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RHETORIC OF CITIZENSHIP AND STATE SURVEILLANCE IN KAZOU ISHIGURO'S *NEVER LET ME GO*

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ABSTRACT

The research critically examines the rhetorical discourse of citizenship in Kazou Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. It aims at unraveling the subjugation of people in modern society by exploring the complex identity of narrator and other characters where citizenship have taken the possibility to new level of power politics, redefining security and reality through universalized state. This research critically analyses how the issues of citizenship and immigrations are rhetorically constructed through discourse, in which categorization and Identity play a crucial role in dividing people into different hierarchies based on race, ability, sexuality, and perceived national origin. Instead of understanding that these categories are fixed, natural, or purely legal, this work reveals the way citizenship operate as rhetorical systems that shape how bodies are seen, governed, and valued. The rhetorical acts involved in creating these discourses mirror colonial logic and reinforce exclusion, surveillance, and disposability of some bodies over others. To support the claim, the researcher draws some of the theoretical insight from Bio-Power mainly forwarded by Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben's concept of Bios and Zeos and David Spurr's concept of Citizenship.

Keywords: Homo sacer, rhetoric, biopolitics, testimony, identity, citizenship

INTRODUCTION

Never Let Me Go (2005) takes us to a futuristic setting in which genetically produced clones grow to certain time period and forced to

sacrifice their organs and life itself for therapeutic purposes of people. The main plot questions the ongoing project of cloning and appeals us to think about human existence with and without political rights in modern day nation states. Apparently, Ishiguro foregrounds an ethical question regarding cloning and its relation with human beings. But this text also exposes the political issue of state acknowledging an individual or group of people as its citizens or Other. *Never Let Me Go* is particularly useful in this context of acknowledging an individual as a political being by a nation state.

The story is narrated from the perspective of Kathy, a clone, but carries life story of Tommy and Ruth as well. They grow up in Hailsham, a boarding school, represents a modern nation state that offers no free will to its subject and keeps its citizens and migrants under constant surveillance. Their life is structured in such a way that they are raised to be first ‘carer’ and later donate their organs. As they enter into adulthood, they seek to raise few questions about their identity. Carers are clones who, before they become donors themselves, are assigned to care for those in the donor phase of their lives as they are gradually killed by repeated organ retrievals.

Ishiguro presents the protagonist Kathy as an agent who narrates her and her friends’ experience as students-clones in a boarding school environment. The society has created and raised them with the sole intent of farming their organs, so, regards them as products. Their human freedom and status have been arrested and they are regarded as soulless creatures. Through Kathy’s narration, she gives voice to an oppressed social group of voiceless clones. So, it is Kathy who develops some sort of awareness and shares the account of her story on behalf of those marginalized clones. Kathy, the narrator and the protagonist of this novel, shares her life experience including her friends during their stay at Hailsham that their life is guided by some rules and norms prescribed to her.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Different scholars critically studied this text exposing different themes that can be related to modern society and its multifaceted reality. Gabriel Griffin raises the issues of beings whose political existence is not established so far. She claims: “At the heart of *Never Let Me Go* is the questions of the relative status of the clones and of what it means to be

human . . . are they like us or unlike us?” (Griffin 2009, p. 653). Hailsham is an institution where the human clones are brought up. The major project of this school is to produce human copies for organ farming and harvesting. These clones possess every basic human physiognomy but still they are rejected as political being. So, Griffin is more concerned about the political discrimination faced by clones.

Similarly, Mark Jerng unveils the way human body is denied as a whole. He argues: “Ishiguro explores the theme of partial personhood by showing the struggle of the narrator, Kathy, to stage her life in terms of the usual parameters of an innocent childhood and a mature adulthood” (Jerng 20008, p. 383). The novel restructures the existing definitions of the human and considers human not as a whole person rather reduced to the parts that can be reused in other bodies.

Despite being artificially developed, clones manifest human characteristics such as creativity and human emotions. Marvin Mirsky analyze this aspects and comments as: “One learns that at the “residence” of Hailsham, special courses involving creative activities like painting, sculpture, poetry, and the arts in general have been introduced in order to answer a crucial question: do clones have souls?” (Mirsky 2006, p. 629). Mirsky points out that discrimination against clones as non-human are not justifiable because they also possess core human nature such as soul and heart which also lead to creativity.

In this regard, their creativity reveals human status. Representation of clones generates a new aesthetics of empathy for a post-humanist age. Shameem Black opines: “The implicit analogies between deracinated, genetically-engineered students and exploited workers in a multicultural Britain and a globalizing economy ask us to recognize how many people in our own world are not considered fully human” (Black 2009, p. 803). These clones also represents minority groups- are being harvested just to donate their vital organs once they reach adulthood. Their futures are planned and arranged by the authority. Like the parentless clones, the normal marginalized beings are also regulated by state mechanism and are under continuous medical gaze.

