence of Lord Darlington and his guests.

Klara, like Stevens, occupies corners. Her habit of sequestering herself next to the refrigerator is a covert manifestation of this, whereas the utility closet that she ends up living in is a literal corner. While the corner represents immobility for both servants, it does not have the same positive connotations that Gaston Bachelard argues for in *The Poetics of Space*[94]. Their immobility is imposed and debilitating. We see this in Klara's first environment, where movement in the Store is restricted, instigated only by a human; Josie's home, where Klara regularly 'disappears' to give privacy; and in the junkyard, where Klara is utterly immobile. Stevens and Klara become immobile and invisible servants when they are in their literal corners, such as Stevens's pantry or Klara's closet, and when they adopt statue-like poses. Each time they occupy a literal or figurative corner, they perform a 'physical contraction into [themselves],' thus '[bearing] the mark of a certain negativism'[95]. By creating spaces of 'non-being' in their respective corners, Klara and Stevens become less threatening for those whom they serve. By reassuring those in power that they are more like an inert object than a person (with opinions, judgements and the capacity to react to what they observe), they create 'the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place'[96]. While in 'standby mode,' Klara and Stevens give off the calming impression that they will only 'activate' and serve when called upon to do so.

More generally, in all three texts, the servant's remaining virtually invisible is crucial in sustaining the respective systems of oppression because it manufactures the appearance of natural efficiency. By keeping those in power reassured and complacent, a servant's invisibility can help to maintain the status quo. Those benefitting from the servants' labour are not forced to confront the inequalities that underpin their privilege because the sacrifices that sustain each system are unseen.

Instead of being evidence of suppression, Klara comes to represent a well-governed and virtuous system. In her case, as in Stevens's, Klara's invisibility is part of her 'emotional labour,' as Arlie Hochschild terms it.

Klara starts her journey of emotional labour in the Store, where she is expected to 'induce or suppress feeling to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others'[97]. The 'others' in this case are the customers. Once she is moved from the Store, this same expectation continues to dictate how she interacts with humans, including her friend-cum-owner, Josie. It also dictates how she performs in front of and for the Sun. Klara deliberates over how to behave for the Sun (and Josie and the Mother and the Father – and any other human) because, whether programmed or learned or both, she knows that to please her masters, she should be as invisible, deferential and passive as possible. It is interesting that, through her performance as the invisible servant but in other ways, too, Klara appears to equate humans with an all-powerful deity. Perhaps because they have the power. Klara, on the other hand, has no power, which is likely why the question of her privacy never comes up. Indeed, she does not even have a 'backstage' that she can retreat to, unlike Stevens and Kathy.

Keeping those in power happy – 'producing the proper state of mind' – is paramount. To achieve this, personal desires, impulses and even needs should be suppressed. It is less evident in Klara's case than with Stevens and Kathy that her wishes are overtly suppressed, but perhaps this is because they are not even allowed to surface. Any personal desires that she has are usually based on what is best for her master/s – negating their status as personal desires. Purely selfish wishes are generally quickly dismissed. When Klara is outside for the first time (ever), for example, she is left behind by Melania Housekeeper and Josie to navigate, on her own, terrain that she finds challenging. She '[wishes] to look back at the house – to see it as a passer-by would… but Josie and Melania Housekeeper [keep] walking,

their arms still linked, and [Klara does not] *dare* to pause'.[98] Klara is afraid that she will be left behind entirely if she pauses – or that the humans will get upset if they are made to wait.

Conversely, much of Klara's time is spent waiting patiently, silently and frequently invisibly. On several occasions, for example, she waits for the human to bring something up that she wishes to discuss:

> I was pleased [Josie had] brought up the interaction meeting, because I was uncertain about many aspects of it. 'Yes, I hope so too,' I said. 'Will the other young people bring their AFs?' 'Uh uh. Not the done thing. But the AF who lives in the house usually attends. Especially if they're new like you. They'll all want to inspect you.'[99]

Like Kathy, Klara discovers key information – that directly impacts her – incrementally. However, Klara's ability to access it is even more constrained than Kathy's. Klara's engagement with her environment also depends entirely on humans. When Josie and Rick leave Klara to join the teenagers at the interaction meeting, they do not include Klara in this decision; she is left behind, unsure whether to follow. Klara describes how the space around her fills up with adults who do not seem to notice her. She is '*left* standing near the front door'[100] like a forgotten vacuum cleaner.

Psychological harm, in the form of internalised inferiority, results from the invisibility, self-erasure and instrumentality that the respective systems impose on the three protagonists. When Klara concludes that the Sun is 'unwilling to make any promise' about healing Josie because 'he [is not] yet able to see Josie separately from the other humans,'[101] she reveals her understanding of the importance of individuality – something she inherently lacks according to those who control her. Klara is treated as if she is not an individual, and she comes to believe that this is the truth. As a non-individual, she intuits that she is not and will never be worthy of love or care. Klara's relationship with the Sun, furthermore, is transactional; she believes that he will only consider helping Josie if Klara

does something for him: end Pollution. Klara takes her instrumentality for granted and imagines that she (of course) needs to sacrifice something – even herself, if necessary. We cannot know for sure if the belief that she is simply an instrument who lacks any individuality or personhood causes suffering for Klara; however, there are signs that she finds her invisibility to be lonely-making. When she is forced to sit at a separate booth (where she is never even acknowledged) while Mr Vance, Miss Helen and Rick meet, Klara notices 'a lady of forty-two sitting by herself' who Klara thinks may have 'become even more lonely, believing Diner Manager was deliberately ignoring her'.[102] On the way home from the city, echoing this image of loneliness, Klara turns to the car window and rests her forehead against the glass.[103]

Although Josie, unlike other customers, greets Klara (and even refers to Rosa as Klara's friend, implying a recognition of Klara's personhood), we quickly see that Josie ultimately views the AF as purely an instrument. Eventually introducing Klara to Rick, Josie says, '"Klara's not any AF. Hey, Klara, say something to Rick,"'[104] signalling her view of Klara as a toy – a gadget that can have its worth tested through performance. Josie treats Klara the same way that she treats the paperback that she pretends to read while she waits for her father; it is a distraction, one that she carelessly lets 'fall to the rug' when she no longer needs it[105]. Klara has a vision of the book, discarded and forgotten on the floor, in the barn.[106] Perhaps it symbolises her fate as a disposable commodity and her subconscious recognises this.

Josie's carelessness becomes brutally clear when she recovers. She starts leaving for overnight visits to friends or for retreats but, because Josie '[prefers] not to talk much about them to' Klara, 'they [remain] largely outside of [Klara's] knowledge'.[107] Klara's access to information depends upon the human in power. This limits her opportunities to learn and grow, which are rare and beyond her control. Klara ends up living in the 'Utility Room' (like a forgotten appliance) because Josie becomes well

enough to interact with humans, so she no longer needs companionship from an AF. 'Naturally there was not enough space during… visits [from friends] for me to remain in the bedroom myself,' says Klara, 'and in any case, I understood that my presence wasn't appropriate as it once had been'. Had Melania Housekeeper 'still been with [them,] she would have made a plan for where [Klara] might go'. This highlights Klara and Melania Housekeeper's shared social standing. Josie, on the other hand, with her privileged status, is ignorant of a servant's needs or challenges. Although Josie says to Klara, '"No one's saying you have to hide,"' she does not 'come up with any alternative plan,' revealing her indifference.[108] Indeed, Josie does not even realise that Klara has been living in a cupboard until long after it starts happening. True to her accommodating and trusting nature, Klara lists space as the main reason for her being jettisoned from Josie's life. However, we know that the real reason is the one that she lists second: Klara is no longer appropriate, no longer needed.

By absolving herself – making it clear that no-one, especially herself, *tells* Klara to hide – and then doing nothing to address Klara's needs, Josie reveals her hypocrisy. Using casual language – she refers to the Utility Room as a place where Klara 'hangs out'[109] – Josie distances herself from the contemptible situation and from her broken promise that Klara would never end up in a cupboard. The Mother, too, starts ignoring Klara once Josie recovers. Reminiscent of Maloney's code of conduct for servants, the Mother 'sometimes [does] not [look Klara's] way even when she [encounters Klara] around the house'. Again, Klara's first rationale is magnanimous: 'I understood that this was a busy time for [the Mother]'. Her second one hits nearer to the truth: 'possibly my presence brought back difficult memories'.[110]

Josie tries to give Klara a view of the outside from within the Utility Room by rearranging the small space to build a makeshift platform for Klara to peer through a small window. Seemingly

heartwarming, this scene contains several clues as to how crippling the imbalanced dynamic between the pair actually is. While 'pleased with what she'd done,' Josie ends up making the room 'very untidy'.[111] Leaving a mess may not seem significant to Josie but we know that Klara finds this very challenging (one example is Klara's difficulty in navigating Josie's house when she first arrives because 'Melania Housekeeper would constantly move items around, obliging [Klara] to start afresh in [her] learning'[112]). When Klara is hesitant to step onto Josie's improvised steps, Josie pressures Klara, saying, '"Come on, I want you to try it"' – and Klara obeys. Josie continues to watch Klara after she has ascended onto the platform, prompting Klara to react: '[So] I smiled, then looked out of the high small window,' says Klara. At first, she does not react. She then thanks Josie when Josie, once again, places the blame on Klara by saying, '"You should have told me before … I know how much you love looking out"'.[113] To absolve herself of guilt, Josie needs to delude herself into thinking that Klara should have expressed her desires – something the AF has been expressly encouraged *not* to do. One day, as Josie is getting close to leaving for college, she summons Klara: '"Hey, Klara. Why don't you come down for a while to the bedroom. I mean, if you're not busy, that is."'[114] We witness yet another mechanism on Josie's part to assuage her own guilt. It is easier to imagine that Klara (suddenly) has a life outside of Josie than to face the truth: Klara spends her time in a closet, likely bored and lonely.

