# Dromophobia's Veil: Unveiling the Enigma of Hailsham in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* Through a Virilian Lens of Fear and Control

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**Abstract**

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go within the framework of Paul Virilio's influential theories. The novel challenges conventional science fiction by seamlessly integrating speculative elements, focusing on character development, and exploring the complexities of human relationships. At its core, the narrative delves into the theme of simulation through human clones destined for organ donation. The story traces the characters' journey from their sheltered upbringing at Hailsham to the ethical dilemmas of cloning, questions about the nature of humanity, and the struggle for individual identity. Hailsham, a meticulously constructed simulation, conceals the truth about the clones' destinies, conditioning them to accept their fates. The narrative prompts reflections on determinism, free will, and autonomy, emphasizing the role of memory and narration in conferring meaning upon their lives. Never Let Me Go transcends genre boundaries to explore the human condition, love, and friendship within a dystopian context. This analysis employs Virilio's theories to enrich our understanding of the novel's intricate exploration of simulated existence and genuine humanity.

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## 1. Introduction

In the realm of literature and cinema, narratives often converge, weaving the threads of individual human experiences into the broader tapestry of cultural transformations. Yet, embarking on an exploration within the realm of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* reveals that this journey doesn't merely confine itself to the realms of imagination. It unfurls into a dynamic analysis of the postmodern condition that traverses continents and transcends epochs.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* offers a lens through which to explore the intricacies of human experience, identity, and the impact of technology. This narrative navigates the terrain of memory, human connection, and the haunting consequences of choices made in a rapidly changing world. Through the lives of its protagonists, Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy, Ishiguro's work explores the ethical implications of technology and its role in shaping the characters' lives, providing an intriguing avenue for a comparative analysis through the lens of Paul Virilio's theories.

To fully comprehend the scope and significance of this study, it is essential to acknowledge the overarching themes that bind this narrative with Virilio's ideas. Postmodernity, with its multifaceted manifestations, serves as the thematic underpinning of this exploration. In a world characterized by technological acceleration, the boundaries of time, space, and human connection have undergone profound transformations. Paul Virilio's theories on speed, technology, and the resultant impact on human existence offer a theoretical framework through which we can critically engage with this narrative.

Rather than fragmenting the shared themes of postmodernity present in *Never Let Me Go* and Virilio's theories as coincidental occurrences, these postmodern pages, scripted by Kazuo Ishiguro and Paul Virilio, tell stories of their own. Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy act as instruments through which the formation and resistance of human connections are dissected. Though their story is a unique one, it pulses with the shared heartbeat of postmodernity—a realm where traditional values clash against the unrelenting tide of change. The exploration of identity, the frustration of aspirations, and the tension between past and present cross boundaries. Through this narrative, insights into Virilio's theories are gleaned, deciphering the impact of technological acceleration on human relationships, societal norms, and the core essence of human identity.

This introduction delves into the shared themes of postmodernity, cultural shifts, and human experience, thus setting the stage for a multifaceted analysis that melds the narrative of *Never Let Me Go* with the theories of Paul Virilio. It captures the essence of this narrative

and magnifies its resonance, inviting readers to embark on a journey that transcends temporal constraints, guided by the beacon of Virilio's ideas. As the traversal of this literary landscape transpires, the uncovering of how the fabric of human existence is woven into the intricate tapestry of postmodern realities occurs, drawing us into a deeper contemplation of the human condition within an era of dynamic transformations.

The methodological framework of this study is designed to unravel the intricate intersections of human perception, trauma, and reality, as encapsulated in *Never Let Me Go,* through the lens of Paul Virilio's theories on speed, technology, and the resultant impact on human existence.

## 2. Literature Review

The intersection of literature, the era of postmodernity, and critical theory has paved the way for an extensive investigation into the intricate connection linking society, culture, and technological progress. This literature review delves deep into the multifaceted dance between the urbanization trends of the postmodern era, the transformative impact of technology on human relationships, and the philosophical bedrock upon which Paul Virilio's theories are built. This provides a robust groundwork for the subsequent analysis of *Never Let Me Go.*

At the core of this societal transformation lies the influence of technology, a pivotal force that has spurred both innovation and disruption. Zygmunt Bauman, in his exploration of Liquid Modernity published in 2013, underscores the fluid and constantly changing nature of contemporary life, where technology acts as a catalyst for rapid shifts and uncertainty.

To begin, it is essential to define hyperreality, a concept that challenges conventional notions of reality. The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) primarily defines reality as "the quality of being real or having an actual existence". However, when examining the concept more deeply, it becomes evident that reality is not a fixed entity. Instead, it is often described as a circular set of signifiers referring back to each other, lacking a firm grounding for meaning. This inherent ambiguity forms the crux of the hyperreal - a condition where the line between reality and imagination dissipates. The subsequent sections will elaborate on various dimensions of hyperreality based on the work of influential theorists.

One of the foundational elements of hyperreality is the concept of simulation and simulacra. Simulation, in this context, is defined as the merging of 'reality' and representation, blurring the boundaries between the two. Within this framework, there is no clear demarcation between where reality ends and representation begins.

