KAZUO ISHIGURO'S PROBLEMATICS OF AUTHENTICITY AND EXPERIENCE

ZEYNEP ARIKAN

111611004

ISTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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PROF. JALE PARLA

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OTANTİSİTE VE
DENEYİM SORUNSALI

Zeynep Arıkan
111611004

Tez Danışmanı: Jale Parla

Jüri Üyesi: Bülent Somay

Jüri Üyesi: Yektan Türkyılmaz

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ABSTRACT

KAZUO ISHIGURO'S PROBLEMATICS OF AUTHENTICITY AND EXPERIENCE

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Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go, When We Were Orphans, authenticity, experience

This thesis explores the ways in which Kazuo Ishiguro's two novels *Never Let Me Go* and *When We Were Orphans* deal with the issues of authenticity and experience. Both protagonist narrators suffer discrimination and subordination since their childhood and this gives rise to a feeling of agony in both of them. As a result they lack the ability to protect themselves against the violence of power and to develop healthy attachments. They use different strategies in order to overcome the negative feelings caused by the subordination they face; however they never truly manage to resist it. The totalitarian power they are exposed to prevents them from having an authentic experience or *Erfahrung* in its Benjaminian sense. They live under the strict control of the authority all through their lives. There is no room for freedom and authenticity for both Christopher and Kathy. What they believe to be authentic is constructed by the dominant power. Despite this gloomy picture however, they manage to open up a space for freedom through friendship, art and remembering. In the end they find the courage to search for the truth and face their lack. In this thesis I claim that this confrontation motivates them to write their stories. Their narratives lead them to regain a new perspective towards their past. They subvert their own power as narrators by constantly reminding the reader about their unreliability and it becomes a threat against the macro power as well. By subverting power to a certain extent, looking at their own history in a different light and therefore approaching the truth, they open up a space for an authentic experience. I argue that in the end writing compensates their inexperience in life and thus becomes an experience itself.

ÖZET

KAZUO ISHIGURO'DA OTANTİSİTE VE DENEYİM SORUNSALI

Zeynep Arıkan
Kültürel Çalışmalar, MA Tezi, 2014
Tez Danışmanı: Jale Parla

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kazuo Ishiguro, Beni Asla Bırakma, Çocukluğumu Ararken, otantisite, deneyim

Bu tez Kazuo Ishiguro'nun iki romanı *Beni Asla Bırakma* ve *Çocukluğumu Ararken*'de otantisite ve deneyim meselelerinin ele alınış biçimini inceler. Her iki romanın protagonist anlatıcısı da çocukluklarından itibaren ayrımcılığa ve tâbiyete maruz kalırlar ve bu durum onlarda yoğun bir keder hissine yol açar. Bunun sonucunda iktidarın şiddetine karşı kendilerini koruma ve sağlıklı bağlılıklar geliştirme yetilerini kaybederler. Maruz kaldıkları tâbiyetin kendilerinde yarattığı olumsuz duygularla baş edebilmek adına farklı stratejiler geliştirseler de buna karşı hiçbir zaman tam anlamıyla bir direnç gösteremezler. Kendilerine tahakküm eden totaliter iktidar otantik bir deneyim ya da Benjamin'in kullandığı anlamıyla bir *Erfahrung* yaşamalarına engel olur. Hayatları boyunca otoritenin sıkı kontrolü altında yaşarlar. Ne Christopher ne de Kathy'nin hayatında özgürlük ve otantisiteye yer vardır. Özgün olduğunu düşündükleri ne varsa egemen iktidar tarafından inşa edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte bu karanlık resme rağmen her ikisi de arkadaşlık, sanat ve hatırlama yoluyla kendilerine belli bir özgürlük alanı açmayı başarırlar. Sonunda da hakikatin peşine düşme ve eksikleriyle yüzleşme cesaretini gösterirler. Bu tez bu yüzleşmenin her iki protagonist anlatıcıyı da hikayelerini yazmaya teşvik ettiğini ve anlatılarının geçmişleri hakkında kendilerine yeni bir bakış açısı kazandırdığını iddia etmektedir. Sık sık güvenilmezliklerini vurgulayarak kendi anlatıcı iktidarlarını sarsmaları zamanla makro iktidara da bir tehdit teşkil eder. İktidarı belli bir ölçüde altüst etmeleri, kendi tarihlerine farklı bir biçimde bakabilmeleri ve bu sayede hakikate yaklaşmaları özgün bir deneyimin kapılarını açar. En sonunda yazma edimi hayatlarında hüküm süren deneyimsizliğin yerini alır ve böylece kendisi bir deneyime dönüşür.

Can’a

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Veritas vos liberabit"[1]

Does the truth really have the power to set one free? This question has been pondering in my mind since the days of Gezi protests which started in the summer of 2013, in Istanbul. As the protest erupted, the routine of our daily life was disrupted and we found ourselves in a totally different reality. After two days of struggle, the Park was occupied and the police was not allowed in. During the occupation people in the Park managed to organize very quickly and despite the disturbance provoked by the nationalists against Kurds, peace prevailed all along. For the government the whole process was a state of emergency; however for us it was an approach to freedom. This feeling of freedom was closely related to the absence of the state apparatus and mainly the police. The discourse that our safety was provided by the state proved to be wrong, for there was no crime and walking on the street had never felt so safe before. During the days of the occupation the source of insecurity was not people who were accused to be "criminals" but the police itself. Even though I was familiar with this fact through the theories I have read and the stories I have heard, it was the first time I had the chance to experience it myself. Undergoing this experience,

[1] The truth shall set you free

the meaning of time and space changed dramatically and instead of being like a lonely gas molecule revolving around the shopping malls, I felt like a water drop flowing around the city which gave a feeling of being part of the collectivity. However as expected it didn't last long. By command of the prime minister police attacked the peaceful people in the park and emptied it. After a couple of months there was almost no trace left from the days of the protest except for our memories.

Taking my own experience of Gezi and other new social movements all around the world into account, I was preoccupied by the idea of the possibility of an authentic experience, an experience that exceeded the limitations of the power. Although people came across with the fact that life without the presence of the state was not beyond imagination, they could not sustain it. This very fact brought into my mind the words of Zizek: "At the level of positive knowledge, it is, of course, never possible to (be sure that we have) attain (ed) the truth —one can only endlessly approach it […]"[2] The impossibility to hold on to truth confused me about its liberating character. And I encountered two protagonists of Kazuo Ishiguro, namely Christopher and Kathy, in the middle of this confusion. Both protagonist narrators are members of totalitarian societies where everything is under the control of an invisible power and hence there's no room for authentic experience[3]. What distinguish them from the other protagonist narrators of

[2] Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London, New York: Verso, 2008), 4.