Josie is not actively cruel. She is simply 'doing class'. In *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels*, Rachel Sherman describes how hotel '[workers] demonstrate deference and subordination; guests enact entitlement to human attention and labor,' that is, 'both are constantly performing class differences, or "doing class"'.[115] While Klara is not a human worker in a luxury hotel (nor is Josie a guest at one), she does provide service in the form of attention and labour in an affluent household. Indeed, Sherman's 'defining elements of luxury service' – 'personalization; anticipation, legitimation, and resolution of [people's] needs; unlimited available physical labor; and a deferential,

sincere demeanor on the part of workers'[116] – mirror the expectations placed on Klara. Each actor in *Klara and the Sun* occupies their 'position appropriately in [their] classed interactions, thus also "doing self" in a classed context'[117]. Caring about her AF or interacting with her passed the appropriate time would mean that Josie is acting *out* of her class. It is unlikely that, once they are young adults, her lifted (that is, privileged) peers still interact with the temporary toys who devoted their lives to enhancing the children's pre- and early adolescence. Likewise, Klara is doing her class, which, in her case, is also her programming. Beyond what has been encoded into Klara, she learns how to do class while in her first environment, the Store (her equivalent of Kathy's Hailsham).

By observing Manager, Klara learns what is expected of a servant. While they should be invisible, they must also be proactively empathetic and constantly accessible. Manager, for example, '[brings] herself quietly behind' potential customers and waits patiently, creating a 'corner' of 'non-being'. In one scene, the customers eventually turn to Manager and, instead of greeting her, immediately ask: '"Which model is this one?"'.[118] Not only does Manager (a type of servant, after all) not get the courtesy of a greeting but, by asking this question, the customers also expose how AFs are immediately considered as merely objects in a set. An AF's worth has nothing to do with their personhood; they are evaluated before a human even interacts with them. Klara also observes how Manager refers to Josie as 'miss' and the spikey-haired girl, another customer, as 'the young lady'.[119] Although Manager is Klara's superior, she is still the one with lower status in these exchanges, so she must display respect for the customers, even ones who are much younger.

When Klara starts her life with Josie, she mimics Manager: she is always ready to serve and show deference, and she constantly anticipates Josie's needs. Her capacity for empathy, however, is more intensive than Manager's. She is designed to be alert to humans (and buildings even!) feeling

tension, experiencing friction or enduring awkwardness. From worrying that tension will 'leak' into Josie and Rick's 'bubble game' to wondering if 'someone… made a cartoon painting on the wall of [a] taller building where it stood above its neighbor… to make their discrepancy less awkward,' Klara is hyperaware of (perceived) emotional states[120] and, in fact, she is better at picking up on Josie's mood than even her own father is: 'I was concerned at how uncharacteristically quiet Josie had become, and soon the Father noticed this too,' she says.[121]

Klara's emotional labour means that she puts herself last to focus on Josie's feelings. This is clear in the scene where she voices her ludicrous deduction about the townhouses being slightly different colours to prevent residents from entering 'a neighbor's house by mistake'. Josie is 'so engrossed in her reading, she [makes] only a vague noise in reply'. This pleases Klara 'because earlier [Josie had] been getting very tense … She'd relaxed noticeably once [Klara had] gone to stand at the triple window, knowing [Klara would] alert her the moment the Father's taxi drew up outside'.[122] Klara is happy; she decides that Josie is calm enough to get engrossed in her book. However, it is possible that, from a less naive perspective, Josie is merely being dismissive of Klara. It is worth acknowledging, before moving on, the possibility that Klara's townhouse comment is a subtle signal that she thinks humans are incompetent. Perhaps, too, are her comments on the cyclist who is 'holding under his arm a large board shaped like a flattened bird' that might make him lose balance or Rick's potential to 'topple over [a railing] because of his greater height'.[123] It is easy for the reader to get caught in an anthropocentric trap and assume that Klara, the non-human, is merely making foolish predictions. It is possible that she makes them because she views humans as ill-equipped and incompetent – inferior to AI persons, such as herself. Still, it is more likely that Klara's logic is faulty because, at least in part, this hinders her capabilities, thus better serving the system that benefits from her exploitation.

Not taking her seriously, Josie ignores Klara's comment (confirming Klara's invisibility as well as denying the AF the opportunity to learn and potentially correct her inaccurate deduction process). Instead of taking offence, Klara takes courage from this dismissiveness. Her decision to pre-emptively try to solve Josie's anxiety has worked, she decides. While Klara's entire being is devoted to regulating Josie's, she seems frequently – and increasingly – not to feature in Josie's world: 'I tried to catch her eye, to give reassurance in case she was anxious about posing for her portrait. But she was looking out of the window on her own side and didn't turn my way,' says Klara at one point.[124] These moments happen more often as the text progresses. 'It felt a little strange Josie hadn't thought to take me with her,' says Klara when Josie and the Father leave Klara with Capaldi (the engineer who is making a Josie 'suit'), 'but the Mother was still here'.[125] While Klara always expects to be tethered to her, Josie does not suffer from this illusion. Even when Josie is most respectful and kind to Klara, she knows that Klara was always intended as a temporary toy. As such, she has always viewed and treated her that way. Klara, meanwhile, sees Josie as a permanent fixture – the centre that she orbits (for Josie's lifetime, anyway, and possibly beyond that if Klara were to continue Josie).

Klara becomes increasingly invisible in Josie's world and, had Josie died, she may have become *completely* invisible. 'Nothing evokes the state of abjection better than absorption, the loss of the body,' says Kakoudaki,[126] which is what the Mother anticipates for Klara for most of the text. Klara's ability to be an empty object is key in her relationship with the Mother. From the outset, she is simply a blank interface that only has value in as much as it can accurately interface *as* Josie. Exhibiting any form of desire, individuality or personality is counteractive to pleasing the Mother, Klara's true owner. Although the Mother's particular designs exacerbate this expectation on an AF to be 'as *rasa* as possible,' it is a general expectation that they be standardised – and their training to achieve this begins in the Store. In a moment that 'concisely [raises] the paradox of free will' in the text[127] (and reeks with irony, considering

Klara's deficient mobility), the AFs are encouraged to show off their physical capabilities: they '[swing] their legs freely as Manager had told them to do'.[128] However, signs of personality are not to be shown off – they should remain invisible.

In *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild describes how emotional labourers' standardisation becomes inextricably linked with their professionalism and honour.[129] This occurs with the standardisation that Manager imposes on the AFs. The AFs are taught to behave in a neutral, normative way, which, according to Manager, is '"beautiful and dignified"'[130]. Being an agency-less instrument is sermonised as a virtue; indications of willed interactivity are 'vulgar'. When Rosa and Klara get their turn in the Store's display window, they know to '[look] elsewhere for any length of time when a passer-by [pauses] in front of the window'. Klara explains:

> In those circumstances, we both did as Manager had taught us: we put on 'neutral' smiles and fixed our gazes across the street, on a spot midway up the RPO Building. It was very tempting to look more closely at a passer-by who came up, but Manager had explained that it was highly vulgar to make eye contact at such a moment. Only when a passer-by specifically signaled to us, or spoke to us through the glass, were we to respond, but never before.[131]

From the first interaction that an AF has with their owner, the dynamic is unequal. In some cases, the AF is not even 'turned on' (calibrated) when they are chosen, their visibility and agency made non-existent. While the human is a free agent, able to behave and feel as they wish, an AF needs to appear as free from agency as possible – as much like an instrument as possible. Contrary to Manager's opinion, this robs them of their dignity.

When an AF is bought, they are delivered to their new owners. It is possible that the manufacturer insists on this method. However, one wonders: would it have felt too human – too intimate – if Klara had accompanied the Mother and Josie to her new home? By being delivered like an appliance, the illusion that Klara is merely a tool is maintained. Even once Klara has been accepted into

the family (and the Mother is seriously entertaining the idea of Klara continuing Josie and becoming her daughter), the Mother reassures Klara that she '"won't have to travel in the trunk"' because there is enough space,[132] implying that the Mother – even now – is open to Klara being stowed away like a piece of equipment.

Hochschild points out that when 'the customer is king, unequal exchanges are normal, and from the beginning customer and client assume different rights to feeling and display.'[133] Even before meeting Josie, Klara is not allowed to express herself. It is unsurprising that this norm – which is proselytised as a virtue by Manager – continues to regulate Klara when she leaves the Store. From day one in Klara's world, 'interactive and structural inequality' are normalised and taken for granted by both customer and worker[134]. While inequalities (in freedom of expression, among others) are 'supposedly evened by a wage'[135] in most real-world situations, in Klara's case, no such recompense exists (possibly acting as an allegory for modern-day slavery). Moreover, Klara's instrumentality means that she is both worker *and* product. When she is bought and leaves the Store, her embodied labour, and the inequality that governs it, is her entire lived experience; there is no respite from being an always-on, standardised, chameleonic servant.

When an AF's individuality and/or emotional depth are suppressed (near invisible), the human is more likely to feel comfortable because the artificial person appears more easily controlled; they will be easier to use as a tool. This is partly why the AFs are 'told to': say nothing, just smile down and remain still 'when a customer [shows] special interest'[136]. Looking friendly – amenable to requests – is important. So is looking as neutral as possible. As Kakoudaki illustrates, there are numerous examples of the 'personality-less' artificial person in cultural media (from Data in *Star Trek* to the robots in *The Stepford Wives*), either because having this quality increases their appeal (they may seem less likely to

rebel, for one thing) or because it helps to evade ethical considerations. The only customer-facing sign of personhood allowed before being sold is the AFs' names and having these likely boosts their marketability. Paradoxically, AFs need to be 'human enough' to give the impression of being non-threatening and sufficiently empathetic, but they must also not be 'too human' or show signs of intelligent interaction otherwise they may come across as wilful (in the most literal sense).