The simulacrum, often described as a copy without an original, is a central component of hyperreality. Gilles Deleuze (1990) provides a poignant definition, stating that "the simulacrum is an image without resemblance" (257). Jean Baudrillard (1994) in *Simulacra and Simulation* further elucidates this concept by mapping the transformation from representation to

simulacrum through four 'successive phases of the image.' The culmination of this transformation is the creation of an image that "has no relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum." (6)

The proliferation and succession of simulacra are intrinsically linked to the ascent of hyperreality. Deleuze, Baudrillard, and various other theorists trace this phenomenon to the modern era, where the world has become either partially or entirely simulated. Frederic Jameson (1990) in his book, *Signatures of the Visible*, argues that late capitalism is characterized by the mass reproduction of simulacra, resulting in a world saturated with unreality and a pervasive absence of "the referent." (17)

Ferdinand Saussure's (1959) outlines the nature of the sign as the signified (a concept of the real) and the signifier (a sound-image). Baudrillard (1981) claims the Saussurian model is made arbitrary by the advent of hyperreality wherein the two poles of the signified and signifier implode in upon each other destroying meaning, causing all signs to be unhinged and point back to a non-existing reality (180).

In Paul Virilio's *The Lost Dimension*, in which he argues that modern media technology have created a "crisis of representation" where the distinctions between near and far, object and image, have imploded (112). Virilio locates the 'vacuum of speed' as the historical development which produces technology that overturn our original understanding of spatial relations by altering our perceptions. This machinery "gives way to the televised instantaneity of a prospective observation, of a glance that pierces through the appearances of the greatest distances and the widest expanses" (31).

The rise of information and communication technologies has obliterated temporal constraints, reshaping our perception of time into something instantaneous and nonlinear. This concept, as explored in Paul Virilio's 2009 edition of *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, resonates deeply with our contemporary reality. Virilio's examination of "critical space," expounded upon in his 1994 work *The Vision Machine*, delves into how communication technologies have redefined the boundaries of human interaction, obliterating physical distances and giving rise to a telepresent existence. His intriguing ideas about disappearance, where individuals merge with cybernetic instruments and these instruments seamlessly blend into the modifying environment, encapsulate the intricate relationship between human action and technological determinism.

Virilio's conceptual framework sheds further light on the trajectory of modern urbanization, a theme that finds resonance in the context of *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro. In *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (2009), Virilio introduces the notion of the "city of the beyond," reflecting the rapid advance of information and communication technologies. This heralds the dawn of cities as virtual entities, tethered to the speed of digital transmission, akin to the dystopian landscapes depicted in Ishiguro's novel. This departure from traditional spatial

constraints signifies a paradigm shift, as cities transcend their physical boundaries to become hubs of instantaneous connectivity and omnipresence. The concept of the *city-world* emerges as a manifestation of this transformation.

Guy Debord (1997) posits that modern society has replaced authentic social life with mere representation. The "spectacle" has replaced real interactions with others so that meaning itself is no longer authentic; it is treated as a commodity or currency. In *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro, a poignant exploration of the consequences of such a society is witnessed, where individuals are conditioned to accept their roles as commodities, a theme that resonates deeply with Debord's notion of the "spectacle."

Ishiguro's dystopian narrative masterfully invites readers to contemplate the profound implications of a world in which technology and societal norms have seamlessly converged, ultimately giving rise to a chilling and thought-provoking reality. This thought-provoking addition not only enriches our understanding of the theoretical foundations discussed but also establishes a compelling and coherent connection to the subsequent analysis of *Never Let Me Go.*

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Close Reading and Textual Analysis

This investigation employs a multifaceted analytical strategy grounded in close reading. The analysis commences with a detailed examination of select textual passages within *Never Let Me Go* that are intricately connected to Virilio's notions of speed, technology, and their effects on human perception and reality. These passages are meticulously chosen for their role in evoking themes of trauma and misperception, forming the foundation for subsequent exploration.

### 3.2. Reader Response Theory

Integral to this methodology is the incorporation of reader response theory, exploring the ways audiences engage with the thematic tapestry of *Never Let Me Go* within the context of Virilio's ideas. This lens of reception uncovers the narrative's impact on its readership through the prism of speed and technology. By examining the interplay between authorial intent, textual signifiers, and reader interpretation within the context of Virilio's theories, this facet reveals diverse dimensions of meaning generation influenced by the accelerating pace of modern life.

### 3.3. Postmodern Interpretative Paradigm

Furthermore, a postmodern interpretative paradigm dissects the narrative's architecture within the framework of Virilio's theories. This analytical facet examines the interplay between textual fragmentation, meta-narratives, and the oscillation between subjective and objective realities as influenced by Virilio's ideas about technology and speed. This analysis augments the excavation of the text with an inquiry into narrative techniques that mirror the complexities of human perception within a technologically accelerated world.

*3.4. Ethical Analysis*

Additionally, ethical underpinnings of distorted perceptions and their implications are examined through ethical theories, as informed by Virilio's concepts. This mode of analysis unveils the moral landscapes of characters' decisions and actions within the context of Virilio's ideas about the moral consequences of speed and technology.

*3.5. Contemporary Contextualization*

The trajectory of this analysis extends to contemporary arenas, where the interplay between technological advancements and perception is explored in *Never Let Me Go* within the framework of Virilio's theories. This dimension situates the themes of the narrative in a contemporary discourse, offering insights into the dialectical relationship between technological interfaces, human consciousness, and Virilio's theories on the acceleration of modern life.

