

# A book review sans spoilers: never let me go

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Throughout the novel, Ishiguro depicts several situations in which Kathy as an individual being still asks herself who she is. Even Though she gives the reader a description of herself right in the beginning of her story “ My name is Kathy H. I’m thirty-one years old, and I’ve been a carer now for over eleven years”, she still struggles to understand the world around herself. The way Ishiguro depicts these clones in his book has many parallels with Giorgio Agamben’s concept of the homo sacer. As already mentioned the homo sacer is a subject “ who may be killed and yet not sacrificed, and whose essential function in modern politics we intend to assert”. According to Agamben described in his work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, we as human beings as subjects are the embodiment of the homo sacer. Reflecting upon the depiction of the subjects in Ishiguro’s novel makes this idea more comprehensible. Just like the homo sacer, Kathy and her fellow clones at some time of their life have to donate their organs and die, and therefore are be killed without anyone in society disapproving. In addition to that, the clones are exiled from society living in Hailsham and without knowledge of purpose in it. They are being reduced to their bare life, only their physical and biological integrity are being paid attention to. The point of not being sacrificed applies in this case as well. The term sacred is ambiguous because, on the one hand, it means to be protected because it is religious, but in regard to Agamen and the characters in the book, it refers to being outside of society. It is not only the pure definition that applies to the characters of Ishiguro’s story but the origins of the state which allows for this kind of situation.

According to Agamben, the ‘ biopolitical paradigm is responsible for some of the worst atrocities of the twentieth century’. In simple words, Kathy reveals memories that gradually form the image of a state-sponsored cruel project, the image of a society that has at some point decided that not everyone has the same right of self-determination. The Hailsham students are educated to accept the fateful decisions of the higher powers. The children of Hailsham are anonymously created clones created to donate their organs as adults. Society regards them as property and ultimately lawless human material, as Jennings states “ Ishiguro reminds us of the terrible cost of dehumanization and oppression that all of us, not only those who are oppressed, must pay”. The domination of the sovereign over the bare life, the so-called biopolitics, play a central role in Kathy’s life. Thus, under the conditions of biopolitics, the arenas of the political are not limited to the places of institutionalized politics in parliaments, governments or in the political public. Rather, biopolitics takes place in medical practices, at work, and in the most intimate decisions and desires about sexual partners and practices. This case is carefully examined in Kathy’s story, the impact of biopolitics is seen in every aspect of her life. As Kathy states “ Here was the world, requiring students to donate”, Biopolitics is always directed not primarily at legal subjects, but at humans as living beings; not to a constitutive people, but to a population. Conversely, life also transforms under biopolitical conditions. The students of Hailsham did not only have to follow the rules of politics but rules that are set in every sphere of their life. Life is no longer the presupposition of politics, as in Greek antiquity, which had distinguished between mere life ‘ zoe’ and political existence ‘ bios’.

In Foucault's words: " biological existence was reflected in political existence. Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body".

Life itself becomes a political problem. Storrow points out that " Ishiguro makes use of these perspectives to imagine a governmental program wherein human clones are created, husbanded, and killed for the use of their vital organs in medical treatment". Therefore you can say that Kathy can be seen as an embodiment of the homo sacer under the power of biopolitics and actually can be seen as a reflection of the world we live in.

Never Let Me Go examines the question of humanity and the subject making ourselves ask once more who we really are. Taking into account the concept of the homo sacer by Giorgio Agamben and the circumstances of biopolitics you can say that these ideas reflect and give an answer to this question. The example of Kathy, a living being who is destined to live a predetermined life as a clone who has to give her organs away, might sound a bit dystopian and futuristic. But as Ishiguro expressed his concerns in a 2016 interview with the Guardian saying that " we are on the brink of all kinds of discoveries that will completely alter the way we run our lives", he already is foreshadowing our future in his novel. Ishiguro might not give us a concrete answer to the question of who we are, but regarding Agamben's definition of the subject in our present time, we can take Ishiguro's novel as a reminder that we maybe

will never find the answer to this question. Observing our own lives can make us aware of things that are going wrong in our society and give us an opportunity to change these.