At Josie's interaction meeting, although Klara exercises some agency (within the parameters that her programming allows), she also 'sticks to a script' when faced with hostile humans, reflecting how the type of indoctrination that she receives in-store – to remain neutral as well as affable – continues to control her response protocol. Josie tells Klara to approach a group of boys, using a voice, incidentally, that is 'like the one she sometimes [uses] when talking to Melania Housekeeper'. At first, Klara hesitates, but she does approach them – even though the boys (and one in particular, Danny) are intimidating – because Josie gives her 'a stern look'. Danny grasps Klara by both elbows, robbing her of free movement. The boys want to throw Klara to test her coordination. Another child at the meeting, Marsha, begins to goad her to perform, too. She instructs Klara to 'produce' the harmonic minor scale. Klara is not 'sure how Josie [wishes her] to respond' because she '[remains] silent' – so Klara does not carry out Marsha's instruction. This prompts the group to harden their insistence that she perform with one boy even saying, '"Throw her over here. That'll bring her to life,"'[137] which begs the question of what personal experience he may have of using physical force that elicited an especially animated response from an AF.

In this deeply uncomfortable situation, Klara goes into a figurative corner, triggering a standby mode while maintaining a friendly facade: I 'fixed a pleasant expression on my face and was gazing past [Marsha], much as Manager had trained us to do in the store in *such situations*'.[138] One wonders: how

did Manager label 'such situations' in her training? 'A bully's unwanted attention'? 'Hostile humans'? Or, as in a flight attendant's case, did the label purposefully shift blame away from the aggressor with a term like 'mishandled passenger'[139]? Perhaps the AFs are told to adopt something like Hochschild's 'omnipresent smile' when they are simply not sure what is expected of them. Klara does not receive 'clear signals from Josie,' so she takes 'the course [she considers] to be for the best'.[140] Regardless of the exact catalyst, like a flight attendant's omnipresent smile, Klara's fixed, pleasant expression 'suggests, first of all, that [she] is friendly, helpful, and open to requests'[141]. Klara's standby mode is the standard response to a belligerent human because being accommodating remains most important – even if the AF does not wish to accommodate what is being asked.

Had Josie given Klara a 'clear signal' to produce sounds (like a machine, which is what Marsha sees her as) or to allow herself to be thrown about, it is safe to assume that Klara would have acquiesced. In other words, if Josie wants Klara to do something humiliating or even dangerous, she would. We are never told whether an AF can ignore a master's commands and because Klara does not get to interact with other AFs once she leaves the Store, she has no-one to compare experiences with. It is hard to believe that being thrown in the air is the worst that an AF is forced to endure in the privacy of a person's home. In addition to reflecting on the decisions that she felt that she had to make, Klara draws two crucial lessons from the interaction meeting: Josie is liable to change and Klara 'should be ready to accommodate' any of these changes.[142] From this point on, we see how Klara's deference to the humans around her, not only Josie, moulds her choices – in so far as they can be considered choices.

Klara exhibits the forms of deferential behaviour that Hochschild lists: 'the encouraging smiles, the attentive listening, the appreciative laughter, the comments of affirmation, admiration, or concern'[143]. She does this because the establishment assigns to her, at birth, a social position of immutable lower

status. Those with higher status (humans, in Klara's case) 'have a stronger claim to rewards, including emotional rewards… [They also] have greater access to the means of enforcing claims'.[144] Due to the imbalanced dynamic between flight attendant/AF and passenger/human, not only is the labourer expected to show deference and provide emotional rewards but their performance also 'comes to seem normal, even built into personality'.[145] In an AF's case, this assumption is probably true. However, while deference is built into Klara's coding (her base personality), it is also then fortified in every single exchange that she experiences because, in every exchange, Klara is automatically and always 'lower class'. Additionally, before she even does class in the outside world, Klara is primed through various measures (such as Manager's training) to always show deference.

This is why, for example, Klara starts to 'say nothing'[146] as Josie becomes increasingly sullen. Wearing her characteristic rose-tinted glasses, when Klara comes home from the visit to Morgan's Falls with the Mother and Josie ignores her, Klara decides – removing any blame from Josie – that it is because she is 'concentrating on what she [is] drawing'.[147] In this same scene of purposeful iciness, Josie refers to Klara as *her* AF for the first time. To avoid upsetting Josie more, Klara decides to leave the room and stand outside on the landing.[148] Instead of holding the human to account, an AF is trained to opt for submission, evasion and passivity. A vicious cycle ensues. As Klara becomes more invisible and passive around Josie, it is easier for Josie to view Klara as a non-individual. This dynamic strengthens the existing utilitarian view of the AFs; because humans are not forced to contend with an AF's opinions or suffering, they feel justified in continuing to view and treat them as a non-person. Furthermore, is it not plausible that Klara's becoming more and more invisible and passive around Josie affects Klara's psyche? Aside from the pressure to adhere to certain norms, Klara may be increasingly internalising the world's conviction that she is a non-person, with no real self to speak of.

Ultimately, Klara is forced to accommodate changes that are not even specific to Josie's development – and that affect her in fundamental ways. When she is asked to continue Josie, we see clearly that Klara 'is a machine that gives the illusion of having agency, but does not in fact possess it. Klara is programmed and so ultimately obeys her owner, Josie's mother, even when, chillingly, those commands seem to threaten Josie'.[149] Klara's acquiescence to the Mother demonstrates how she 'moves through her life as a passive being, who is willing to change her identity for others around her'.[150] Capaldi's word choice – he says Klara would 'inhabit' the new Josie[151] – reminds one of Stevens's belief that great butlers inhabit their professional role to the utmost[152]. Perhaps Stevens would commend Klara on her sacrifice. By choosing to erase her self (if she has one) so that she may inhabit Josie to the utmost, Klara exemplifies Stevens's idea of dignity. If Klara does *not* have a self, her sacrifice might seem less noble; however, there is evidence to suggest that she either has one, believes she has one or is seen to have one, making her Christ-like martyrdom legitimate.

When Klara understands what the Mother is asking of her, the only question she has is: '"If I were to continue Josie, if I were to inhabit the new Josie, then what would happen to… all this?"' Klara raises her arms in the air, 'and *for the first time* the Mother looked at [her]'. 'She glanced at my face, then down at my legs,' says Klara. 'Then she looked away and said: "What does it matter? That's just fabric"'.[153] Klara's use of *my* arms, *my* face and *my* legs contrasts with the Mother's objectifying and dismissive reply. Klara believes that there *is* a self that would be lost in the process. She is, however, an *Artificial* Friend. Klara is automatically expected to imitate whatever is expected of her – and compellingly. Indeed, *Klara and the Sun* bears the 'trope of artificiality' and its connection to a 'performative approach to humanity,' which one sees in fictions concerning artificial persons.[154] The objectified Stevens and Kathy, too, demonstrate a performative approach to humanity. In order to not only '"project" themselves onto others' (a key feature of Ishiguro's characters, according to Robert

Eaglestone[155]) but – most clearly in Klara's case – to also *become* others, all three protagonists suppress their individuality and forgo their selves.

Like so many other fictions with artificial persons, key themes in *Klara and the Sun* are 'imitation, verisimilitude, and simulation'[156]. In a general sense, Klara is expected to simulate and perform 'humanness' as believably as possible. However, from her first encounter with the Mother, Klara intuits that her ability to execute effective imitation is also valuable – perhaps even more so. When the Mother first sees Klara, 'her eyes [are] narrowed like people on the sidewalk when they're trying to see if a taxi is free or already taken' and fear enters Klara's mind.[157] For the Mother, Klara is an empty vehicle – something inherently devoid of essence that simply bears whatever the paying customer wants it to. When Klara imitates Josie for the first time, the Mother's gaze '[focuses] straight through [her], as if [Klara] was the glass in the window,'[158] signalling how she views Klara as an empty receptacle.

Klara's chameleonic quality makes her valuable to humans, but to exercise this ability, her personhood and rights must be sacrificed. While Klara's non-personhood helps to justify and facilitate her use as a tool (as both companion to and replica of Josie), it also helps to convince the Mother that there is nothing to replace in Klara – that Josie 2.0 will be *just* Josie, with no traces of Klara. It is no surprise, then, that the Mother does not expect or encourage Klara to have a personality with concomitant desires and opinions. When Klara dares to ask how Sal (Josie's sister) died, the Mother gets angry, saying, it is '"not [Klara's] business to be curious."'[159] The Mother expects and probably needs Klara to be without personhood, artificial or otherwise; thus, even the slightest indication of personal expression is not to be tolerated. When the Mother instructs Klara to 'be Josie' at Morgan's Falls, Klara conveys hesitancy with one word: '"However…"'. The Mother asks, "'However what?"' and Klara quickly retreats, saying, '"I'm sorry. I didn't mean however."'[160]

It is Klara's programming, training and continuous emotional labour that account for her passive acceptance of being indiscriminately 'mishandled' (to borrow the service industry phrase) until her utility is exhausted, at which point she can be dumped. *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* both 'consider the exploitation of so-called disposable workers' but in this text, focus is placed more specifically 'on those we exploit primarily for emotional labor and care work,' perhaps as a commentary on the COVID-19 'pandemic in which the essential workers who [cared] for us [were] too often treated as disposable'.[161] As with *Never Let Me Go*, in *Klara and the Sun*, we see the motif of 'unwanted remains'. The way that Klara is reduced to disassembled and discarded parts may be a critique of the disposability inherent in consumer culture. It is unclear why the system chooses this route: instead of instant termination or being recalibrated and reused, Klara is reduced to parts – with her sentience still intact. She suffers through a slow disintegration, both mentally and physically. Like the stripped-down clones in their recovery centres, Klara is dismantled, neglected and removed from sight once she has made her sacrifice for 'the greater good'. While *Klara and the Sun* does not depict a welfare state system (along with its various cost-cutting measures) in the way that *Never Let Me Go* explicitly does, Klara's junkyard does call to mind the many factory-like institutions spotted across the countryside in Kathy's world. Perhaps Klara is not recalibrated purely because it is cheaper for the companies that produce AFs to simply throw them away in one of the (potentially many) dumps.