*3.6. Synthesis and Scholarly Compass*

The methodological infrastructure employed in this study guides the investigation into the nexus of perception, trauma, and reality in *Never Let Me Go* within the context of Paul Virilio's theories. This analytical approach synthesizes diverse theoretical underpinnings within a coherent narrative shaped by Virilio's ideas. Ultimately, this methodology serves as a scholarly compass, guiding the exploration of the narrative with intellectual rigor and interpretative finesse, as it intersects with Virilio's theories on the impact of speed and technology on human existence and perception.

## 4. *Never Let Me Go:* A Postmodern Exploration of Technological Realities

In the realm of literature, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* transcends its identity as a mere literary creation; it functions as a microcosm that encapsulates profound shifts within the tapestry of society. This section embarks on a meticulous exploration of this work, delving into its historical context, the intricacies of postmodern elements, and the intersection of its narrative with Paul Virilio's theories on technology, perception, and societal evolution, particularly focusing on keywords related to simulation and virtualization.

*Never Let Me Go* stands as an exemplar of a postmodern narrative that navigates the boundaries between historical realities and an imagined world. It introduces readers to an alternate reality where human clones grapple with the implications of their existence.

The historical context of *Never Let Me Go* immerses the reader in a parallel universe where medical advancements have led to the creation of human clones whose existence is defined by the ethical dilemmas of science and the human quest for longevity.

As the narrative is delved into more deeply, the postmodern elements within *Never Let Me Go* come to the fore. Ishiguro's narrative structure, characterized by fragmented storytelling and a focus on the inner lives of the characters, aligns with the postmodern emphasis on subjectivity and the complexity of human experience.

The engagement with Paul Virilio's theories on technology, perception, and societal evolution within the novel reveals the acceleration of technology and its impact on human consciousness, particularly in the realms of simulation and virtualization. It serves as a backdrop to the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by the characters in the story. Virilio's ideas on the shrinking of time and space in the age of technological acceleration find resonance in the experiences of the characters, where the boundaries of reality and virtualization blur.

In this exploration, the postmodern landscape presented in *Never Let Me Go* will be navigated, exploring how historical realities and an imagined world converge and diverge. The role of technology in shaping human perception and ethical choices within the context of this narrative, particularly in the realms of simulation and virtualization, will be scrutinized, guided by the beacon of Paul Virilio's theories.

## 5. Casting Light on Post-War Realities in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

Embarking on the literary odyssey presented by Kazuo Ishiguro's seminal work, *Never Let Me Go,* necessitates a profound immersion within the intricate historical tapestry against which its narrative gracefully unfurls. This literary masterpiece stands as an embodiment of post-war tumult, its narrative intricacies resonating far beyond the confines of its pages. The winds of change, heralding a swiftly evolving world, lay the groundwork for the lives of Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy, central figures within *Never Let Me Go.* Through their experiences, Ishiguro offers readers not only individual stories but also profound insights into the broader societal transformations reverberating through England and extending their tendrils far beyond its shores.

The years following the cataclysmic Second World War are indelibly etched in the annals of history as an era marked by convulsive change, social upheaval, and unprecedented technological advancement. It is within this tumultuous backdrop that the narrative of *Never Let Me Go* germinates, echoing the unmistakable resonance of a world grappling with seismic shifts. The haunting scars of war, vestiges of a fading empire, and a geopolitical landscape undergoing rapid transformation collectively constitute the dramatic historical tableau that sets the stage for Ishiguro's magnum opus.

In this intricately woven historical tapestry, Ishiguro's meticulous craftsmanship shines brilliantly. His unwavering commitment to historical authenticity, manifesting in meticulously crafted details encompassing the sensory facets of a bygone era and the nuanced emotional temperaments of its denizens, bestows upon the novel an authenticity that transcends the realm of fiction. The rich tapestry of post-war Britain, elegantly depicted through his prose, serves as a palimpsest upon which the narrative elegantly dances—an evocative canvas immersing readers in the palpable realities of that era.

Within the crucible of this historical maelstrom, Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy, the central personas of *Never Let Me Go,* embark upon their journeys. While their personal stories exude an intimate essence, they simultaneously reverberate with broader cadences of societal change. As the world grapples with the specters of war's aftermath, the inner landscapes of these characters become emblematic of generations wrestling to reconcile the weight of personal aspirations with the overarching narratives of a world still reeling from the tremors of conflict. The lines demarcating personal and collective destinies blur, and Ishiguro's narrative deftly traces the trajectories of individual lives as they intersect with the surging historical forces of the epoch.

The historical underpinnings of *Never Let Me Go* transcend the superficial trappings of mere window dressing; they serve as conduits through which Ishiguro masterfully explores the very essence of postmodernism. As the tumultuous, war-scarred world transforms into an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, urbanization, and shifting paradigms of reality, the characters' grapple with the profound complexities of personal identity and societal transformation. The turbulent historical backdrop transcends its role as mere scenery; instead, it actively shapes and molds the lives of the characters, infusing their narratives with the very zeitgeist of postmodern uncertainty.

Delving further into the essence of *Never Let Me Go,* the reverberations of its historical foundation amplify, beckoning exploration into the interstice of individual and societal metamorphoses. This thematic confluence harmonizes with the very spirit of postmodern inquiry, offering an intellectual expedition ripe for academic exploration.

## 6. Perception Unveiled: An Odyssey Through Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

In the sphere of literature, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* emerges as a paragon of postmodern narrative artistry, adroitly navigating the intricate tapestries of perception, identity, and societal transformation. This literary masterpiece invites meticulous analysis as it unfurls within a distinct yet thematically interwoven world, offering profound insights into the panorama of human experiences, societal intricacies, and the moral conundrums of the 21st century. While its narrative diverges in premise, it undertakes a nuanced exploration of the human condition against the backdrop of contemporary society's tumultuous landscapes.