To support the hypothesis, the researcher has divided the paper into four parts. The first part introduces the primary text of the research, states

hypothesis. The second part brings existing knowledge on the primary text and theoretical methodology that includes the concept of rhetoric, biopolitics, citizenship and testimony. The third is textual analysis in which the researcher studies the primary text from the perspective of rhetoric and discourse of citizenship. And finally, the last section concludes the finding of the research.

David Spurr notes, “Non-Western people are essentially denied the power of language and are represented as mute or incoherent. They are denied a voice in the ordinary idiomatic sense- not permitted to speak- and in a more radical sense- not recognized as capable of speech” (Spurr 1993, p.104). This silencing and dismissal of people from non-Western cultures, considering them as incapable of meaningful communication, is a form of colonization of their Identity through language. Jenkins (2000) argues that identity and citizenship are socially and rhetorically constructed through the intricate interplay of language, classification systems, and power dynamics. This understanding is particularly relevant in the case of immigrants who are often termed ‘illegal’ or ‘aliens’. Jenkins emphasizes, “Identity is never just a matter of individual psychology or social cognition. It is always also political” (p.19).

Pham (2016) writes: “Citizenship is not neutral” (123) and further emphasizes that citizenship is rhetorical as it is argued over, performed, and felt, and involves not just policy but also emotional, ethical, and symbolic dimensions of belonging; “Despite citizenship being the ‘legal foundation and social glue of the new communality,’ it lies at the intersection of individual autonomy and collective government action. It is in this intersection that the term citizenship is ‘created and contended with rhetoric” (p. 94).

Focusing on the rhetoric of citizenship and identity, Andreouli and Howarth (2013) note that participants from non-Western countries have been denied access to the West for decades, and the very process of navigating immigration controls and visa applications has positioned them as “others” (p. 374). They explain how the institutionalized practice of immigration controls and differentiates between Western as elites and non-Western as non-elite immigrants, directly impacting how “this” person makes sense of his “place” in the UK as the Non-Western migrants are doubly otherised and misrecognized... (p. 375). Social categories such as

British, immigrant, etc. are social representations, and “Identity is as much about identification with certain groups as it is about recognition from those groups and others” (p. 364).

Not only are non-Westerners seen differently or othered based on their looks and origin, but citizenship also challenges the myth of assimilation by acting as a bureaucratic identity for them, more than their cultural Identity. Kate Vierra argues, “Without legal status, one was not permitted to drive, take out federal school loans, work, vote, or sponsor family members to migrate . . . papers were textual evidence of their exclusion” (Vierra 2016, p. 11). Legal status, such as citizenship or other documents, produces social inclusion or exclusion that shapes the Identity of immigrants through access to or lack of their institutional rights. This reinforces that documents are not just bureaucratic tools—they signify legitimacy, belonging, and power, shaping immigrant Identity materially and symbolically (p. 10). Amy J. Wan (2014) frames citizenship as day-to-day performance and ideological practice constructed in multiple social, cultural, and linguistic sites beyond the legal realm. Wan contends that “the good citizen constructed by this training participates but must also meet eligibility criteria . . . often defined through educational background and along race, class, and gender lines” (p. 13), showing how the rhetoric of citizenship functions to discipline immigrants, aligning them with dominant expectations. Beyond legal aspects, citizenship is rhetorically constructed to manage national anxiety, often through education and literacy.

Giorgio Agamben, in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), presents the idea of “bios” and “zoe” in his theory bare life. He argues:

The Greeks . . . used two terms . . . zoe, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and bios, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group. [...] The entry of zoe into the sphere of the polis—the politicization of bare life as such—constitutes the decisive event of modernity. (Agamben 1998, p. 1)

During Greek period, every citizen had these two separate qualities. Homo Sacer is someone who is banned from the political legal community and reduced to the status of his physical existence. He can be killed with

impunity but cannot be sacrificed. Agamben considers bare life to be marginal like refugees, asylum seekers, raped women, the brain dead and so on. Although they all involve human life, they are excluded from the protection of the law.

Construction of 'truth' is another important aspect of state functioning and discourse plays very important role. Michael Foucault stresses that discourse is associated with relations of power as expressed through language and practices because it is based on certain knowledge that helps to form power. Foucault argues: "Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern" (qtd. in Weedon, 108). Discourse is regulated by a set of rules which circulates certain utterances and statements that produces knowledge and meaning in a discursive way. The authorities or people, who are in power control, guide or regulate to gain power over others through languages or practices that ultimately produce 'truth' or 'knowledge'.