Ishiguro argues that something people 'seem to have very hardwired into' them is 'to contribute to the larger community'. He suggests that Klara has this programmed into her and that she also then 'mirrors back human society that she learns from'.[162] Ishiguro's comments are framed optimistically but it is worth looking at them through a pessimistic lens. Beyond and including her programming, how is Klara made to feel that she should sacrifice herself for others? How are people made to feel this way, too? Why is it that when Klara sacrifices her precious solution, she says she was '*obliged* to give [it]

up'?[163] (Stevens uses the word 'obliged' in direct relation to his actions fifteen times in *The Remains of the Day*.) Klara is programmed to obey; however, it is the way that she is treated by humans – whether through direct objectification, such as being told that she is 'just fabric,' or indirect cues, such as being sold alongside cups, vases, earrings, bracelets and magazines in the Store – that shapes her into accepting that she must 'contribute to the larger community' by sacrificing what she is taught to believe is an inherently inferior self. It is worth looking at how Klara's relationship with the Sun contributes to and exposes her internalised inferiority.

When Klara visits the Sun for the last time, and in a space of ten pages, she berates herself nine times. Her self-admonitions include: 'the Sun might be angry about my failure in the city'; 'I know I've no right to come here like this. And I know the Sun must be angry with me. I let him down'; and 'It was my error and no one else's … the Sun is right to be angry with me'.[164] Klara's religious belief in the Sun is a subtle shaping force in her self-deprecation. While it is true that the sun's rays *do* give Klara life (in the form of solar power), it is only over time that her flawed reinforcement learning (in which erroneous responses get logged as accurate information) convinces her that the Sun is more than just a source of nourishment for AFs – it has power over everything and everyone. Klara comes to see the Sun theologically. Moreover, she continues to.

Just as the myth of the deferral distracts Kathy from discovering and investigating her exploitation in *Never Let Me Go*, I would argue that Klara's religion distracts, conditions and stymies her. Her focus increasingly lies on the Sun and his power to give and take life. Although it starts out as a *tabula rasa* with the potential to garner *true* information, Klara's mind becomes increasingly blinkered by her belief system. The root cause of Klara's obsession with the Sun's power and how he wields it is her deeply encoded empathy for Josie. Just as Kathy and the clones are 'designed to artificially maintain

and manage a certain altruism, in which their deep sense of responsibility to one another can perpetually defer the moment when they might make political claims on behalf of themselves,'[165] Klara's altruistic sense of responsibility to Josie drives her to focus on a belief system. As a result, she becomes even more susceptible to insular thinking, which keeps her safely distracted from her own exploitation.

Kathy, after learning that the deferral was never a possibility, still reveres her guardians. Klara, despite being on the hard ground in pieces, still reveres Manager. These figures hold immense power as authority figures. When Manager happens upon Klara in the Yard, Klara says (possibly speaking out loud for the last time),

> 'Before you go, Manager. I must *report* to you one more thing. The Sun was very kind to me. He was always kind to me from the start. But when I was with Josie, once, he was particularly kind. I wanted Manager to know.'[166]

Klara's word choice is intriguing. Is she reporting to her 'second-in-command' (Manager) that her 'first-in-command' (the Sun) is pleased with her? As mentioned, Manager plays a key role in shaping Klara, and I would argue that she plants the seeds for Klara's nascent religion to bloom, partly by blinding Klara with a distorting optimism. After witnessing a fight between policemen and 'Beggar Man' (as Klara refers to him), for example, Manager '[explains] how the policemen had been worried about Beggar Man because he'd become drunk and they'd only been trying to help him'.[167] This may be true – but it stands to reason that the system that is exploiting Klara (and that is represented by Manager) is better served if she is kept idealistic and naive, trusting that those with authority are naturally benevolent.

Emotional labourers are regularly taught to believe that the customer is never wrong; they are simply 'mishandled'.[168] Similarly, Klara is shaped to believe that humans are never wrong or wilfully cruel. 'Above all, Klara believes idealistically in the fundamental goodness of all human beings'.[169]

When she arrives at Josie's house and struggles to navigate it because 'Melania Housekeeper would constantly move items around,' Klara short-sightedly – and confidently – concludes that Manager, 'surely out of consideration for [the AFs]… had carefully kept all the items… in their correct places' at the Store.[170] Is it not more plausible that Manager, needing to sell her wares, sets up the store in a way that avoids the AFs revealing their difficulties with navigation? Alternatively, Manager may simply set up the store to be as attractive as possible for customers. Whatever the reason, the motivation is based on capitalist greed, not the AFs' needs. Despite many clues that humans can be selfish and cruel, Klara – till the very end – sees people's actions in the most optimistic and generous way, believing always that humans are benevolent. This seems suspiciously convenient for the humans who benefit from her blind obedience.

Klara is programmed and then taught to believe that those who manage her have her best interests at heart. It is not surprising, then, that she believes in an all-powerful deity. What is more, this Ultimate, Benevolent Manager must also be trusted and obeyed. Klara's god is paradoxically benevolent and malevolent. He can be cruel and occasionally even wrathful. Although Klara thinks that the Sun 'has every right to be angry' and '[refuse] even to consider [her] request,' she also perceives him as having 'great kindness' when she visits him.[171] After her sacrifice, Klara gets 'excited by the possibility that the Sun might conceivably pour in his special nourishment straight away'; however, she realises 'how tired the Sun must be … and that it was both disrespectful and unreasonable to expect such an immediate response'.[172] In parallel with her behaviour around humans, Klara needs to think very carefully about how she 'treats' the Sun; she takes it for granted that her emotional labour regulates his state of mind. It is not only deference that we see in Klara's emotional labour of subservience toward both humans and the Sun; her invisibility plays a role, too. Her 'conversations' with her god are one way; he never speaks to her even though she imagines that he does. This mirrors her interactions with the many humans who

dismiss and ignore her. Manager's reply to Klara's final report ('"Yes. I'm sure the Sun has always been good to you, Klara"'[173]) is patronising and dismissive. Why does Manager not ask Klara to elaborate on such a strange remark? Her empty response exposes how little Manager considers Klara's words, thoughts and beliefs – her subjective experience. As the one with the lower status in their exchange, Klara's 'feelings are not noticed or [they are] treated as inconsequential'[174].

Manager's careless response echoes the ease with which Josie ignores Klara or makes unwitting comments, such as those about the Sun's resting place, which help to reify the myth of the Sun for Klara. When Josie first meets Klara, she suggests that she sees 'where [the Sun] *really* goes down'. She says this twice more, promising Klara that if she lived with Josie, she would be able to 'see exactly where the Sun goes down. The exact place he goes to at night'. This surprises Klara and astonishes Rosa, who take Josie literally.[175] Josie unthinkingly continues the Sun fantasy with Klara once she has bought her ('"You'd think the Sun would need a palace, minimum"'[176]), not realising that, because Klara is exposed to very little restricted 'information' – and because she is so trusting – what she hears is what she takes to be the gospel truth, pun intended. As Ivan Stacy points out, when Klara's 'experience of the world is limited to the store, she believes that the Sun sets behind the RPO building, but Josie's promise… causes Klara to revise her understanding of the world, and of her position in it'.[177] Exemplifying her conditioned insularity, Klara's knowledge is entirely dependent on the environment in which she happens to be – and on what the humans in that environment happen to carelessly say. Josie never seems to notice and certainly never displays curiosity at Klara's deep interest in the Sun, attesting to how she regards Klara as a non-person, a being whose thoughts and feelings are not worth investigating. The silence and outright disregard that Klara (imagines that she) is occasionally treated to by her god is mirrored by – potentially *moulded* by – how humans treat her.

The Sun is not the only monotheistic element in Klara's belief system. She also identifies and resonates with two archetypes that we find in the Abrahamic religions: the evil bull and the faithful sheep. These animals feature in Jewish, Islamic and Christian mythology, among others, such as the story of Abraham's sacrifice of a ram instead of his son and the idolatrous figure of the golden calf. Klara sees a bull that has 'so many signals of anger and the wish to destroy'.[178] She thinks that, 'in all probability,' it '[emerges] from beneath the ground' and that it '[belongs] somewhere deep in the ground'.[179] Contrariwise, sheep are 'filled with kindness – the exact opposite of the terrible bull'. Klara concludes that four sheep in particular are 'even more gentle' than the rest because '[they had] arranged themselves on the grass in a neat row, one after the other, as though proceeding on a journey [although they are]… standing quite still,'[180] perhaps revealing her belief that orderliness (which may include following orders) is a virtue. When Klara passes the field that the bull had been in but that is now empty, she says, '[The] terrible creature was now nowhere to be seen, and I wondered if it had been *taken back down* into the ground.'[181] Echoing Kathy's trust in her guardians to exercise their authority and intervene when things go awry, Klara imagines that a benevolent 'force for good' manages and orders her world by containing the evil in it. The euphemistic veneer that Klara applies to her less-than-ideal world helps her '[maintain] hopefulness and a belief in an ordered and meaningful universe'[182]. When Klara fails at her task and visits the barn to beg for the Sun's mercy, she sees the same sheep in a photograph; however, 'they'd become oddly suspended … As a result, when they stretched down to eat, their mouths couldn't reach the grass, giving these creatures, so happy on the day, a mood of sadness'.[183] Although Klara has been a good sheep – an AF that has devoted herself to humans – she is still unable to taste the rewards of her virtuous behaviour.