Embarking on a Literary Odyssey: Journeys through Ishiguro's Realm

Ishiguro's narrative journey transplants the world of literature into a distinct and profoundly evocative realm. *Never Let Me Go* unfolds within a dystopian alternative reality where human clones grapple with the haunting implications of their existence. Despite its divergence from the familiar, this setting serves as a microcosm mirroring the broader societal transformations that define the contemporary era.

### 6.1. Characters and the Labyrinth of Perception: The Complexities of Self-Discovery

At the narrative's heart are characters whose perceptions of self, society, and reality undergo profound and intricate transformations. Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy, nurtured within the confines of Hailsham, confront the challenges of a sheltered upbringing that obscures the grim reality of their existence as clones, fated for organ donation. The emotional core of the narrative materializes through their misperceptions about their world and purpose.

### 6.2. Narrative Artistry and Metaphorical Vistas: Exploring Ethical Ambiguities

The consummate narrative artistry exhibited by Ishiguro extends beyond individual destinies. Hailsham, a secluded boarding school, transcends its physicality to become a metaphorical microcosm encapsulating societal control and ethical ambiguity. It conjures profound inquiries about the value of human life within the context of medical advancements, thus serving as a thematic fulcrum.

### 6.3. Unraveling Complex Themes and Analytical Methodology: Navigating the Intellectual Landscape

*Never Let Me Go* adroitly unfurls the complexities of perception, ethics, and societal change, beckoning readers to delve into its intricate layers. As we navigate these thematic landscapes within the framework of this study, we artfully untangle societal and ethical complexities, revealing their resonance with contemporary debates. The novel, surpassing its role as mere narrative, emerges as a profound conduit through which we comprehend the interstices of human existence, the reverberations of misperceptions, and the redemptive journey toward self-discovery, acceptance, and atonement.

## 7. Celluloid Interpretations: *Never Let Me Go on* the Silver Screen

In the realm of cinematic expression, Kazuo Ishiguro's literary masterpiece, *Never Let Me Go,* emerges as a paragon of postmodern narrative artistry. The transition from written word to visual medium, brilliantly orchestrated by director Mark Romanek in 2010, warrants meticulous examination as it undertakes the formidable task of translating Ishiguro's intricate prose into a cinematic tableau. This celluloid adaptation deftly encapsulates the novel's contemplative ambiance, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in the eerie yet beguiling beauty of the narrative.

The cinematic rendition unfolds as an evocative tapestry of sensory experiences, beckoning audiences to traverse the existential terrain inhabited by Ishiguro's characters. With stellar performances by Carey Mulligan, Andrew Garfield, and Keira Knightley, the film breathes life into the novel's iconic characters, endowing them with emotional depth and resonating authenticity. Their portrayals artfully convey the characters' internal turmoil, forging an

intimate bond between the viewers and the profound existential questions that permeate the narrative.

Romanek's directorial endeavor transcends mere visual storytelling; it serves as a vehicle for a profound exploration of Ishiguro's intricate thematic tapestry. The film adeptly conveys the disquieting realities faced by human clones, inexorably bound by predetermined destinies. In doing so, it faithfully preserves the essence of the novel's philosophical narrative, making it accessible to a wider audience and reaffirming cinema's enduring capacity to convey literary depth.

This cinematic odyssey underscores the transformative potential of cinema in reshaping and enriching the thematic profundity inherent in literary postmodern narratives. It emerges as an indispensable facet of academic inquiry, facilitating a meticulous examination of the intricate threads of perception, societal metamorphosis, and the human experience that intricately weave through the fabric of *Never Let Me Go.*

### 7.1. Confluence of Performances and the English Landscape

An element that draws a compelling parallel between *Never Let Me Go* and other cinematic works is the presence of Keira Knightley, who delivers captivating performances. Within the confines of *Never Let Me Go,* Knightley takes on the role of Ruth, thereby showcasing her remarkable versatility as an actress. Her portrayal of Ruth deftly navigates the moral ambiguity and existential dilemmas inherent in the film's dystopian world. Knightley's aptitude for embodying diverse roles and conveying nuanced character facets attests to her formidable acting prowess.

Furthermore, these cinematic works often unfold against the backdrop of England. *Never Let Me Go* explores a dystopian alternative reality within the serene English countryside. This British setting offers thematic continuity in the exploration of societal norms and cultural subtleties, notwithstanding the distinct temporal and narrative contexts. England itself assumes a character-like dimension in these narratives, exerting a palpable influence on the characters' experiences and decisions, and serving as a lens through which broader themes are interrogated.

Keira Knightley's commanding and nuanced performances, coupled with the English setting, contribute substantively to the thematic resonance that transcends the confines of these cinematic adaptations. As we engage in a critical examination of how perception, ethics, and societal transformation are rendered on the silver screen, Knightley's roles and the English backdrop emerge as integral facets of our analytical exploration.

## 8. Hyperreality in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go:* A Virilian Exploration of Simulated Existence

In Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go,* the concept of hyperreality, as elucidated through Paul Virilio's theories, takes on a poignant and thought-provoking dimension. The novel, set in a dystopian alternate reality, offers a lens through which we can understand the blurring boundaries between reality and simulation in a world characterized by technology, surveillance, and the manipulation of perception.