[3] When I say "authentic" I keep in mind that the word is controversial in many ways. However I don't discuss different aspects of the term, and I use it only in the way Benjamin and afterwards Adorno used it. The question that post structralists would posit if

Ishiguro are their active search for an alternative world and their hunger for truth; nevertheless their ambition to reveal the truth cannot help them to liberate from the totalitarianism they are exposed to. Both *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go* consist of the memory pieces of Christopher and Kathy like in the case of the rest of Ishiguro's novels. They constantly remind the reader about the inefficiency of their memories. Their unreliability almost serves as a leitmotif which subverts the power of the narrators. The awareness of their own lack[4] can be evaluated as a threat towards the macro power as well, for it evokes a desire to write their own stories and hence reveal the social subordination they suffer due to power. Both novels demystify the language that veils the violence of the system. Especially in the case of *Never Let Me Go* the alienating character of the language is quite significant. As Pandey states, unlike conventional science-fiction novels we don't encounter any invented words, "[r]ather than invent new words, however, Ishiguro uses known words neologistically."[5] The usage of "carer", "possible", "student", "complete" normalize the hegemonic and violent character of the environment in the novel. Both protagonist narrators are stuck in an identity constructed by the manipulative language of the power and are prevented from the truth about themselves and their lives. Having said that, the way both Christopher and

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authenticity is possible at all is not the topic of this thesis. I will return to this subject in the second chapter.

[4] By lack I refer to the Lacanian term which implied the lack of phallus.

[5] Anjali Pandey, "'Cloning Words': Euphemism, Neologism and Dysphemism as Literary Devices in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go," *Changing English: Studies In Culture And Education* 18:4 (2011): 385.

Kathy constellate the memory pieces of their past gives voice to the unsaid and open up a space for a transformative authentic experience. My purpose of the study is to examine the path that leads the protagonist narrators to writing. I claim that in the end of both novels the totalitarian power that prevents them from having their authentic experience is subverted to a certain extent by the process of remembering and writing; eventually writing becomes an experience itself.

1.1 Literature Review

Most of the academic essays and theses about the two novels concern the narrative devices and with regard to these devices, the remembering processes of the protagonist narrators. In her article, Bizzini analyses both novels in terms of storytelling in Benjaminian and Arendtian senses and reconstruction of the self through this action. She argues that Christopher and Kathy's "remembering processes prevent them from falling into the trap of self-victimization and in the end they manage to reconstruct their identity."[6] I will oppose her argument in terms of her usage of storytelling in Benjaminian sense and her claim that in the end they "recover from their phantasmal and unresolved past."[7] I argue that neither Christopher nor Kathy can be considered as traditional storytellers. I also

[6] Silvia Caporale Bizzini, "Recollecting Memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro's When We Were Orphans and Never Let Me Go," *Atlantis* 35: 2 (December 2013): 65.

[7] Ibid.

claim that approaching the truth about their lives does not set them free and they never manage to cut off ties with their past. Irina's essay on the other hand considers *When We Were Orphans* to be a story of a contemporary exile. She "reads [the novel] as one long metaphor for lost identity- that of Banks and possibly that of the author. Tracing thus contemporary exile not only in the "no man's land" between cultures but also in the individual sense of inner displacement, Kazuo Ishiguro proves once more to be one of the most far-reaching voices of, and about, the postmodern condition."[8] She also focuses on the hybridity of Christopher in terms of his rootlessness and trans-nationality borrowing the term from Homi Bhabha. Hybridity is not only peculiar to the protagonist narrator but also to his narrative. The novel resists any categorization; it does not fit any genre, including detective novel, for it is totally unconventional compared to other examples. It is also the case concerning *Never Let Me Go*. Attempts to classify the novel have failed so far. As Shaddox suggests, it exceeds the genres of both science fiction and dystopia on account of the fact that there is neither science[9] nor any agent of the totalitarian system.[10] Some scholars commented that it fits the generic mold of Bildungsroman which I disagree. Dilthey claims that in a Bildungsroman "[a] regular development is observed in the life of the individual: each of the stages has its own intrinsic value and is at the same

[8] Irina Toma, "Contemporary Exile in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novel When We Were Orphans," *Petroleum - Gas University Of Ploiesti Bulletin, Philology Series* 61: 2 (December 2009): 61.

[9] Except for the technology of cloning which we never encounter throughout the novel.

[10] Karl Shaddox, "Generic Considerations in Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go," *Human Rights Quarterly 2* (2013): 448, accessed June 11 2014, doi: 10.1353/hrq.2013.0026.

time the basis for a higher stage"[11] Slaughter defines *Never Let Me Go* in terms of a dissensual Bildungsroman[12]. Levy on the other hand states that it is the story of Kathy's "personal growth from early childhood to maturity and adulthood" [13] in accordance to Dilthey's description. However I oppose both opinions for I claim that Kathy is prevented from growing up and from undergoing a *Bild-ung* (a construction of the self) as a result of the repressive power. The most essential element of the development of a child is perhaps the competence to protect themselves and their own lives. Kathy however lacks this basic instinct, namely Eros, which prevents her from developing a long-term attachment with Tommy as well. Taking this very fact into account, I argue that *Never Let Me Go* is the opposite of a Bildungsroman.

There are plenty of reader-oriented critics as well. Britzman deals with the psychoanalytic reading problems in *Never Let Me Go.* She "suggest[s] this novel of education may be read as a commentary on the internal world of object relations, where Ishiguro's characters stand in relation to our affective representations."[14] Whitehead on the other hand

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[11] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Poetry and Experience*. Ed. and trans. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), 390.

[12] Joseph R. Slaughter, "Enabling Fictions and Novel Subjects: The Bildungsroman and International Human Rights Law," *PMLA 121: 5 (2006): 1405-1423*, accessed June 26 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25501613.

[13] Titus Levy, "Human Rights Storytelling and Trauma Narrative in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go," *Journal Of Human Rights* 10: 1 (January 2011): 2.