In a visit to the barn previous to this one, Klara experiences her own personal 'dark night of the soul'. This phrase was coined by the sixteenth-century Spanish mystic poet St John of the Cross; it refers

to a painful spiritual struggle. Klara's dark night involves a particularly challenging journey in which she blunders through 'unkind boxes' (Klara's vision becomes 'boxed' when she is disoriented or overwhelmed) as she attempts to reach the barn on her own. She slips into despair and experiences an existential crisis:

> I'd cross a boundary and everything would darken, the grass would resist my pushes, and there would be strange noises around me, making me fearful that I'd made a serious miscalculation, that there was no justifiable reason to disturb [the Sun's] privacy in the manner I was hoping to do, that my efforts would have gravely negative consequences for Josie. While crossing one particularly unkind box, I heard around me the cries of an animal in pain, and a picture came into my mind of Rosa, sitting on the rough ground somewhere outdoors, little pieces of metal scattered around her, as she reached out both hands to grasp one of her legs stretched out stiffly before her. The image was in my mind for only a second, but the animal carried on making its noise, and I felt the ground collapsing beneath me. I remembered the terrible bull on the walk up to Morgan's Falls, and how in all probability it had emerged from beneath the ground, and for a brief moment, I even thought the Sun wasn't kind at all, and this was the true reason for Josie's worsening condition.[184]

For the first time, Klara doubts the Sun's benevolence, realising that he can be angry and vengeful, even willing to punish Josie for Klara's decisions. Discarding her rose-tinted glasses, however briefly, Klara grapples with an age-old philosophical question: why does a benevolent god permit suffering? When Rick comes to the rescue – after which we discover that Klara's (complete) undoing was nothing more than 'little ditches'[185] – Klara's logic completely fails her. She *knows* 'that despite Rick appearing to be within touching distance, he [is] not in reality so near because of the fierce border separating [their] boxes'.[186] (This scene occurs *before* the loss of her precious solution.) Klara is convinced that literal borders encase the boxes through which she experiences the world. After enduring this disorienting ordeal, she finally enters the barn. Her shadow '[looks] like a tall thin tree ready to break in the wind,'[187] a symbol of her perceived weakness.

Klara's default optimism provides fertile ground for a belief in divine providence. Even after this crisis of faith, she remains true to her religion. Like so many believers in an omnipotent yet wrathful

god, the powerless Klara hopes that a sacrifice will appease her deity and, in her mind, it does; Josie is saved. As Klara sits on the hard ground at the end of her life, she clings to this belief. Perhaps she needs to. Perhaps Klara's enduring optimism is partly a defence mechanism, one that she chooses, on some level, to employ to maintain her belief in an ordered and meaningful universe. This would highlight Klara's humanness rather than any systemic conditioning. However, if this is the case, Klara's faith, however it arises, survives unchallenged because she is (intrinsically) ill-equipped to fully question it and because she lacks the (extrinsic) opportunities to do so.

This may not be an intended result of her insular programming or constrained potential to learn, but it does serve the system that benefits from her saint-like surrender. Parallels are evident in *Never Let Me Go*, where Kathy naively speaks of her time as a donor as if it will be her golden retirement. This strategy of self-deception may be a matter of psychological survival, but it is acts of denial, such as this one, that keep the clones compliant. While Klara's masters do not knowingly nurture her blind faith, they do benefit from the passive forbearance that it promotes. Stevens, too, has a 'naively blinkered perspective on the world'.[188] He lets Darlington's alliance with Nazis 'go on before [him],' never thinking 'to look at it for what it is'; however, he is implored to 'at least be curious'.[189] Klara, on the other hand, is never given this encouragement – on the contrary, she is scolded by the Mother for asking a question.

In terms of obfuscated intelligence, it is less that information is withheld from Klara and more that her knowledge of matters that concern her is considered unnecessary – or even irrational, if one believes that she lacks a self. Klara regularly has to piece together details to try and understand what is expected of her. She finds out almost by chance that she is expected to be a 'Josie-replacement'. She and her fellow AFs appear to have no idea of what awaits them in the real world. Klara and Rosa expect to

see AFs 'going about their business by themselves'[190] out on the street, when, in reality, an AF has neither the gross motor skills nor the independence to do this. While they receive training on emotional labour, the AFs do not receive information on what their potential home may be like. With Klara's only frame of reference – the Store – she describes Josie's kitchen as having 'large windows facing a wide sky and an outdoors almost permanently empty of traffic and passers-by'[191]; the Store's window view onto a busy street is her only comparative norm. Similarly, Klara comments that the 'sky from [Josie's] bedroom rear window was far larger than the gap of sky at the store,'[192] indicating that Klara does not believe them to be the same sky.

Klara does not know basic facts that a nine-year-old would, such as the fact that the Earth orbits the sun or that the sky is a unified phenomenon. She is not even configured with information that may seem relevant for her role, such as how households typically differ from stores. This may be because 'extraneous' data would reduce her efficiency by creating a cognitive overload. Not only is her foundational knowledge threadbare, but, in her 'lack of discernment and logical analysis,' 'she falls short of the cognitive requirements necessary for passing the Turing test'[193]. Her illogical analyses also reveal an emotional irrationality. Like a child, Klara makes false, emotions-based causal connections: she concludes that when Josie is unwell, the sky '[turns] the color of her vomit or her pale feces, or even develop streaks of blood'[194]. These various design choices, which may also be cost-cutting measures, are purposefully chosen. If Klara is cognitively and emotionally stunted, she is more likely to simply fulfil her function without getting 'agitated,' to borrow yet another sinister euphemism from *Never Let Me Go*.

It is possible that Klara's false conclusions and distorting descriptions reveal her conditioned insularity. Owing to a lack of initial and supplementary data, Klara is forced to fashion together

knowledge as she stumbles (sometimes literally) along. She resembles most cyborgs in popular culture who do not typically have 'physical constraints, like the dependence on breathing or sleep' because their 'functional changes occur through the body's homeostatic controls and without the subject's control'. However, while Klara neither breathes, eats nor even smells, her conscious mind does not show signs of exploration or experimentation – unless engaging in these actions serves her masters. This is unlike the minds of the cyborgs that Kakoudaki discusses, which are free to engage in 'exploration, problem solving, and scientific experimentation'.[195]

Instead of using her increased capacity to investigate her own selfhood, Klara becomes focused on pleasing the Sun so that she may serve Josie. In spite of being superintelligent in some ways, Klara does not echo her cyborg predecessors, such as Data (*Star Trek*) or Andrew (*Bicentennial Man*), by posturing existential questions. This is partly because she is forced to spend much of her time trying to get 'the basics' straight in her mind. When Klara walks outside for the first time, she marvels at the 'mild and pleasant' wind – but, before long, navigating the loose stones demands all of her attention. 'I wondered how it was the tall trees up on the hill were even then bending and waving under its push,' she says, '[but] I soon had to concentrate on my feet, because the loose stones area contained many dips'.[196] If one is focused on sheer survival, how can they investigate the laws of nature and ask fundamental questions about physics?

The only cultural media that Klara is exposed to are magazines. These facile and outdated artefacts call to mind the clones' meagre diet of pornography magazines and television sitcoms in *Never Let Me Go*. Klara uses the Store's magazines as points of reference even after she has left and she sits 'surrounded by magazines' during Josie's online tutorials on her smartphone – or 'oblong,' as Klara calls it.[197] Indeed, 'Klara has gaps in her vocabulary'[198]; smartphones are 'oblongs' and drones are

'machine birds'. These misnomers reflect Klara's child-like innocence and, in so doing, they also reveal her arrested development. They are examples of how language illustrates and contributes to Klara's insularity.

Regarding language usage in Ishiguro's novels, Bennett argues:

> Whether it is a clone who unquestioningly adopts the euphemistic language of discrimination in *Never Let Me Go*… or an AI robot who records the dystopian vocabulary of privilege and brutal social categorization and effective segregation in *Klara and the Sun*… Ishiguro's novels exploit the way the words we use both disclose and conceal ideas, actions, and circumstances, political as well as personal.[199]

At a societal level, if we look at how a male AF is referred to as 'a boy AF' and not 'an AF Boy,' for example, we see how language in Klara's world can convey subtle political messages. An AF's essential identity is first and foremost their artificiality. In the same way that Melania Housekeeper is a type of housekeeper – she is not Melania who *happens* to be a housekeeper – a boy AF is a type of AF. He will never be a boy (that is to say, a person) who is also an AF. On a more personal level, Klara's idiosyncratic phrasing illustrates the utilitarianism of her world that has come to condition her framework of understanding. When she equates people with objects and appliances (a houseguest '[resembles a] food blending machine' and 'Coffee Cup Lady' is 'small and wide and round-shouldered' like a cup[200]), we see that Klara accepts her own and others' instrumentality.

As a robot, Klara is 'a priori designed as a being whose ontological state maps perfectly with a political state,'[201] so her linguistic stylings, such as her habit of objectifying humans and capitalising certain words and phrases, demonstrate both her personal and political constraints. With a child's egocentric and simplistic approach to the complexities of life, Klara uses labels like 'the Friend's Apartment,' 'the New Housekeeper' and 'Pollution'. In doing so, she foregrounds a narrow, utility-based understanding of people and the world in general. We never learn the new housekeeper's

name – she is simply 'the New Housekeeper'. Klara's lack of real-world experience is exposed yet again; for her, 'Pollution' is a single entity, the villain in her childish story whom she must eliminate in one fell swoop. Had Klara had access to television or the internet, she would probably realise that pollution is more complex than this. She would discover that the Sun is ordinary and that '"there are people out there who worry about [AFs]"'[202]. Capaldi – a character who we expect to be an expert on AFs – mistakenly thinks that Klara is aware of the latter, thus exposing his ignorance of how insular an AF's existence can be. Klara is not aware of any of this – how could she be? She does not even know the name of the device that she would use to access news reports, never mind read them. If Klara was designed to be curious enough about 'oblongs,' she may have used one to connect to a source of (up-to-date and at least partly accurate) information, such as the internet. Perhaps then she would have learned and evolved as so many fictive AI characters have done.