Virilio's notion of hyperreality posits that the distinction between reality and simulation becomes increasingly indistinguishable, primarily driven by the rapid advancement of technology and media. In *Never Let Me Go,* this phenomenon finds resonance in the lives of the characters, who are clones raised for organ donation. These characters grapple with a predetermined fate, one that is predetermined and engineered by a society that views them as commodities rather than human beings.

The media and communication technologies in the world of *Never Let Me Go* play a central role in shaping the characters' perceptions and experiences. They are constantly under surveillance, and their lives are subject to the gaze of the outside world. This surveillance mirrors Virilio's concept of tele-surveillance, where individuals become passive witnesses to an orchestrated production.

The characters in *Never Let Me Go* are emotionally manipulated by the media and societal norms. They are presented with a version of reality that justifies their existence as organ donors, blurring the lines between what is real and what is simulated. This manipulation of perception is akin to what Virilio calls a "publicity clip," where the audience is emotionally manipulated by the media's version of truth.

Moreover, the characters' lack of agency in determining their own destinies aligns with Virilio's argument for passive and manipulated subjectivity. In a world where their lives are predetermined, they are victims of a hyperreal existence, one that is dominated by the simulacra of societal norms and technological control.

In essence, *Never Let Me Go* serves as a poignant exploration of hyperreality through the lens of Paul Virilio's theories. It highlights how technology, surveillance, and media manipulation can blur the boundaries between reality and simulation, ultimately leading to a hyperreal existence where agency is diminished, and individuals become passive spectators of their own lives.

### 8.1. Artificial Construction and the Concealment of Reality

Virilio's insights in *Speed and politics* (1986) emphasize the critical role of speed in contemporary society, particularly in the context of technological progress. He posits, "It is speed as the nature of dromological progress that ruins progress.... Western man has appeared superior and dominant, despite inferior demographics, because he appeared more rapid" (Virilio 46-7). Virilio underscores that the perception of superiority is intricately linked to the rapidity with which Western society adopts and adapts to technological advancements.

Virilio further highlights the contemporary crisis of ethical and aesthetic references in *The aesthetics of disappearance* and he suggests that the recourse to History, as proposed by postmodernity experts, can be a mere diversion from the fundamental question of Time. This crisis, he argues, arises from the growing imbalance between direct and indirect information dissemination through various communication means, favoring mediated information over meaningful content. In this context, the reality effect tends to supplant immediate reality, emphasizing means over ends. (24)

Virilio's insights align with the notion that the essence of humanity is deeply intertwined with its existence in time and space. As he asserts, "The statement that the human is that which moves through time equates human reality with time and space and in a sense inextricably entwines the future of both." Technological speed, as Virilio contends, disrupts the conventional concepts of time and space that have served as the foundation for human understanding for millennia.

Throughout history, human self-perception has been grounded in a stable notion of time and space. Virilio's work aims to demonstrate that destabilizing this conventional notion, whether through the lens of quantum physics or deconstruction, has profound implications. Speed, as a dominant force, challenges the traditional anchoring of consciousness that defines the human experience within the cosmos. Virilio asserts that the erosion of consciousness due to the overwhelming influence of speed amounts to a cultural decline, a gradual suicide. This erosion deprives us of the capacity to distinguish between the original, that which remains authentic or static, and the copy or simulacra. Consequently, it impairs our ability to make informed political and social decisions.

Shifting focus to literature, *Never Let Me Go,* a pivotal setting in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go,* is an intricately designed environment that serves a specific purpose: to mold the perception and understanding of the students residing within it. As Guo (2015) astutely points out, *Never Let Me Go* can be aptly described as "a dystopian pseudo-paradise'' (2).

In the realm of artificially constructed spaces, Disneyland stands as a prominent example. Disneyland consciously endeavors to simulate alternative external realities, creating a fantastical universe for visitors. Similarly, *Never Let Me Go* constructs a carefully controlled environment, but its objectives differ significantly. *Never Let Me Go* 's aim is not to reveal but rather to conceal the truth about the outside world from the children it nurtures.

Virilio's insights regarding the manipulation of perception and the blurring of reality's boundaries become particularly relevant when examining *Never Let Me Go*. This educational institution plays a significant role in shaping the students' perception of the world beyond its confines. Virilio's concepts of tele-surveillance and the orchestration of reality through media manipulation provide valuable perspectives for understanding how *Never Let Me Go* operates.

The institution strategically limits the students' awareness of the external reality, ensuring they remain shielded from the genuine experiences of the "real" world inhabited by non-clones.

In essence, *Never Let Me Go* 's concealed utopia not only serves as a crucial backdrop for the narrative but also offers a lens through which Virilio's theories can be applied to explore the deliberate concealment of reality in a dystopian context. These examples from literature and popular culture shed light on the recurring theme of concealed utopias and the manipulation of perception in artificially constructed spaces.