[14] Deborah P. Britzman, "On Being a Slow Reader: Psychoanalytic Reading Problems in Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go," *Changing English: Studies In Culture & Education* 13: 3 (December 2006): 307.

mentions the identification problem in the novel. She argues that for the reader it is not clear with whom to identify: with the clones or with the normals who take advantage of the organ donations. This confusion gives way to a great disturbance in the reader and transforms them into "self-reflexively and performatively discomfort and perplex readers."[15]

The formation of identity in both novels constitutes one of the central issues. Both protagonist narrators suffer a highly traumatic childhood and depending on the nature of trauma, they are incapable of expressing it in words. Christopher attaches no emotions to the memories regarding the loss of his parents and Kathy can never truly realize what it means to "complete" at a very young age. Webster Thomas argues that in order to maintain her dignity Kathy uses narcissistic defense mechanisms which results in "depletion of affect, weak identity, limited symbol formation, thinking and self-knowledge, and a diminished capacity to give meaning to relationships."[16]

Another common issue is the comparison between Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *Never Let Me Go.* The clones are mostly considered as successors of Frankenstein, although they are much more human-like and their creator never shows up throughout the novel. This can be considered as a result of the dramatic change in socio-economic conditions by means of

[15] Anne Whitehead, "Writing With Care: Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go," *Contemporary Literature* 1 (2011): 54.

[16] Diane A. Webster Thomas, "Identity, Identification and Narcissistic Phantasy in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro" (PhD diss., University of East London, 2013): ii.

post-capitalism. This change can also be traced in a comparison between *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go.* The former reveals the oppressor of Christopher in the end who comes out to be a Chinese mafia boss whereas in the latter we do not encounter any concrete representative of the totalitarian power. There is no information about the procedure of the operations: we never get to know who decides for them, who receives the organs, how they are organized in general. In any case both protagonists are socially subordinated as a result of power relations. In *When We Were Orphans* it is caused by the World War II and the imperialist politics of England whereas in *Never Let Me Go* it is a result of the unrestrained development of technology lacking any means of ethics after the World Wars. This thesis seeks to contribute to the existing literature with its analysis of power relations and social subordination which results in lack of authentic experience in both novels. I claim that the hegemonic power they are exposed to prevents both Christopher and Kathy from growing up. It causes an ever-lasting agony and deprives them of any idea for resistance against the power. However in the end, as they face their lack and impotence by means of their curiosity and hunger for truth, they transform agony and inexperience into writing. Although they cannot manage to overcome repression, they give voice to the unsaid and open up a space for an authentic experience.

1.2 Methodology

Martin Jay's elaborate book *Songs of Experience*[17] inspired me a lot in deciding for the purpose of my thesis. The eighth and the ninth chapters, namely "Lamenting The Crisis of Experience: Benjamin and Adorno" and "The Poststructuralist Reconstitutions of Experience: Batailles, Barthes, and Foucault" arouse interest in me about the term "experience" and specifically the way Benjamin uses it. This interest led me to Benjamin's book *Illuminations*[18] and his essays "The storyteller" and "On Some Motifs of Baudelaire" opened new doors to me in dealing with the concept of "experience". For a further reading on the subject I applied to Agamben's *Infancy and History*[19]. His meditation on the destruction of experience in modernity gained me a new perspective. As a result of my perusal, I started to read the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro in a different light. I realized that the totalitarian environment in both *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go* deprived the protagonist narrators of an authentic experience, for they almost resemble guinea pigs in a laboratory where their whole lives are under control. For an examination of power relations that cause such inexperience, I referred mainly to Butler's book *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection.* In explaining their impotence as well as their lack of a notion of resistance (especially in the case of Kathy) I made references to

[17] Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience : Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[18] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*: *Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Scocken Books, 1985).

[19] Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (London, New York: Verso, 1993).

philosophers like Foucault, Freud and Lacan. I frequently used Lacanian vocabulary including words like the Real which signifies the realm of the unchangeable truth regarding both the Self and the external world. It is "the state of nature from which we have been forever severed by our entrance into language."[20] The Symbolic order on the other hand defines the realm of language, or in other words "the social world of linguistic communication, intersubjective relations, knowledge of ideological conventions, and the acceptance of the law."[21] Another Lacanian concept I often referred to is Lack, meaning the lack of phallus. According to Lacan desire relies on lack. It is certainly the case for both Christopher and Kathy, for their desire for writing evokes after facing their impotence. As a result they give voice to their stories. I mostly borrowed Lacanian terms from Zizek, hence the way I use them is his interpretation. In the third chapter I did not use as much theory as I did in the first two chapters. However I made use of Azade Seyhan's theory on remembering from her book *Writing Outside the Nation.* I came up with the idea of child agony and deprived growth caused by a repressive power in the two novels after reading Jale Parla's essay on the subject.[22] My opposition to the idea that *Never Let Me Go* can be evaluated as a bildungsroman relies on her suggestion that deprived growth of children

[20] "Modules on Lacan," Introduction to Psychoanalysis, (accessed July 1 2014), http://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/psychoanalysis/lacanstructure.html

[21] "Symbolic Order," Introduction to Psychoanalysis, (accessed June 30 2014), http://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/psychoanalysis/definitions/symbolicorder.html

[22] Jale Parla, "From 'Father Time' to the *Child in Time*: The Book of the Child," *JTL 3* (2006).

should be considered as a new genre.[23] My purpose for choosing *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go* among Ishiguro's other novels in spite of the similar narrative devices they share is because of Christopher and Kathy's ambition to reveal the hidden truth and root out the evil from the world as in the case of Christopher and to search for a possibility of deferral for the fatal operations they will undergo as in the case of Kathy. Although *The Unconsoled* consists of the journey of Ryder where he pursues the purpose of his existence in a Central European city, the state of his amnesia differentiates him from the two. Christopher and Kathy's courage to face the undesirable truth discerns *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go* in terms of the function of the narrative. I argue that in both cases narrative compensates the lost experience.

[23] Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE AND POWER

2.1 Internalization of Power and Child Agony

One of the main characteristics of modern times is surely the transformation subjects have undergone. Individuality took place of the collectivity and bare bodies became the center of politics. There is no concrete agent of power in post-capitalism. As some post-structuralists argue, power is internalized and performed by bare bodies. These bodies become subjects by performing social norms produced by power. This process indicates that power cannot be reduced to its despotic quality. It doesn't function only negatively but also positively, meaning that it isn't only destructive but also constructive.

> "But it seems now that the notion of repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power. In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of such power, one identifies power with a law which says no, power is taken above all as carrying the force of a prohibition… If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure forms knowledge, produces discourse"[24]

Power constructs subjects. They become the conveyors of power. They become who they are. The manipulative aspect of power convinces

[24] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 119.

people about their authenticity, although the identities they belong to can't be considered as freely chosen categories. As Foucault states, a normative, self-evident and universal model of man has been developed.[25] This means, individualism in its liberal sense didn't end up with free and authentic bodies, but with foundations of constructed social categories and identities. According to Agamben, the main dichotomy of the modern world isn't friend/enemy dichotomy but that of bare life/political existence, zoe/ bios, exclusion/inclusion.[26] This argument guides us in understanding the "othering" within societies. To be an acceptable citizen, one has to belong to an acceptable social category whereas others get criminalized and excluded from the center. This indicates that power in disciplinary societies functions by either idealizing or criminalizing some courses of action. The questions remain though: How is power internalized and why do people accept subordination? Can we trace these processes in literature?