Frantz Fanon, (1952), powerfully articulates that one of the primary ways rhetoric colonizes is by imposing rigid categories, which serve to fix individuals within a predetermined social and ontological hierarchy. He further argues that the colonizer's language and gaze create the "fact" of Blackness as an objectified and inescapable condition: "'Look, a Negro!'"... I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination; I discovered my Blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships..." (p. 112). Even though the body is categorized and burdened with a history it did not individually create, it is forced to embody.

State creates 'truths' through discourses and the subjects have possibility to bear testimony. Testimony lies "between the inside and outside of the langue, between the sayable and unsayable in every language – that is, between the potentiality of speech and its existence, between the possibility and impossibility of speech" (Agamben 1999, p. 194). Agamben talks about the possibility of bearing the witness in relation to testimony. Testimony as the "possibility of bearing witness" embodies a possibility of language confirming the impossibility of the position of the subject.

This liminal space between witness and linguistic expression unveils the possibility for testimony.

Immigrant identity is constructed through state classification systems, border regimes, and evolving public narratives rooted in race. Favell (2001) writes: "States make and define populations in order to generate territorial sovereign power: the fundamental bordering processes by which they categorize, distinguish, differentiate, and integrate nationals and foreigners, citizens and aliens, majorities and minorities" (p. 5). On the same line, Eithne Luibhéid (2002) says immigrant identity is constructed through racial, gendered, and sexual logics, privileging white-heteropatriarchal families while excluding other groups. Similarly, in American sociology and public policy, the term "immigrant" usually meant "European immigrants," which hides the differences and inequalities among immigrants and covers up how race shapes the way immigrants are treated (p. 6). Immigrant identities are shaped by changing laws, racial and sexual hierarchies, and neoliberal ideologies. He argues: "Legal immigrants can become illegal, and vice versa... legality and illegality are clearly ongoing processes, rather than simply static statuses" (p. 304).

Appadurai (2006) discusses, "the dilemma is that minorities are both necessary and threatening to majoritarian nationalisms. They are seen as aspirants to equality who are never fully equal" (p. 43). In the modern nation-state, minorities are viewed as threats to the national body rather than supplementary groups. He presents that immigrants and minorities are often rhetorically framed as impure, excessive, or undeserving of full membership in the nation, and their identities are constructed as partial citizens or internal threats, but are also necessary, yet are not given the respect and space.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

This paper endeavors into the contemporary capitalist nation states which commercialize human organs through technological use for monetary interest. *Never Let Me Go* echoes twentieth century legacies of modern capitalist subjugation of its subject by nation state. Like *Homo Sacer*, the students of Hailsham are not given the proper status and raised to serve their body parts. Hailsham is the microcosm of the capitalist society and it uses authority to exploit the clones in terms of monetary value. They

are excluded from the protection of law. The lives of clones in Hailsham identify with 'bare life' which does not have any political, social and legal existence in society. Indeed, they are always under the unconditional threat of death.

Kathy narrates about her current life as a carer and the education system provided by Hailsham. Gradually, she reveals that all the students at Hailsham are clones who are predestined to become carers and then, donors. Her story begins with an assertion of her identity as she goes as: "My name is Kathy H. ... thirty-one years old . . . a carer now" (1).

Through Kathy's narration, this introductory section lets us know about her identity as she shares her three things about her; her name, age and her profession. She lacks family name and address signifies that the clones as treated a bare life who is denied protection law by the state.

Kathy's narration indicates that Hailsham is mainly concerned with the clones' bodies which are to be kept healthy. That is why; weekly regular health check-up takes place in order to promote their healthy organs. She remembers what the regular schedule for health checkup at Haisham "we had to have some form of medical almost every week" (13). On a very surface level, though Hailsham represents itself as an educational project which outwardly educates the genetically engineered students but its sole purpose is to exploit those students hegemonically to its extreme level. To make it possible, Hailsham regulates them through the use of discourse and other various medical technologies. The discourse humans create about Hailsham helps them disguise the true purpose of this institution. In reality, Hailsham is an institution through which the clones are objectified and ultimately turned into organ donors.

As a consequence, Hailsham strategically spreads discourses which the students have to strictly follow. The guardians do not focus much on knowledge about the reality of the world instead they always try to keep the human clones healthy as much as they can for their future donations and they are taught to believe on what the guardians say without questioning any fact.

Hailsham considers the clones as a collection of healthy organs, as products. So, they are raised in non-human conditions with many

restrictions. These clones don't have control over their futures. Usually, immigrant identities are rhetorically shaped by state power, cultural myths, and moral narratives, rather than by the immigrants themselves. Hartelius (2015) also presents the idea that images of immigrants are constructed as if they pose threats to the military, economy, and are societal burdens, or are portrayed as "modern-day Ellis Island arrivals by border authorities, governmental administrators, corporate agents, and the American public" (p. 2). The guardians always instruct them about the limitations of these clones during their stay at Hailsham like they are strictly not allowed to have cigarettes or drink alcohol or do anything that could harm their bodies in order to preserve healthy organs for donations. Power has been used as a form to control their lives; these clones are necessary for human beings only from utilitarian perspective but won't allow having citizenship. Discourse is used to demean their existence so that their organs can be used for therapeutic purpose.