*8.2. From Hailsham to the World: Constrictions of Reality in Kazuo Ishiguro's Universe*

Every student within the confines of Hailsham shares the distinctive trait of being a clone, resulting in a striking degree of similarity among them. Primarily, their ages exhibit remarkable proximity, and their sole adult figures are the guardians overseeing their upbringing. Notably, none of the children within the institution can lay claim to a conventional family unit, bereft of biologically-related siblings or parental figures. Consequently, they form an intricate metaphorical family, comprising solely of children and their guardians. Their collective existence is characterized by a shared curriculum, adherence to standardized daily routines, engagement in artistic and athletic endeavors, consumption of identical sustenance, and interactions limited to a fixed cadre of adult figures. This uniformity in their daily lives fosters a profound sense of community exclusive to Hailsham. However, it is crucial to underscore that this sense of belonging is confined solely to the precincts of Hailsham. Were the students ever to gain insight into the realities of the external world, they would inevitably come to view themselves, as well as their Hailsham cohorts, through a different lens when compared to a broader spectrum of individuals who markedly differ from them in numerous aspects. The guardians overseeing Hailsham's operations are acutely aware of this reality, thus diligently endeavoring to limit the children's exposure to the external world. They actively propagate the notion that there exists no alternative to the world within Hailsham, or that the entirety of the universe mirrors Hailsham. The narrative's trajectory bears witness to the efficacy of this meticulous concealment. Hailsham's students evince scant inquisitiveness or interest in the world beyond the institution's walls; they do not manifest any yearning to explore or transcend these boundaries. No child harbors aspirations of escaping the school or venturing beyond the perimeter fences. Their lack of exposure to external realities translates into an absence of awareness regarding what they are missing or the facets that ought to arouse their curiosity. Moreover, owing to their birth and upbringing within Hailsham, they are inherently predisposed to accept this circumscribed reality as the sole reality. The reality presented to them is unequivocally taken for granted, viewed as the exclusive, plausible reality; they are, in essence, oblivious to any alternative:

"This might all sound preposterous; however, one must bear in mind that, during
that particular juncture in our lives, any realm beyond Hailsham assumed the character
of an otherworldly realm. We possessed nothing more than the most nebulous notions
about the world outside, harboring a profoundly limited comprehension of its dynamics
and the realms of possibility that it might proffer" (Ishiguro 66).

The pupils' interaction with the outside world is so scrupulously managed and mediated
that it extends even to the selection of volumes within their library. Even the inclusion of books
in their library, which discuss the external world, is a matter of meticulous curation:

"There existed a rumor, perpetuated within the confines of our library, that certain
classic literary works, such as the Sherlock Holmes series, remained conspicuously absent
from our shelves due to the proclivity of their main characters for excessive smoking.
Moreover, instances of encountering pages torn from illustrated books or magazines
bore witness to the fact that such pages featured depictions of individuals indulging in
smoking" (Ishiguro 67).

### 8.3. Personal Space and Fear in Hailsham

Another noteworthy aspect of life within Hailsham is the conspicuous absence of personal
space, a deprivation keenly felt by the students. Kathy, for instance, devises a private game as
a coping mechanism to compensate for this lack of personal space. She yearns for an
alternative to the communal existence enforced upon them:

"In those days I had this secret game. When I found myself alone, I'd stop and look
for a view – out of a window, say, or through a doorway into a room – any view so long
as there were no people in it. I did this so that I could, for a few seconds at least, create
the illusion the place wasn't crawling with students, but that instead Hailsham was this
quiet, tranquil house where I lived with just five or six others" (Ishiguro 88).

This can be regarded as an attempt to simulate personal space within the confines of a
communal existence, a subtle act of resistance against the artificially constructed life and
environment imposed upon them.

As it unravels, the carefully orchestrated childhood within Hailsham serves a singular
purpose: to rear healthy donors for the larger system.

Hailsham, functioning as the epicenter of this "machinery of control," wields power over
the students through the use of fear. In examining Hailsham through the lens of Paul Virilio's
notion of "the system of deterrence," we discern parallels in the imposition and exploitation of
fear to preserve and perpetuate the simulation. Virilio frequently explores how fear is
harnessed within systems of control, transforming it into a spectacle capable of influencing the
masses. This system of deterrence encompasses various facets, including wars, social and
political crises, and media manipulation, all of which are designed to perpetuate fear in the
collective consciousness. The masses are not merely afraid of a tangible threat, such as a

nuclear bomb; rather, their fear is stoked by the omnipresent system of deterrence, fostering apprehension of the nuclear threat.

Such a system of deterrence also operates within Hailsham. The reason the children never contemplate venturing beyond the institution's boundaries, as mentioned previously, is their exposure to harrowing stories of previous attempts. These narratives are nothing short of horrifying, verging on the gothic and grotesque. They take on the character of oral folklore, passed down through generations of students:

> "There were all kinds of horrible stories about the woods. (...) 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" (Ishiguro 50).

This system of deterrence, intertwined with the stories of terror and the watchful gaze of the guardians, works in unison to dissuade any curiosity about the world beyond Hailsham's confines. It reinforces the notion that venturing into the unknown is synonymous with peril, an idea that becomes deeply ingrained in the students' psyches.

In essence, personal space, or the lack thereof, becomes a poignant aspect of life at Hailsham, prompting subtle acts of resistance like Kathy's secret game. Furthermore, the institution employs the machinery of control and the system of deterrence, akin to Virilio's concepts, to shape the students' understanding of the external world, ensuring their compliance with the predetermined fate that awaits them.

## 9. Simulated Realities and Psychological Responses: Dromophobia in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

In the context of Hailsham, the concept of trauma, as defined through Paul Virilio's idea of "dromophobia," can shed light on the psychological experiences of the students. Dromophobia refers to the fear of speed, or more broadly, the fear of the relentless acceleration of modern life. In Hailsham, the students are subjected to a highly controlled and accelerated existence, where their lives are predetermined, and the pace of their development is tightly regulated.