In this chapter I will try to find some answers to the questions above, keeping in mind that literature does not provide answers as much as it inspires questions and insights. As I stated before, politicization of bare bodies (which Foucault describes as bio-politics) and "the entry of zoe into the sphere of the polis"[27] is perhaps the most decisive aspect of modernity. The so-called bio-power, functions mainly by creating docile bodies, using

[25] L.H. Martin et al, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault - October 25th, 1982," *From:Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (London: Tavistock, 1988), 9-15.

[26] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 8.

[27] Ibid.

appropriate technologies.[28] In both novels *When We Were Orphans*[29] and *Never Let Me Go*[30], we witness that the protagonist narrators are exposed to such power. Starting from their childhood their bodies are restrained and given certain forms. In *When We Were Orphans* the education Christopher and Akira receive doesn't only aim to educate them cognitively but also bodily. Every day Christopher has to sit down to do his homework for a strict period of time:

> "We called it the 'library', but I suppose it was really just an anteroom whose walls happened to be lined with books. There was just enough space in the middle of the floor for a mahogany table, and it was there I always did my schoolwork, my back to the double doors leading into the dining room. Mei Li, my amah, saw my education as a matter of solemn importance, and even when I had been working for an hour, it never occurred to her, as she stood sternly over me, to lean her weight on the shelf behind her, or else to sit down in the upright chair opposite mine. The servants had long since learnt not to blunder in during these moments of study, and even my parents had accepted they should not disturb us unless absolutely necessary."[31]

He is prohibited to touch certain objects in the house: "It was the property of Morganbrook and Byatt, which meant there were many ornaments and pictures around the place I was forbidden to touch."[32] Akira is under great pressure by his parents. They force him to inherit Japanese culture. Their understanding of education has a militaristic aspect. A good example for

[28] Ibid, 16-17

[29] Kazuo Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans, (*London : Faber and Faber, 2000).

[30] Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go (* New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).

[31] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 42.

[32] Ibid, 32.

this attitude is when he gets forced to go to Japan all alone, in order to get Japanese education, which results in a traumatic experience. He feels like an outsider in Japan: “From his very first day in Japan, Akira had been thoroughly miserable. Although he never admitted this explicitly, I surmised that he had been mercilessly ostracised for his 'foreignness' […].”[33] Another instance which evokes the harshness of his parents is where he dreads because of a small tear in the sleeve of his kimono. He says this is the third time he does something bad which means he can be punished by being sent back to Japan. Another attempt to transform the children into docile bodies is to interfere with their games. Christopher goes to London after the loss of his parents and there he continues playing the games he used to play with Akira all alone and his aunt protests this: “'He's gone for hours,' I could hear her saying. “'It's hardly healthy, a boy his age, sunk in his own world like that. He has to start looking ahead.'”[34] The restriction of his playing body also means the restriction of his childhood. Children explore the world by playing. They transform the objects surrounding them and make them a part of their fantasy which results in their own transformation. Not allowing the child to play means preventing them from having their authentic experience.

The clones in *Never Let Me Go* are the results of technological development after the world wars. They are produced to provide organs for “normal” people and they donate their vital organs at a very young age (in their 20s) and die for this purpose. Through their education they always get

[33] Ibid, 35.

[34] Ibid, 6.

informed about the truth they're facing; but because Truth can't be seen with naked eyes, they never fully comprehend the destructive aspect of their environment. In school any behavior that could harm their body is strictly forbidden. Smoking is one of them: "I don't know how it was where you were, but at Hailsham the guardians were really strict about smoking. I'm sure they'd have preferred it if we never found out smoking even existed; but since this wasn't possible, they made sure to give us some sort of lecture each time any reference to cigarettes came along."[35]

Although sex isn't forbidden, guardians still have an ambivalent attitude towards it. It gives the students a feeling of restriction: "[…] for all the talk of sex being beautiful, we had the distinct impression we'd be in trouble if the guardians caught us at it."[36] All these restrictions of their bodily desires through discourse of health have nothing to do with their own good, but the good of the normal people's society. They have to watch themselves in order not to harm the people who will receive their organs:

> "One thing that occurs to me now is that when the guardians first started giving us proper lectures about sex, they tended to run them together with talk about the donations. […]Now to be fair, it was probably natural to run these two subjects together. If, say, they were telling us how we'd have to be very careful to avoid diseases when we had sex, it would have been odd not to mention how much more important this was for us than for normal people outside. And that, of course, would bring us onto the donations."[37]

[35] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 33.

[36] Ibid, 46.

[37] Ibid, 40.

"'You've been told about it. You're students. You're…special . So keeping yourselves well, keeping yourselves very healthy inside, that's much more important for each of you than it is for me.'"[38]

The education they get is quite democratic. The standards of the school are very high and they are provided with many opportunities. On the other hand, exactly because of this democratic aspect of the education, they are prevented from seeing the truth. For instance they are told about the donations at a very early age, but because the age they learn it is too early, they never fully comprehend what it really means. Guardians take very good care of their bodies, but only because these bodies are for rent. Perhaps by the effect of this kind of an education, when they think about the possibility of changing their future, they can't get beyond the idea of deferring their "completion", namely their death. They obey the rules without knowing where these rules come from. They are deprived of the idea of resistance against the invisible power. If we read it as an allegory[39] we can say that the clones are substitutes for modern individuals, whose "soul is the prison of [their] body."[40]

In both novels we realize in the end that their bodies are subjects of politics, which means their bare lives are intertwined so much with politics

[38] Ibid, 34.

[39] According to Benjamin, allegory resists narration which we can claim also for this novel, for the narrator is totally unreliable, always repeating how inadequate her memory is. Her narration is based on loss: Loss of memory, meaning etc.

[40] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), pp. 30-34.

that it is almost impossible to resist power and have their authentic experience in life. Remembering and reconstructing the past on the other hand, becomes a tool for resistance. They connect the past to the future and gain a different perspective during the process of writing.