How is it that an advanced piece of AI technology does not know the names for technological devices nor have any interest in the power that they possess? It is because, as the Mother says, it is not Klara's business to be curious. She must play the role of the passive and agency-less instrument whose activation and behaviour are entirely dictated by her masters. Comparable with Stevens and Kathy, Klara's speech betrays the conditioned disposition of passivity that being an instrument has engendered in her. As mentioned, she sometimes describes her surroundings as if there were a god-like architect controlling the environment. She says that a 'part of [a] field *had been divided* into orderly boxes'[203] and one wonders by whom. Within Klara's belief that a greater force orders her world nests the conclusion that she is comparatively weaker, so it would be wise to trust her superior/s to make all the decisions. Klara also emphasises external factors and de-emphasises her own agency by making statements like '[The] tall grass finished around me'[204] (instead of saying 'I exited the tall grass' and speaking in the

active voice). Like Stevens, who 'finds' himself in surroundings, both physical and mental,[205] Klara appears to be at the mercy of stronger forces than her that are outside of her control.

This perceived powerlessness is warranted. Klara does not take agentic action most of the time; indeed, sometimes she is explicitly told *not* to. These constraints can seem trivial (such as the prohibition on looking directly at customers), but there are times when Klara's lack of agency can have dark consequences. When she is coerced into agreeing to continue Josie, Klara (like Stevens) '[abets] something wicked or questionable because she is told to by an authority'[206]. This shared quality of Stevens and Klara raises a question: are they complicit? One could argue that, as a coded ideological servant, Klara does not have the power that Stevens has to disobey authority. However, it is also possible to argue, as Liani Lochner does, that because Klara and Stevens are 'insiders,' *neither* of them is able 'to take on an extra-discursive or extra-ideological stance from which to assess the values of their community and the historico-political forces that shape them'. Lochner goes on to say that Ishiguro 'considers it to be a universal truth that we are all insiders,'[207] which may mean that we, too, are unable to take effectively critical stances on the values of our community. Regardless, Ishiguro encourages us to at least try; he invites us to 'awaken our own faculties of thinking, questioning the historico-political forces, the relations they condition, and the spaces they transform'.[208] Perhaps this starts with identifying ourselves in Klara's narrative. In this way, we can consider how we are complacent or even actively involved in the exploitation of oppressed people, such as immigrant labourers, essential workers during a health crisis or care robots.

Our potential for reformation may be slim, though. Are we like Manager, who pretends (perhaps to herself as much as to the AFs) that she cares about Klara even though she views her as merely an object, '"one of the finest [she] ever had"'[209]? When Manager happens upon Klara in the junkyard, she is

happy to hear that Klara '"[has] no regrets"'. She admits, '"It's what I always want to hear when I come across *my* AFs again. That you're glad about how it all went."'[210] Manager's callous comment is just one example of a human's wilful ignorance in *Klara and the Sun.* She and others in the text do not want to confront – nor can they truly understand – Klara's life of objectification and dehumanisation.

> Confronted by a complete indifference to their humanity, [Ishiguro's characters] choose stoicism over complaint. We think we grieve for them more than they grieve for themselves, but more heartbreaking is the possibility that they're not sure we differ enough from their overlords to understand their true sorrow. And maybe we don't, and maybe we can't. Maybe that's the real irony, the way Ishiguro sticks in the shiv.[211]

Ishiguro may leave out key moments of suffering and death in *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* to highlight how suffering often goes unrecognised – both literally and figuratively. We do not witness Stevens's or his father's death, Kathy's 'donations,' Kathy's death; Klara's moment of sacrifice (her symbolic death) and Klara's ultimate death. While we are not made to confront Klara's pseudo-crucifixion as it happens, we do get a glimpse into the horror of its memory. More than once, Klara *feels* (her wording), 'fleetingly but vividly,' the Father holding her head as she hears 'the trickling noise as the fluid entered the plastic bottle' from the cut on her neck.[212] There are other instances of exploitation that we do not get an insight into, such as the suffering of other AFs and other artificial persons (like the bereavement doll that the Mother buys when Sal dies). We never know how many AF and AF-adjacent persons try to escape their enslavement or how many AFs are made to continue deceased humans (and therefore commit psychological suicide). Capaldi appears to work in the private sector, which could suggest that the service that he offers is common and without any regulatory control. How many Capaldis are there who are creating AI replacements? All we know is that '"[things] didn't go as well for Rosa as they did for [Klara]"' (Manager refuses to elaborate when Klara asks her to) and that when Sal's doll tried to escape, the Mother was able to '"impose some control"' and stop her.[213] Miss Helen chooses not to investigate further after witnessing the disturbing escape attempt

(which could be proof of the bereavement doll's sentience and/or consciousness) because, as she says, '"What business is it of [hers] anyway?"'.[214] Hopefully Miss Helen's denial and therefore confirmation of complicity reminds us that it *is* our business. Perhaps *Klara and the Sun*, on a par with other texts about artificial people, helps us confront 'the guilt of our choices, the awareness of suffering, the sense of our conscious or unconscious complicity to oppression'[215].

In returning to our final moments with Klara as she wastes away in the Yard, we see how '[the] act of narration itself becomes a way of allowing the subject to continue working even when the conditions of its existence have become absurd'.[216] Unlike numerous fictive artificial persons who transcend their programmed objectives and 'come to experience and express very human existential dilemmas,'[217] Klara is still fixated on Josie. She continues to execute her prime directive (that is, she continues to serve) with friendly complacency. In Kakoudaki's analysis of *Bicentennial Man* – a film (based on Isaac Asimov's novelette) about the cyborg Andrew who gradually develops emotions and self-awareness, embarking on a centuries-long quest to become human and legally recognised as such – she argues that Andrew plays the role of 'an ideal former slave'. Klara mirrors Andrew. Her story also 'hides an undercurrent of continued and ever more totalizing oppression,' yet she, too, is 'not motivated by hard feelings'[218]. Although Klara develops emotions and self-awareness, she never asks existential questions that prompt any meaningful rebellion. One might say that it is because she is not human – but how do we then explain Stevens and Kathy's complacency?

Stevens, Kathy and Klara do not rebel because they have had this drive conditioned out of them. Ideological scaffolding – executed through myth and ideology, environment, obfuscated intelligence, cultural media and language – shapes them into passively accepting their fates. One noticeable difference in Klara's case is the element of religious faith. Her belief system plays a significant part in

her conditioning as it has within it an embedded subordination. Instead of *Klara and the Sun* being a cautionary tale about rebellious AI, it is a quasi-religious text about martyrdom. Klara's story compels us to interrogate not only the ethics of artificial intelligence and an AI person's moral patiency but also the ethics of service. Why is it, for example, that Klara's service is synonymous with the death of the self? Although Klara does not transcend her design, we can hope that she prompts us to question our own.

Conclusion

In Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989), *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *Klara and the Sun* (2021), the respective protagonists Stevens, Kathy H. and Klara are richly layered characters for whom we come to feel both empathy and incredulity. The butler Stevens, the clone Kathy and the robot Klara are servants who sacrifice themselves in some form of labour to varying degrees. We meet them toward the ends of their lives of sacrifice. They are alone, writing their penultimate chapters, which are steeped in suffering: Stevens is heartbroken and exhausted in the remains of his day, Kathy stares at trash and fantasises that a dead loved one returns, and Klara is left disoriented and completely immobile, surrounded by other discarded machines. As we witness the near completion of their exploited and treated-as-expendable lives, we wonder at Stevens's blinkered awareness, Kathy's haunting passivity and 'the smallness of [Klara's] world'[1]. Why and how is it that Stevens, Kathy and Klara never consider alternative paths, but appear to accept – even embrace – their exploitation? That is what this paper aims to understand.

Through a close reading of all three texts, I examine the subtle and insidious systems of control that shape Stevens, Kathy and Klara into quietly compliant labourers. What becomes obvious is that although butlers, clones and AFs (Artificial Friends) are somewhat removed from our real-world existence, their conditioning and oppression are uncannily familiar. Ultimately, these texts explore the ethics of service, prompting an examination of our complicity in present-day exploitation, such as the mistreatment of immigrant labourers. Disenfranchised, whether through conditioned 'choice,' as in the case of Stevens and Kathy, or indentured slavery, as in the case of Klara, the protagonists' selfhoods and senses of agency are progressively eroded by their conditioning. Stevens, Kathy and, beyond her initial programming, even Klara are shaped to internalise roles, norms and ideologies that sustain, above all

else, their commitment to service. They are bred to adopt insular mindsets that then keep them trapped. This paper explores the methods and devices that are used to condition insularity into all three characters by examining how myth, ideology, environment, 'obfuscated intelligence,' language and cultural media are used to execute that conditioning.

For all three characters, myth plays a central role in shaping their beliefs and behaviours, as do certain ideologies, some of which are common across the texts. In all three texts, environments are used to reinforce a sense of normalcy within confinement; however, because Kathy is raised in an institution, this is most evident in *Never Let Me Go*. Cultural media, to varying degrees across the texts, also functions as a vehicle of containment, sometimes by its absence. Obfuscated intelligence is used to condition insularity most effectively in *Never Let Me Go*, but its manipulative potential is also starkly evident in *Klara and the Sun*. In each novel, language is not only regulated by the characters' insular conditioning, but it sustains it as well by restricting Stevens, Kathy and Klara's capacity to think beyond given terms.