The trauma experienced by the students in Hailsham can be understood as a result of this dromophobia. Their lives are constantly under the pressure of an impending future where they will become organ donors, a fate that is both accelerated and inevitable. This fear of the rapidly approaching moment when they will have to start donating their vital organs permeates their existence. It creates a sense of powerlessness and anxiety, akin to the fear of an impending collision in Virilio's dromophobic framework. As one student, Kathy, reflects:

> "In those days, I had this secret game. When I found myself alone, I'd pause and seek out a vista—be it through a window or ajar into a room—any prospect free of human presence. I undertook this ritual to momentarily fabricate the illusion that our abode was

not teeming with students but, instead, a serene dwelling where a mere five or six of us resided." (88)

This could be construed as an endeavor to simulate personal space within the overarching simulation of communal existence—a coping mechanism ingeniously employed by Kathy to navigate the intricately crafted artifice that is Hailsham.

Moreover, the machinery of control in Hailsham, represented by the guardians and the institution itself, employs fear as a potent tool to dominate over the students. This aligns with the idea of the postmodern government or authority using fear as a means of control, a concept prevalent in contemporary society as well. The guardians perpetuate myths and horror stories about the outside world to dissuade the students from venturing beyond the boundaries of Hailsham. These stories create a sense of dread and apprehension, effectively imposing a system of deterrence, as discussed in Jean Baudrillard's work, to keep the students compliant and confined:

> There were all kinds of horrible stories about the woods. (...) 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. (50)

A thought-provoking query surfaces: Are these narratives fabricated by the guardians of Hailsham or, rather disconcertingly, by the students themselves? If the former holds true, the rationale is unequivocal: to intimidate the children into remaining within the confines of Hailsham. However, if the latter proves accurate, the motives veer into a disquieting realm. By contriving harrowing tales, the students validate their own incarceration within Hailsham, providing themselves with a compelling pretext to shun the world beyond the institution's periphery. Essentially, they become architects of their own system of deterrence.

In the realm of simulation and hyperreality, Hailsham is a microcosm of a hyperreal environment. The students are raised in a carefully constructed simulation of normal life, complete with artificial familial relationships and a controlled, accelerated existence. They lack a genuine connection to the outside world, and their reality is defined by the rules and norms of Hailsham. This hyperreality is so ingrained in their minds that they struggle to conceive of an alternative reality. Their simulated existence becomes their truth, even though it is artificially constructed.

Miss Lucy's attempt to reveal the truth to the students represents a rupture in this hyperreality. She disrupts the carefully crafted simulation by exposing the grim destiny that awaits them. However, their indifferent response underscores the extent to which they have internalized the hyperreal environment. They react as though they already knew the truth, suggesting that they have been conditioned to accept this hyperreality as the only reality:

'If no one else will talk to you, 'she continued, _then I will. The problem, as I see it, is that you've been told and not told. You've been told, but none of you really understand, and I dare say, some people are quite happy to leave it that way. But I'm not. If you're going to have decent lives, then you've got to know and know properly. (...) Your lives are set out for you. You'll become adults, then before you're old, before you're even middle-aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs. That's what each of you was created to do. (...) You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided. (...) You need to remember that. If you're to have decent lives, you have to know who you are and what lies ahead of you, every one of you.' (79-80)

Miss Lucy's revelations curiously fail to provoke a profound and transformative response from the students. Instead, their reaction appears to be one of nonchalance, as if they had long harbored this awareness, their equanimity remaining undisturbed. This response underscores not only the content of their knowledge but, more critically, how this knowledge was initially imparted and absorbed. It seems that they ingested this truth as the singular and indisputable reality, rendering it utterly unremarkable. Had the stark disparities between their existence and the world beyond been accentuated, had their profound lack of autonomy been emphatically delineated, their reaction might have exhibited a divergence. The students have been systematically indoctrinated into the confines of Hailsham's reality since a tender age, making it exceptionally challenging for them to conceptualize an alternative reality or question the one in which they are ensnared.

Paradoxically, even though Miss Lucy's revelations fail to incite a passionate response among the students, they culminate in her dismissal from the institution. This apparent indifference on the part of the students, coupled with the institution's punitive reaction, underscores the formidable complexity of challenging a deeply internalized system of simulation. This challenge persists, even when individuals consciously and deliberately oppose it.

Within the confines of Hailsham, the guardians assume roles that bear a striking resemblance to parental figures in the lives of the students, embodying a psychological surrogate akin to the relationships conventionally cultivated between children and their parents. The students maintain an unwavering and uncritical fondness for their guardians, rarely pausing to engage in introspection regarding the authenticity of this affection. This adoration appears intrinsic and instinctual in nature.

''Do you like Miss Geraldine? 'It might have been the first time I 'd actually thought about whether I liked a guardian. In the end I said: ''Of course I like her''.' (47)

Ruth takes a more assertive stance by claiming to have received a unique gift—a pencil case—from Miss Geraldine. This assertion appears to be rooted in a hopeful reverie, driven by her yearning to be perceived as exceptional in the eyes of a parental figure. Kathy, initially

cautious about Ruth's claim, later empathizes with her, recognizing the underlying motive behind this imaginative fabrication:

> ''So what if she'd fibbed a little about her pencil case? Didn't we all dream from time to time about one guardian or other bending the rules and doing something special for us? A spontaneous hug, a secret letter, a gift? All Ruth had done was to take one of these harmless daydreams a step further; she hadn't even mentioned Miss Geraldine by name''. (60)

In the absence of any exposure to the conventional concepts of family, parents, or siblings, the students within Hailsham find themselves longing for these fundamental notions. Stranded in a world devoid of these natural relationships, they ingeniously construct imitations of familial bonds within the constraints of their artificial environment. This underscores the persistent presence of inherent emotional needs and humanity's innate capacity to seek alternative forms of connection.