Another aspect of their subjection to power is through subordination. Both characters can be considered as subaltern. Christopher loses his parents at a very early age and dedicates all his life to finding them. He gets forced to leave the country he grew up. He tries to settle down in a foreign country where it is said to be his homeland:

> "'Look here, old fellow. You really ought to cheer up. After all, you're going to England. You're going home.' It was this last remark, this notion that I was 'going home', which caused my emotions to get the better of me for -1 am certain of this - the first and last time on that voyage. Even then, my tears were more of anger than sorrow. For I had deeply resented the colonel's words. As I saw it, I was bound for a strange land where I did not know a soul, while the city steadily receding before me contained all I knew."[41]

In *Never Let Me Go,* Kathy suffers a different type of othering. The purpose of her existence is to provide organs for the patients among normal people. She knows that her life will end up in her 30s. She has almost no control over her life. She's stuck in a totalitarian environment where everything –even the time of her death– is planned for her.

[41] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 17-18.

2.2 Subordination

Both situations bring into mind the question of how subordination occurs. We can argue that it is likely to be related with the attachment to their love objects in childhood. Officers in Shanghai convince Christopher to leave the country he was grown up and go to London by saying that his parents will soon come to take him:

> "'You may well be right, my boy,' he said eventually. 'I sincerely hope you are. But just in case, why don't you come with me anyway? Then once your parents are found, they can send for you. Or who knows? Perhaps they'll decide to come to England too. So what do you say? Let's you and me go to England tomorrow. Then we can wait and see what happens.'"[42]

Kathy on the other hand has a strong emotional connection to her guardians. Even though guardians always keep a certain distance, they substitute parents for the students: "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?"[43]

According to Butler, subordination has a strong link to a passionate attachment:

> "If there is no formation of the subject without a passionate attachment to those by whom she or he is subordinated, then subordination proves central to the becoming of the subject. […] Moreover, the desire to survive, "to be," is a pervasively exploitable desire. The one who holds out the promise of continued existence plays to the desire to survive. "I would rather exist in subordination

[42] Ibid, 16.

[43] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 30.

> than not exist" is one formulation of this predicament (where the risk of "death" is also possible)."[44]

In *When We Were Orphans* orphanhood becomes Christopher's identity. He organizes all his life around this fact. He becomes a detective in order to find his lost parents. He never gives up looking for his parents and at the same time never gives up being an "orphan".

In *Never Let Me Go* clones never rebel against the fact that they have to donate their organs in order to lengthen the normals' lives. There is no agent of power (except for the 'guardians' whose case is controversial) which makes it even more difficult to resist the totalitarian system. They depend on each other insofar that their relationship becomes the backbone of the novel. In their relationship they constantly reproduce subordination by bullying each other, peeping or dominating like in the case of Ruth. Though the question how they internalize power, remains unanswered, it is still clear that they become subjects by performing its norms. Therefore they have an organic relationship with power that subordinates them: It doesn't only subordinate them but also brings them into being. We encounter a paradox here: In order to exist, they accept subordination which results in their destruction:

> "To desire the conditions of one's own subordination is thus required to persist as oneself. What does it mean to embrace the very form of power—regulation, prohibition, suppression — that threatens one with dissolution in an effort, precisely, to persist in one's own existence? It is not simply that one requires the recognition of the other and that a form of recognition is conferred through subordination, but rather that

[44] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection (*Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 7.

> one is dependent on power for one's very formation, that that formation is impossible without dependency, and that the posture of the adult subject consists precisely in the denial and reenactment of this dependency."[45]

This is the very reason why both characters are deprived of a possibility of growing up and "having" experience in Benjaminian sense, which I will return in the second chapter. This makes the novel almost the opposite of a Bildungsroman.

If being dependent on dependency is one aspect of subjectivation, then it wouldn't be wrong to claim that belonging to social categories "even as they work in the service of subjection is often preferred to no social existence at all."[46] This brings an explanation to why Christopher is stuck in orphanhood: "But for those like us, our fate is to face the world as orphans, chasing through long years the shadows of vanished parents."[47] Butler claims: "'Submission' to the rules of the dominant ideology might then be understood as a submission to the necessity to prove innocence in the face of accusation […]. To become a "subject" is thus to have been presumed guilty, then tried and declared innocent."[48] After solving the case of his parents (the quest resembles an inner journey, a journey to his past) Christopher finds his mother in a lunatic asylum and asks her if she will forgive him. The attempt to prove his innocence is like an attempt to get rid

[45] Ibid, 9.

[46] Ibid, 20.

[47] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 193.

[48] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power,* 118.

of his heavy guilt and transform to a different subject from an "orphan": "Supposing this boy of yours, this Puffin. Supposing you discovered he'd tried his best, tried with everything he had to find you, even if in the end he couldn't. If you knew that, do you suppose... do you suppose you'd be able to forgive him?"[49] The positive answer he gets ensures him that his mother has always loved him. This "love", even though its object no more exists, (for she's not conscious any more) releases him from the dark shadows of his past to an extent and opens a new door for transformation. Solving the puzzle of his parents' loss serves in the possibility of a new beginning. To do so he faces the truth that the totalitarian authority has deprived him of. His life was designed by Wang Ku, the mafia boss in Shanghai who kidnapped Christopher's mother: "Uncle Philip nodded. 'Your schooling. Your place in London society. The fact that you made of yourself what you have. You owe it to Wang Ku. Or rather, to your mother's sacrifice.'"[50] He cuts himself loose and finds a possibility of resistance by investigating his past, the truth about himself, proving his innocence about the loss of his parents and narrating his story. However, he can never manage to free himself from his identity. His ties to the past don't let him get married and have children, thus be a part of the discourse of generation. I argue that this renouncement is a price he pays in place of his father, who worked in the service of a company that belonged to the colonizer. Despite this bondage to his past, he leaves his trace to the world by writing his story. Even though

[49] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 118.

[50] Ibid, 181.

he demises the idea of being immortal in space (by having his child) he becomes immortal in time.

Belonging to a social category even if it is in the service of subjection is exactly what Hailsham students do. Kathy never questions why she has to donate her organs. She accepts being a clone without any objection. Furthermore, they believe they are not random copies of the normals, but copies of the subaltern in the society. Ruth claims that they are the copies of the outcast even though there isnt enough evidence: "'We all know it. We're modelled from trash. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos. That's what we come from. We all know it, so why don't we say it?'"[51] However, the good conditions of Hailsham and the close friendship among the students make it harder to resist against the totalitarian power. An idea of an alternative world never occurs to any of them. Their dreams are bound to be limited like their bodies and lives. We can anticipate it also from Kathy's narrative tone. She writes as if she talks to the reader and addresses them supposing they are already informed about their existence. She compares her life with the reader's, and implies that there is nothing weird about the extreme hierarchy between them. She talks as if she is destined to violence; violence becomes her existence: "*I don't know how it was where you were*, but at

[51] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 78.