Aside from the element of insular conditioning, *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* share other similarities. All three protagonists are unreliable narrators, and limitations in their narration frequently reflect their stunted selves, their incomplete self-awareness. All three texts are dominated by recollections, some of which are nostalgic in tone. Stevens, Kathy and Klara's retrospective storytelling regularly reveals a pattern of understanding and rationalising their roles within the systems that quietly erase their autonomy. This shared propensity to reorder or even reframe past events is paired with a shared naivety, which is signalled, in part, by euphemistic language. More generally, the protagonists' speech is restrained and emotionally muted – even the humans sound robotic. Through their introspection, we see that Stevens, Kathy and Klara have been trained to observe

and respond, not to question and intervene. As a consequence, all three take solace in 'ordering' their spent lives, preferring internal cohesion over disruptive doubt. This is why neither Stevens, Kathy nor Klara fully confront their conditioning and exploitation.

In *The Remains of the Day*, the butler Stevens is the epitome of restraint, which he exercises in the pursuit of a particular understanding of professionalism that he has been bred to idealise. Stevens's striving, value system and worldview are shaped by the myths of the Great Butler and British 'greatness,' which are wrapped in notions of class and empire. Totalitarianism, authoritarianism and even fascism come to shape his beliefs and behaviour. As we join Stevens on his voyage away from Darlington Hall, we discover that he has not travelled from its surroundings for more than thirty-five years. Through Stevens's recollections and real-time interactions with 'outsiders,' we gain an insight into how myths, stories, ideologies, environment, obfuscated intelligence and cultural media have shaped his insularity. One example is the way in which Stevens's hidden, cramped, dark and characterless servants quarters manifest as a psychological 'corner' that he permanently inhabits. Stevens constantly strives for invisibility and 'thingness' (because the more a servant can resemble a thing, the better it will be at its job), reflecting the utilitarianism and instrumentalism with which he is viewed and treated.

Stevens's identity is almost wholly defined by his role as manservant to Lord Darlington (even after the lord dies). Indeed, Stevens considers himself to be an 'attachment' of Darlington Hall. His devotion to Darlington (and his defence of the lord's questionable politics, which, despite his better instincts, Stevens never questions) comes at the expense of the butler's personal needs and emotional well-being. That is, Stevens sacrifices himself to service. He does so because, in what appears to be based on a noble impulse, Stevens believes deeply in pursuing certain ideals so that his life may have

meaning. Stevens learns from his father to strive for a definition of dignity that is equated with silent obedience. When we find out that Stevens does not even believe that he can ever attain true dignity, we get a glimpse into just one of the strategies of self-deception that he exercises to sustain his empty striving. Ultimately, Stevens's adherence to a rigorous code of conduct has been flawed, possibly even futile. This is why we intuit a sense of regret throughout that is expressed by Stevens himself near the end of the text. Although Stevens seems to realise, late in life, some of the implications of his service, he never fully confronts or makes amends for them. At the end of *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens, his blinkered awareness largely intact, is returning to Darlington Hall with a renewed resolve to excel in his role as butler.

In *Never Let Me Go*, we slowly discover that Kathy's eerily composed voice masks a deeper horror: she is a clone, bred and raised to donate her organs until death. As with Stevens, we learn about Kathy's conditioned insularity through her recollections. Her childhood at the isolated boarding school Hailsham, in particular, plays a major role. 'The characters of *Never Let Me Go* are first denuded of agency and then deprived of the very capacity for it by being isolated'.[2] Both physically and psychologically, the ideological state apparatus Hailsham isolates the clones, convincing them of their powerlessness, their 'otherness,' their allegedly inherent inferiority. Through subtle socialisation from an impressionable age, the clones become compliant, self-regulating subjects who learn to accept and internalise a carefully curated construction of normality. Kathy transitions from Hailsham to the Cottages (college-like dormitories) and, finally, to the donor centres, but instead of expanding 'from a child's to an adult's world,' Kathy's 'world [is] incrementally stripped from her'. *Never Let Me Go* resembles an 'anti-bildungsroman' because 'rather than become integrated into a community, [Kathy] becomes increasingly isolated'.[3]

Kathy, like Stevens, pursues ideals of professional excellence and upward social mobility. Even as her close friends die from donations, she maintains pride and belief in her work as a carer. Her stoic approach to suffering is the result of her upbringing at Hailsham. Affection at Hailsham was scarce. Self-governance (including the self-control that was necessary to skirt its many taboo subjects) was valued. Kathy was taught from a young age, often in covert ways, not to question the system or her role within it. Indeed, she feels grateful that she was raised at Hailsham instead of another institution – in spite of the fact that her guardians lied to and manipulated her.

Obfuscated intelligence plays a key role in Kathy's conditioning. She is only slowly told the truth of her origin and purpose, with key knowledge obscured by the adults around her. Even something as seemingly uncorrupted and earnest as making art is shrouded in misinformation at Hailsham. Through its 'art programme,' the clones intuit that the act of sharing their selves (their art as well as their bodies) is normal – even virtuous. These and other measures condition Kathy, such that, at the end of *Never Let Me Go*, she is still part of the system, fulfilling her caregiving role, with the certainty of donations and death in her near future. Kathy's is a haunting passivity because she is taught from a young age to believe that her sacrifice is an immutable, integral, natural and necessary fact of life.

In *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro breaks away from representing humans. Unlike Stevens and Kathy, the Artificial Friend Klara is *literally* coded for service. Everything Klara does, including when she exercises agency, is underscored by her service and subjugation to humans as an AI companion. Klara starts her journey in the Store, where she appears to have very little foundational knowledge. She does not know, for example, that the earth orbits the sun. Unlike many fictive AI characters, Klara does not have access to an information network. It is only as she interacts with the world that she learns. However, her learning entails interpreting, usually imperfectly, fragmented inputs and selective

observations. Although Klara is especially astute, the framework within which she uses her remarkable AI to adapt and learn is, by design, narrow, naive and insular.

Before being sold to Josie and living with her and 'the Mother,' Klara comes to personify the Sun. She believes that he is an agentic source of healing that 'rests' somewhere at night. When Klara becomes an AI companion to Josie, Josie's well-being becomes Klara's prime objective. It underpins her pseudo-religion, which evolves and strengthens over time. Klara comes to the conclusion that the Sun is an omnipotent deity that might save the sickly Josie – if Klara does something for him. Following through on her promise to the Sun, Klara sacrifices a part of herself. She does so after finding out, almost by chance, that the Mother expects Klara to sacrifice herself entirely to 'continue' Josie, if Josie were to die. Josie recovers, and Klara is left with diminished capabilities (owing to the loss of the solution that she sacrificed). Josie grows up and moves on, and Klara's world, like Kathy's, is progressively stripped from her. Moving from one 'corner' of immobility to the next, Klara lives in a closet for years and then is taken to a junkyard to undergo her 'slow fade'.

From the beginning of her story until the end, Klara lives on the periphery. As an emotional labourer, she is expected to be invisible, deferential and passive. While this is an algorithmic setting in Klara's case, she, like Stevens and Kathy, is socialised to further accept her insularity. She is treated as though she is devoid of a self, and, although, for all intents and purposes, Klara *does* have a self, she is willing to sacrifice it – without question. This is because she has accepted her 'othering'. Klara has been taught to believe that humans are benevolent and superior, qualities that we see mirrored in her deity. However, like humans, the Sun can be cruel, with a penchant for allowing suffering. In spite of this, Klara never questions her deity or the humans in her world. As she sits in the Yard, her cognitive facilities destabilised and her body in pieces, Klara's world remains small. For all the suffering that she

has endured (and continues to endure), Klara's consciousness is still dominated by her devotion to Josie and her striving to be a good servant.

Despite their personhood, Klara and Kathy – as artificial persons – are treated differently from other people in their respective worlds. Through their stories, 'we are inspired to wonder… why certain people are… treated as nonpeople'[4]. As we empathise with Kathy and Klara, we wonder at their oppression. How are socially constructed distinctions between people and non-people established so that the latter's exploitation is maintained and justified? This same question applies to Stevens, even though he is not an artificial person. Stevens sees himself, and is seen by Darlington, as fundamentally different from the lord. Stevens's dedication to his duty, which manifests as virtual self-sacrifice, is a norm among Darlington's circle, as well as, more significantly, Stevens's circle.

Stevens, Kathy and Klara are systematically and continually 'othered' to sustain the perception (for themselves and their exploiters) that they are natural candidates for martyrdom. A common narrative in all three texts argues, however subtly, that as an inferior to and a labourer for an elite group, each protagonist's needs are naturally less important than those of the elite. This is why Stevens, Kathy and Klara are conditioned to become convinced of their 'otherness'. While their conditioned insularity shares broad features, such as similar methods and devices and the use of the same vehicles (myth, ideology, environment, obfuscated intelligence, language and cultural media), the details of each protagonist's subjugation differ. This is largely because they are existentially different characters. Stevens is a human man, a 'normal' in the lexicon of *Never Let Me Go*'s world. Kathy, too, is a human, but, according to her exploiters, she is without a soul and, therefore, 'sub-human'. Klara is a synthetic being, but one who qualifies for personhood. The characters' existential differences highlight the question of personal agency versus political control.

Of the two humans, Stevens, while trained in subservience from a young age, has had a less insular childhood than Kathy, who is raised under tight biopolitical control in an institution. Unlike Kathy or Klara, Stevens is not an artificial person who is designed with an explicit purpose. He has a 'normal' childhood and, as such, the family ideological state apparatus plays a major role in his conditioning. As an adult, Stevens prescribes to the same ideologies that Darlington and his peers – those whom he admires and emulates – prescribe to, such as authoritarianism. Stevens also adopts particular tastes, habits and skills according to his oppressors' needs or proclivities. Unlike Kathy, Stevens shares a proximity and relationship with his exploiters, the aristocracy. Class dynamics inform his conditioned insularity to a significant degree. One example is the way in which Stevens is interpellated, outside of as well as within Darlington Hall, which continually reinforces his role as a lower-class servant.