Additionally, the clones grapple with complex nuances in their relationship with sexuality. Engineered to be sterile, they face the dual deprivation of not only lacking parents but also the inability to become parents themselves. Their existence remains void of any prospect of sexual reproduction, a theme poignantly highlighted in a passage from the novel that encapsulates the profound consequences of their enforced infertility:

> I just waited for that bit that went: _Baby, baby, *Never Let Me Go* ... 'And what I'd imagine was a woman who'd been told she couldn't have babies, who'd really, really wanted them all her life. Then there's a sort of miracle and she has a baby, and she holds this baby very close to her and walks around singing: _Baby, *Never Let Me Go* ... 'partly because she's so happy, but also because she's so afraid something will happen, that the baby will get ill or be taken away from her. (70)

In summation, life within the secluded confines of Hailsham unveils a multifaceted tapestry of psychological responses, all forged within the crucible of a carefully constructed simulation. The students grapple with the trauma of coerced infertility, the perpetual scarcity of personal space, and the pervasive use of fear as a means of control. Despite their partial awareness of reality, they are systematically conditioned to acquiesce, leaving them incapable of envisioning an alternative existence. The guardians, assuming roles akin to parental figures, represent a psychological substitution in the lives of the students. These simulations of familial bonds and the profound implications of enforced infertility further underscore the intricate psychological landscape within Hailsham's precincts, mirroring the dromophobic undercurrents in the works of Paul Virilio.

## 10. conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of Never Let Me Go reveals the profound implications of artificially constructed environments on perception, psychology, and human responses. By applying Paul Virilio's theories of dromophobia, hyperreality, fear as a tool of control, and the blurring of boundaries between reality and simulation, we have unveiled the intricate tapestry of human experiences within the confines of Hailsham.

The students' lives, meticulously regulated and accelerated towards predetermined destinies, resonate with Virilio's concept of dromophobia. The fear of an impending future as organ donors permeates their existence, inducing anxiety and powerlessness akin to the fear of a relentless collision in modern life. The machinery of control within Hailsham employs fear as a potent tool to maintain authority and conformity, echoing Virilio's exploration of fear's role in contemporary society.

Moreover, the hyperreality within Hailsham blurs the boundaries between reality and simulation, with the students accepting their predetermined fate as the only truth. Their lack of exposure to the external world illustrates the power of artificially constructed environments to shape perception and understanding, mirroring Virilio's discussions on hyperreality.

The psychological responses of the students, including their yearning for personal space and the creation of surrogate familial bonds with the guardians, highlight the enduring human quest for connection and meaning within an artificial world. Their enforced infertility adds another layer of complexity to their understanding of sexuality and reproduction, reflecting the profound consequences of their engineered existence.

In essence, Never Let Me Go challenges us to contemplate the boundaries between reality and simulation, the consequences of an accelerated existence, and the enduring human quest for connection and meaning within an artificial world. Through this interdisciplinary analysis, we gain a deeper and more academic understanding of the novel's themes and characters, emphasizing the power of literature to explore complex facets of the human experience. Kazuo Ishiguro's masterpiece serves as a profound exploration of how artificially constructed environments can shape the perceptions, psychology, and responses of its inhabitants, offering a thought-provoking narrative that resonates with contemporary societal concerns.

## 11. Future research

Future research in the realm of artificially constructed environments in literature and film offers an exciting avenue for scholars. Building upon the analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, a promising direction involves conducting a comprehensive comparative analysis of such environments across various works, providing a holistic understanding of recurrent themes and human experiences within controlled settings. Gaining insights into Kazuo Ishiguro's intentions in crafting Hailsham as an artificially constructed environment through interviews and personal reflections could shed light on the narrative's thematic underpinnings.

Ethical dimensions surrounding the creation of such environments, particularly in cloning, surveillance, and control contexts, warrant further exploration. Investigating the moral dilemmas faced by characters and their implications for contemporary ethical discourse is essential. Moreover, the depiction of media manipulation and fear orchestration in these environments presents a rich area of investigation. Analyzing techniques used to control perception and behavior can shed light on societal concerns regarding media influence and power dynamics.

A psychological study into the long-term impact of growing up in artificially constructed environments, as depicted in literature and film, is another avenue. Understanding how characters cope with challenges can provide valuable insights into human resilience. Additionally, studying adaptations of works like *Never Let Me Go* across different media forms reveals how narratives are reimagined and their impact on diverse audiences.

Linking these themes to contemporary issues like genetic engineering and surveillance underscores the relevance of artificially constructed environments. Developing pedagogical approaches for teaching literature and cultural studies using these narratives can foster critical thinking. Encouraging interdisciplinary research that combines literary analysis with fields like sociology, psychology, ethics, and media studies can provide holistic insights into human existence within such realities.

Finally, exploring utopian and dystopian elements within these environments deepens our understanding of societal aspirations and anxieties. Future research can investigate how these narratives challenge traditional notions of utopia and dystopia. In sum, future research enriches our comprehension of human experiences and underscores the enduring relevance of artificially constructed environments in contemporary discourse, offering a coherent roadmap for scholars in this field.

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