Hailsham the guardians were really strict about smoking."[52] This tone contributes to the uncanny character of the novel.

Their ignorance to the extent of blindness for a possibility of subverting power is expressed ironically in the part where children talk about the concentration camps in the World War II. They get astonished by the fact that nobody ran away from the camps and they try to rationalize it:

> "We'd been looking at some poetry, but had somehow drifted onto talking about soldiers in World War Two being kept in prison camps. One of the boys asked if the fences around the camps had been electrified, and then someone else had said how strange it must have been, living in a place like that, where you could commit suicide any time you liked just by touching a fence."[53]

The striking irony here reveals the fact that the students can't be described as simply masochistic (they don't "want" to be subordinated) but that they are unaware of their imprisonment. They can't see the resemblance between the camps and Hailsham. The totalitarian reality has become their own reality. It manipulates the way they see the world. The truth is hidden behind some discourse such as the importance of education. Good conditions in Hailsham glosses over its resemblance to the concentration camps. According to Agamben: "[…] the radical transformation of politics into the realm of bare life (that is, into a camp) legitimated and necessitated total domination. Only because politics in our age had been entirely transformed into bio- politics was it possible for politics to be constituted as

[52] Ibid, 33.

[53] Ibid, 38.

totalitarian politics to a degree hitherto unknown."[54] Clones were never deported to Hailsham. They came into being in Hailsham. This very fact prevents clones from questioning the legitimacy of the total domination: "Once terror is identified with the world, it becomes invisible."[55]

2.3 Self-Devotion

In order to endure the painful circumstances they experience, both characters use plenty of defense mechanisms including self-devotion. They devote themselves to an ideal, which in the end comes up to be a compensation of their Lack. Their ambitions cover their feelings of fear and guilt. The impossibility of their mission implies the never lasting pain they suffer in their souls. As Butler states:

> "Although devotion appears to be a form of self-immersion, it is also a continuation of self beratement as self-mortification. This self-feeling, precisely because it does not reach the unchangeable, becomes itself the object of derision and judgment, marking the continuing inadequacy of the self in relation to its transcendent measure. The transcendent is what is always missed, and so haunts this consciousness as a figure of what is permanently inaccessible, forever lost."[56]

Christopher sacrifices himself, all his life and desire (namely his love, Sarah) for finding his lost parents. He believes that this quest will bring peace to the world by preventing World War II. In the end it comes out that

[54] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 120.

[55] Mikhail A. Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita,* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London, New York: Penguin, 2000), xii.

[56] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power,* 47-48.

his ambition and childish fantasies don't root in the outside world but in his own self, in his lack. This lack is closely related to the feelings of guilt, for he holds himself guilty for the loss of his parents. We can argue that Christopher resembles a hard-boiled detective[57]:

> "The hard-boiled novels are in contrast generally narrated in the first person, with the detective himself as narrator […] By means of his initial decision to accept a case, the hard-boiled detective gets mixed up in a course of events that he is unable to dominate; all of a sudden it becomes evident that he has been "played for a sucker." What looked at first like an easy job turns into an intricate game of criss-cross, and all his effort is directed toward clarifying the contours of the trap into which he has fallen. The "truth" at which he attempts to arrive is not just a challenge to his reason but concerns him ethically and often painfully."[58]

We realize that his aim "to root out single-handedly all the evil in the world" is actually a displacement of the aim to root out the evil in his inner world. He tries to overcome the guilt caused by the unconscious desire to destruct his love objects[59] (which became reality after the kidnap) by self-devotion. This guilt prevents him from detaching himself from his past and progressing. He gets stuck in his childhood. Although finding his mother and ensuring her love opens new doors in his life, he still loses his hopes to settle down. He's doomed to be rootless for the rest of his life:

> "I enjoy my walks in the parks, I visit the galleries; and increasingly of late, I have come to take a foolish pride in sifting through old newspaper reports of my cases in the Reading Room at the British Museum. This city, in other words, has come to be my home, and I

[57] This resembles should not imply that Christopher fits the category fully.

[58] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1991), 53.

[59] For further reading see Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratidute*

> should not mind if I had to live out the rest of my days here. Nevertheless, there are those times when a sort of emptiness fills my hours, and I shall continue to give Jennifer's invitation serious thought."[60]

I argue that Christopher's self-devotion is also relevant to his father's occupation. During his years in Shanghai, he witnesses plenty of quarrels between his parents concerning his father's job in a company called Morganbrook and Byatt. His mother constantly opposes him for working in such a company for it is in the service of the colonizer. Her objection is against the harm they give to the Chinese: They are in drug business and make needy Chinese people drug addicts. His father cannot take a radical decision and leave the company but feels guilty at the same time. During his quest for finding his parents, Christopher investigates this issue the most. He thinks that they were both kidnapped for this reason. He subtly blames his father's job, hence his father for the catastrophe and he seems to have taken over this guilt. When he asks for forgiveness from his mother, this guilt comes to the surface: He realizes that he holds himself responsible for the loss. A coincidence seems to have supported this unconscious feeling. The day his father gets kidnapped (though in the end we understand that he wasn't kidnapped but ran away) he and Akira were about to correct a mistake concerning Ling Tien, the servant of Akira's family. He's a Chinese and without a concrete reason Akira is so much afraid of him. He believes that he transforms severed hands of children into spiders:

> "Ling Tien, evidently, had discovered a method by which he could turn severed hands into spiders. […] Akira had often heard the old

[60] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 193.

> servant creeping out in the dead of night to do just this. My friend had once even seen in the garden, moving through the undergrowth, a mutant Ling had taken prematurely from its solution which did not yet fully resemble a spider and could easily be identified as a severed hand."[61]

Driven by this fear, they decide to get into his room and check out if their fantasies are for real. In the end they manage to get a bottle of lotion from his room. First they enjoy the idea of having broken the rules, but later they start getting confused:

> "I remember we became quite confused about how much we wished to maintain our fantasy about Ling Tien, and to what extent we wanted to consider logically how best to avoid getting into serious trouble. I remember, for instance, our considering at one point the possibility the lotion was a medicine Ling Tien had bought after months of saving his money, and that without it he would become horribly ill; but then in the next breath, without abandoning this last notion, we considered other hypotheses which assumed the lotion to be what we had always said it was."[62]

They decide to put the lotion back in the Chinese servant's room and make a plan for it. However, on the same day and time they arrange, some men come to visit Christopher's house and inform them about the loss of his father. His mother does not let him go and therefore he can't keep his promise to Akira. I argue that breaking into the Chinese servant's room and stealing his lotion which they imagine to be some superstitious stuff, symbolize the attitude of colonizer Britain towards its colony China. Just like what Akira and Christopher do to Ling Tien, the colonizer dehumanizes the colonized and therefore legitimates his violence. The fact that his

[61] Ibid, 55.