In this way, these clones are restricted from many human rights and opportunities as they are not acknowledged as 'proper human' and the major motive of their existence is just to harvest their organs. They are not allowed to marry or have babies because [Mrs Emily] said, "sex affects emotions in ways you'd never expect" (66). Similarly, the Hailsham students are given detailed sex education. Though, they can have sex without any tension related to unwanted conceives, they are strictly forbidden to conceive babies. In this way, these clones are discriminated from normal human beings related to instinctual behavior of nurturing. So, their lives are guided by certain rules and norms prescribed by Hailsham which they are instructed to follow. Like the materialist culture, Hailsham also counts these clones as products to be sold, so reduces them to its body parts. This is the reason why they are deprived from natural fundamental rights because they are not citizens.

As the plot, the students of Hailsham come to know about the secret mission of their existence. When the clones including Kathy know the bitter reality about their unfulfillable human desire of motherhood, Kathy expresses her suffering through the jazz song. It goes as: "Baby, baby, never let me go...." (57). The pillow that Kathy holds is very symbolic which she

assumes to be her imaginary baby; she wants but cannot have in her entire life as the state policy does not allow that.

One day, when Miss Lucy overhears a group of children sharing their future plans about going to America, becoming a star, working in a supermarket and so on, she reveals the real mission of Hailsham for breeding them. She gives a vicious speech of stop dreaming and frequently repeats that ‘none’ of them will never grow old or have careers as they are destined to donate their healthy organs after they reach maturity. Miss Lucy tells: “Your lives are set out for you. You’ll become adults, and then before you’re old, before you’re even middle-aged, you’ll start to donate your vital organs” (64). In this way, the future of clones is already planned by the authority. Categorization is a political project that executes policy of utilizing clones’ organs for therapeutic use being indifferent to their life. The materialist culture has created these non-human entities called ‘clones’ with no proper status for the sole purpose of medical exploitation.

Similarly, Cisneros (2014) emphasizes resisting the vulnerable images and stereotypes created for immigrants. He mentions that to redefine citizenship as performance and political agency, immigrant protestors challenged alienating narratives through multilingual, visual, and bodily rhetoric: “Protesters in La Gran Marcha fused multiple modes of discourse... into a hybrid version of citizenship” (p. 27). Kathy who shares the life experience of these marginalized clones exhibits her consciousness and subjectivity. In this way, she tries to recognize and establish her identity. So, in a sense, she tells her story to the readers to raise the voice against Hailsham project. Resistance does not necessarily have to be violent and aggressive; one can resist silently too. Kathy raises awareness and questions about the system that ultimately proves her being of agency and subjectivity.

CONCLUSION

Hailsham represents modern nation states that are governed by technology and guided by capitalism. The phrase, “Never Let Me Go,” gives the same impression of double standard as modern nation state. They need immigrants and at the same time refuse to award citizenship. Human beings need clones for the therapeutic utility of the clones but at the same time they refuse to give clones human status and hence the title *Never Let Me*

Go. The lives of these artificial humans represent marginalized community and immigrants who are systematically discriminated and discarded on the basis of legal papers. Fundamentally, citizenship is mutual agreement between individual and the state: individual has obligation towards state and the state protect the individual. But in modern era, citizenship itself has become the means of discrimination among peoples. Clones are not awarded with citizenship and hence are denied their political existence.

Hailsham encourages students to develop their artistic creativity to humanize the clones and prove the world that it reveals humanity. At the same time, Madame addresses them as ‘poor creatures’ in order to emphasize the superiority of the humans and inferiority of the non-humans or in a sense, how these human clones are discarded, alienated and ‘othered’ from normal human world. The narrative itself exposes life experience of the marginalized community in modern state. They have been subjected by the knowledge, power and discourse of citizenship which are created to exploit them.

Production of clones itself marks the loss of their identity as the state denies them as proper human beings. These clones are given only first name and have no family name, such as Kathy and Tommy. This shows that the state takes clones just like animal or a ‘bare life’ that can be used, exploited or even killed if needed.

To conclude, the experience of Kathy and inadequacy of language to express provides space for testimony. She witnesses the exploitation of the clone community who is reduced into mere chunk of organs. The combined phenomena of her witness and her narrative function as testimony. They do behave as humans but are not recognized as humans in bureaucratic system for they lack papers and hence autonomy and agency. Ishiguro’s exploration of human right issues is optimistic though. The way Ishiguro presents Kathy as a speaker who raises voice on behalf of marginalized social group gives a clue that he is seeking for human agency to make their free will that should not be compromised on the basis of a paper- citizenship.

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