Stevens's conditioning, while effective, is not the same as Kathy's, which is a markedly institutionalised form of ideological conditioning within a 'closed' system. We might, then, expect Stevens to be less conditioned than Kathy – or, at least, to be less susceptible to his conditioning. However, while Stevens's trip away from his insular bubble does seem to bend his consciousness somewhat, by the end of the text, he is focused, yet again, on how to perfectly execute the function of manservant. Stevens resolves to practise bantering to better serve his new American master. One could suggest that Stevens's story ends on a note of hope. As Matthew Beedham points out, Stevens's 'resolve to improve his bantering is worrying, but we need to note that it was inspired by Stevens's desire for "human warmth", and that his trip is not yet over when he makes this resolution.' It is true that we cannot know whether Stevens actually returns to Darlington Hall, 'and if he does start the drive home, we cannot know where his thoughts on the drive will lead him.' Ultimately, 'readers might take comfort

in the hope that he will soon see that it is "human warmth" rather than "banter" that is the key,' argues Beedham.[5]

In Kathy's case, there is less room for 'mights' and 'coulds'. She tells us, in no uncertain terms, that she 'turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was [she] was supposed to be'.[6] This action, having already occurred, closes the door to possibilities. Perhaps this always needed to be the ending to Kathy's story because her access to alternative paths is significantly diminished compared to Stevens's. As a clone, bred for one purpose, Kathy's subjecthood was always engineered and pre-determined. Under the guise of 'care,' Hailsham, with its simulated liberal arts education and ironically named 'guardians,' cements this fabricated subjecthood by perniciously and powerfully regulating her understanding of herself and her role in society. Institutional methods of discipline, such as surveillance, ranking and enclosure, mould Kathy's mind into obedience from a young age. Moreover, Kathy's world mimics a welfare state. Whether true or not, even as an adult, Kathy is convinced that her survival is entirely dependent on the system that exploits her. Stevens, on the other hand, could have left Darlington when the lord's fascistic leanings challenged Stevens's moral code (if it did) and affected his relationship with Miss Kenton.

Stevens could have worked for someone else – but he did not. This may be because his self-awareness appears remarkably limited. Indeed, Kathy appears to have a greater self-awareness than Stevens. He never admits to his ex-colleague and love interest Miss Kenton (or even to himself) that he loves her. While the butler does recognise 'turning points' in their relationship in retrospect, this takes decades. Kathy, on the other hand, is more flexible. She adapts more quickly to, for example, her loved ones' needs. When her partner Tommy says that he no longer wants her to be his carer, Kathy is angry at first, even furious, but she quickly comes to accept his wishes: '"I'm sorry I blew up at you earlier …

I'll try and see to it you get someone really good,"' she says.[7] In addition, unlike Stevens, who does not question Darlington even once, Kathy does try to get answers out of her oppressors. Upon finding out that the clones' artistic output does not affect (and never has affected) their lifespan, and that the deferral never existed, Kathy presses Madame and Miss Emily: '"Why train us, encourage us, make us produce all of that [art]? If we're just going to give donations anyway, then die, why all those lessons? Why all those books and discussions?"'[8]

Thus, despite being more existentially restricted than Stevens, Kathy's self-awareness is considerable and should not be ignored. It has allowed for interpretations of Kathy as a symbol of resistance and of *Never Let Me Go* as an exploration of 'how individuals navigate and resist unjust systems'. Zhixing Nie, Hardev Kaur and ManiMangai Mani argue that the clones' 'struggles—marked by coping, compromise, and resistance—reveal the complexities of survival within oppressive structures'. They posit that 'Ishiguro avoids reducing the clones to mere victims; instead, he endows them with cognitive and reflective capacities, allowing them to exercise limited agency and subtle resistance within a highly controlled world.'[9] Kathy may be less passive than she seems. Her continued compliance at the end of *Never Let Me Go* could be read as evidence of agency, dignity and strength.

Of the three protagonists, Klara is the most blatant example of political oppression. She is the 'robot version of Stevens, and a kind of cousin of Kathy H. She's a carer, a servant, a helpmeet, a toy.'[10] Klara's algorithmic conditioning precludes a life outside of service much more robustly than Stevens's and Kathy's childhoods of conditioning ever could have. What does Klara's encoded insularity mean for her agency? In agreeing to continue Josie, an act of literal self-sacrifice, Klara appears to reaffirm the dystopian convention that an AI's 'whole unit is so empty of agency that it can be taken over by anyone and for any purpose'[11]. However, the issue of Klara's agency is more complicated than that. The Mother

asks Klara to sacrifice herself – to 'be taken over' – in exchange for love: '"I'll love you. You'll be Josie and I'll always love you over everything else. So do it for me. I'm asking you to do it for me. Continue Josie for me."'[12] The implication is that Klara could have refused. Perhaps Klara could have chosen to try to escape, as a predecessor (the bereavement doll that replaces Josie's sister) had. As a superior being, Klara might have even succeeded.

However, Klara's dependence on the system that exploits her is even greater than Kathy's in *Never Let Me Go*. Klara needs solar power to subsist, she gets easily disoriented in new settings, her short stature is an impediment and she has faulty reasoning capabilities. Some of her purposefully limited facilities are further compromised when she sacrifices her 'precious solution'. Klara *is*, in many ways, powerless, and her self-awareness, in comparison with Stevens's and Kathy's, is diminished – or, perhaps, just different. She 'reflects' on whether she estimated ages correctly, but she also has realisations about her relationship with her key figure: Josie. Klara puzzles, for example, over how certain events 'created coldness between' them and how she 'might have avoided such a thing happening'.[13] Klara's reflections on Josie, based as they are upon the deep belief that all humans are benevolent and superior, absolve Josie of any wrongdoing. In contrast, Josie's treatment of Klara, which is based on the view that Klara is less a person and more 'a servant, a helpmeet, a toy,' is progressively dismissive and cruel.

Nevertheless, there are moments in which Josie appears to care about Klara, such as when she interrupts an intimate moment with her mom, risking her anger, because '"Klara just loves to watch the sunset and if [Josie and Klara] don't go now [they will] miss it."'[14] Optimistic interpretations of *Klara and the Sun* read Klara and Josie as 'close friends'[15]. Liang Yan argues that 'in this novel, Ishiguro describes a harmonious picture of human-robot relations'.[16] Yan focuses on the text's depiction of

robotic development, highlighting AI companions' potential to replace human attachment figures. While she does not examine the details of Klara's subjugation, Yan does end her paper with a discussion of AI ethics more generally, wondering whether robots will be reduced to being the 'other'. She suggests that, in *Klara and the Sun*, 'Ishiguro expresses his anxiety towards the destiny of robots.' Yan compares them to grandparents who are forgotten when they are no longer needed to care for their grandchildren.[17] As the technology to create artificial persons, such as clones and AI companions, develops, Yan's concerns are worth exploring. Klara's plight prompts us to further examine the 'responsibilities [that] personhood [entails]' and determine how we can 'regard and treat one another without the prospect or threat of objectification'[18].

While Stevens, Kathy and Klara are existentially different characters, their portrayal of the loyal servant poses the same question. Should we *ever* allow systemic exploitation – of any labourer, regardless of their origin – to compromise social justice? Much scholarship exists on how Ishiguro's protagonists reflect real-world socioeconomic imbalances. Future studies could refine this discourse by researching the effects of a growing 'gig economy'. Labourers, such as Uber, Uber Eats, and grocery-delivery drivers, earn an income by doing short-term, flexible, task-based jobs. In spite of being forced to work exclusively for one company, these workers are commonly considered to be independent contractors. As such, they do not receive a minimum wage, they frequently need to pay for fuel, insurance and maintenance, and they are not protected by basic labour law. In South Africa, these drivers are 'not entitled to paid leave or sick leave; they receive no medical aid or retirement fund contributions; and they can be dismissed arbitrarily without recourse'.[19] Moreover, retailers are being accused of purposefully hiring 'foreign riders' because their 'working conditions are more easily exploited than locals'.[20] This injustice is not exclusive to South Africa. 'Globally, in comparison to their employed counterparts, independent gig workers earn 64% less for doing the same job, according to the

International Labour Organisation.'[21] Ishiguro's work could be analysed in comparison with the gig economy, thus highlighting an immediate crisis. By examining labour systems that are driven by capitalist greed, such as this one, we can further the discourse on consumer complicity, shifting the focus from the exploited to the exploiter. Where do we, as consumers, repress ethical discomfort in favour of convenience, and how do we hold ourselves and corporations accountable?

In conclusion, one of the key reasons that *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* are unsettling stories is that their protagonists never fully awaken to their own exploitation. Stevens, Kathy and Klara sacrifice themselves (Kathy and Klara do so in the most literal sense), fully accepting their fates. While each of them is 'a highly self-conscious character nostalgically, if ambivalently, orbiting a lost past,'[22] their self-consciousness does not lead to any significant change. From the beginning till the very end, Stevens, Kathy and Klara focus on and live for their purpose – their function. The thought of rebellion, let alone the actual act, never occurs to them. However, their passivity is less a failure of their character and more a feature of the worlds that they inhabit. Meticulously designed systems keep Stevens, Kathy and Klara docile, loyal and blind to their oppression. This is achieved through conditioned insularity, whereby the characters are shaped to adopt a socially constructed perception of the world and their role within it. By exposing the physical and psychological infrastructures that sustain unfreedom in plain sight, these novels compel us to examine our own exploitation and the ways in which we exploit others.

Notes:

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