[62] Ibid, 58-59.

father's loss comes right after this crime brings into mind that Christopher may have linked the two cases and thought that his father's loss could have been the price of the crime he had committed. Asking his mother for forgiveness strengthens the possibility of such a feeling of guilt. As a defense mechanism, he devotes himself to the ideal of being a good detective and rooting out the evil from the world. However in the end we find out that this ideal serves him to deny his painful feelings of guilt. He also condemns himself by renouncing from having children and joining the discourse of generation. The fact that he has inherited this guilt from his father indicates that it has traces of collective trauma.

Kathy is as well a self-devoted and motherly character. She's always humble and tolerant. In her relationship with Ruth, she always tolerates her to the extent that she renounces her needs and desires. For instance she never protests losing Tommy to her, although she loves him all through her life. In accordance to these qualities, she never hesitates being a carer. She applies for it herself: "It wasn't long after that I made my decision, and once I'd made it, I never wavered. I just got up one morning and told Keffers I wanted to start my training to become a carer. It was surprisingly easy."[63] Taking her efforts into account, they let Kathy to be a carer for twelve years, which is the longest period compared to the other clones. They even let her choose her own patients. She calms them down before and after the operations, talks to them and supports them in every aspect. Despite all its difficulties, she loves her job: "For the most part being a carer's suited me

[63] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 96.

fine. You could even say it's brought the best out of me. But some people just aren't cut out for it, and for them the whole thing becomes a real struggle."[64]

As we can see, both characters devote themselves to an ideal. In the end, this self-devotion comes up to be an unconscious strategy to conceal their suffering. Objects of these ideals refer not to a target in the outside world, but to a target concerning the characters themselves. Christopher's quest for his parents and his ambition to save the world, substitutes his unconscious wish to overcome his guilt and find himself a shelter in the world. The object of Kathy's ideal on the other hand is a strategy to conceal her fear of death. In both cases we witness the process of subjectivication through subordination and both subjects try to overcome the emotional pain subordination causes by devoting themselves to ideals. In the end they find the courage to face the truth and realize that their ideals are parts of their lack.

Since bare bodies and bare lives have become the subjects of politics and the borders between domestic and public spheres got blurred, it is necessary to redefine the boundaries between bodies and power, internal and external, life and politics. In modern world, power lacks an agent and through some technologies it creates subjects who internalize the norms produced by power. This process of subjectivation starts in infancy where the baby has a passionate attachment to their caretaker. According to Butler

[64] Ibid, 97.

if the baby is passionately attached to their caretaker who subordinates them, existence will depend on subordination. "'I would rather exist in subordination than not exist' is one formulation of this predicament (where the risk of "death" is also possible)."[65] Subjects will compromise with power and in return for existence they will accept to be subaltern. Self-devotion on the other hand is a part of these power relations which can be formalized as the continuation of self beratement as self-mortification. The transcendent ideal that one devotes herself is always inaccessible, forever lost. [66] Taking this theoretical background into account, I tried to trace the process of subjectivation and internalization of power in the novels. I argued that the totalitarian structure of power prevents both characters from having their authentic experience. They resist this domination by remembering the past and writing their stories.

There are still some questions waiting to be answered. If bare bodies are the subjects of power and if we don't face an explicit agent of power, how does it reveal itself? Can we trace it in interpersonal relationships? How is victimization related to the topic?

[65] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* , 7.

[66] Ibid, 47-48.

2.4 Emergent Power in Relationships

As long as we argue that in modern world there is no concrete agent of power, and that the center of politics is bare bodies and bare life, the place to search for power turns out to be interpersonal relationships. The subjects constructed by power always reproduce it in their encounter with others. We can trace this reproduction of power also in the two novels. The setting of *When We Were Orphans* is Shanghai and London, in the beginning of World War II. Christopher spends his childhood in Shanghai, in a district called The Settlement where mainly people from the colonizer countries reside. He doesn't witness war directly. However he becomes an indirect victim of it: War steals his parents from him. His father works in a company called Morganbrook and Byatt. From the quarrels between his parents, we understand that the company is in drug business and they make needy Chinese people drug addicts. Although his father cannot take a radical decision and leave his job, he always feels guilty about it. In the end, he runs away without informing them. He somehow foreshadows his escape though, in one of his dialogues with Christopher:

> "I want you to know this, Puffin, your father is no longer today the same person you saw that time, you know, that time you and Mother burst in on me. You remember that, of course you do. That time I was in my study. I'm sorry you ever had to see your own father like that. Well anyway, that was then. Today, thanks to your mother, I'm someone much much stronger. Someone, I dare say, Puffin, you'll one day be proud of."[67]

[67] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 51.

A short time after this speech, he runs away. The reason why he doesn't inform them is perhaps the threatening attitude of the company he works for. As we understand from his words, he wants to justify himself in the eyes of his son before he leaves. This tragic separation is followed by the loss of his mother. Afterwards the officers of the company force him to go to London and wait for his parents there. Nobody tells him the truth. In the following years he becomes a popular detective and devotes himself to finding the truth. All through his career he looks for the evil in the outside world. However in the end it comes out that the evil he's searching for is at home. I use it both in a literal and metaphorical way. In its literal meaning I refer to Uncle Philip. As a result of all his efforts he finally finds out that the story isn't as complicated as it was in his childish fantasies. Nobody was kidnapped. His father ran away and his mother was forced to go with a Chinese mafia boss called Wang Ku. And because of his unreturned love, Uncle Philip, who was a very close friend of Christopher's mother and who regularly visited them at home, didn't try to stop him:

> "'Very well. I'll confess to you the truth. About why I allowed Wang Ku to kidnap your mother that day. […]. I helped Wang take your mother because a part of me wanted her to become his slave. To be used like that, night after night. Because you see, I always lusted after her, right from the days when I came to be a lodger in your house. Oh yes, I desired her, and when your father went off like that, I believed it was my chance, that I was his natural successor. But... but your mother, she'd never looked at me like that, I realised it after your father went away. She respected me as someone decent..."[68]

[68] Ibid, 182.

It is of course the most common end of a detective story: The murderer is a member of the household. But what makes this novel queer is that finding the murderer exposes the fact that the victim and the detective are the same person. It becomes clear that he has been searching for his own truth and moreover his own self. So the evil he was searching for has always belonged to his own reality. He gets to understand that the totalitarian environment has concealed it from him and controlled all his life and his being. In such a world where there is no room for authentic experience, he opens up a space for his own experience by remembering his past and writing his story.

We encounter the traces of the totalitarian power that he is intertwined with in his memories about the Chinese as well as in the attitude of the humanitarian activists towards them. His fantasies with Akira about the Chinese are always ambivalent. This ambivalence is caused by the discourse their families use about them. They are constantly warned about not crossing the borders of the Settlement: "I for one was absolutely forbidden to enter the Chinese areas of the city, and as far as I know, Akira's parents were no less strict on the matter. Out there, we were told, lay all manner of ghastly diseases, filth and evil men."[69] However this warning is very ironic, for actually they have already crossed the borders by colonizing China. They accuse Chinese people of a crime that they themselves have committed. The prohibition of crossing the border (it is almost like a taboo) seduces the children and they make up imaginary stories about what is

[69] Ibid, 33.

beyond. Their image of a Chinese has the implications of both a monster and a hero:

> "On one occasion, Akira had been strolling down a crowded alley and had seen a man - some powerful warlord, he supposed - being transported on a sedan chair, accompanied by a giant carrying a sword. The warlord was pointing to whomever he pleased and the giant would then proceed to lop his or her head off. Naturally, people were trying to hide themselves the best they could. Akira, though, had simply stood there, staring defiantly back at the warlord. The latter had spent a moment considering whether to have Akira beheaded, but then obviously struck by my friend's courage, had finally laughed and, reaching down, patted him on the head. Then the warlord's party had continued on its way, leaving many more severed heads in its wake."[70]

Children reveal the ambivalence of the discourse in their fantasies. The oppression of colonialism emerges in their games. Another such example is about the Chinese servant Ling Tien. Akira and Christopher dread the servant for no reason and believe that he transforms children's hand into spiders. This violent fantasy seduces them to trespass his borders (just like their parents did to China) and they steal a bottle from his room which they think is filled with superstitious lotion. However when they start thinking rationally they realize the crime they have committed and feel guilty about it: "I remember we became quite confused about how much we wished to maintain our fantasy about Ling Tien, and to what extent we wanted to consider logically how best to avoid getting into serious trouble."[71] The emergence of the oppressive power in children's imagination indicates how power is internalized and conveyed by subjects. We don't see a concrete

[70] Ibid, 33-34.

[71] Ibid, 58-59.

agent of power in the novels. It is reproduced by the characters. Another example can be given regarding the human rights activists. The hypocrisy of Sir Cecil, one of the founders of the League of Nations, indicates how weak such foundations are compared to the total domination prevailing in the world. At a dinner he gives a speech to express how hopeful he is for the future:

> "In his view, mankind had learnt from its mistakes, the structures were now firmly in place to ensure we would never again see on this globe a calamity on the scale of the Great War. The war, ghastly as it was, represented no more than 'an awkward window in Man's evolution' when for a few years our technical progress had run ahead of our organisational capacities. We had all surprised ourselves with the rapid development of our engineering might, and the consequent ability to wage war with modern weaponry, but now we had made good the gap."[72]

After the speech he encounters Christopher and confesses his real thoughts and feelings:

> "'All of that I was saying earlier at dinner. About this world being made a safer, more civilised place. I do believe it, you know. At least' - here he grasped my hand and gave me a droll look - 'at least, I'd like to believe it. Oh yes, I'd dearly love to believe it. But I don't know, my young friend. I don't know if in the end we'll be able to hold the line. We'll do what we can. Organise, confer. Get the greatest men from the greatest nations to put their heads together and talk. But there'll always be evil lurking around the corner for us. Oh yes! They're busy, even now, even as we speak, busy conspiring to put civilisation to the torch. And they're clever, oh, devilishly clever. Good men and women can do what they can, devote their lives to keeping them at bay, but I fear it won't be enough, my friend. I fear it won't be enough. The evil ones are much too cunning for your ordinary decent citizen."[73]

[72] Ibid, 26.

[73] Ibid, 27.

The contradiction in his comments reveals how cynical the founder of the most powerful human rights union is. By being cynical, he closes all the doors for resistance and concedes defeat. This can be considered as a subtle approval, thus reproduction of power. It causes betrayal of trust towards humanitarianism.

We encounter another aspect of the reproduction of power in the friendship of Akira and Christopher. Although they are very good friends and they support each other in hard times, a subtle violence still dominates their relationship. The hierarchy between them starts from the language they speak. Although Akira isn't an English native speaker, there's no other way of communication for the two. Akira's feeling of disdain comes out as passive aggression some times:

> "'Anyway, it's not old chip,' I told him in the end, during one of our disputes over how our game should proceed. 'It's old chap.' Akira, as I knew he would, protested vigorously. 'Not at all. Not at all. Mrs Brown. She make me say again and again. Old chip. Old chip. Correct pronunciation, everything. She say old chip. She teacher!' It was pointless to try to convince him; since starting his English lessons, he was immensely proud of his position within his family as the expert English speaker. All the same, I was unwilling to concede the point, and in the end the quarrel grew to such proportions, Akira simply stalked off in a fury, our game abandoned, through our 'secret door' - a gap in the hedge separating the two gardens."[74]

Akira has a very strict family who always impose Japanese culture to their son. They almost have a militaristic understanding of education. Akira projects this attitude onto his friendship with Christopher. For instance he constantly tries to prove his superiority for being Japanese:

[74] Ibid, 32.

> "Most irritating of all were those occasions on which he would try to start arguments about who cried the easiest, the Japanese or the English. If I spoke up at all on behalf of the English, my friend would immediately demand we put things to the test, which meant in practice his putting me in one of his dreadful arm-locks until I either capitulated or gave in to tears."[75]

The arm-locks become a symbol of suppressed violence between them. Akira uses them in order to dominate Christopher: "[…] there were various things that gave my Japanese friend great authority in my eyes. There were, for instance, his arm-locks - which he would often administer if I made statements that displeased him, or if during one of our dramas, I became resistant to adopting a particular plot-turn he was keen on."[76]

Although it is clear that power emerges in their relationship, I still argue that the friendship between Akira and Christopher provided a potential for resistance for Christopher. They had the chance to experience the world and themselves by playing games. Perhaps the detective scenarios they made up were great inspiration for Christopher in choosing his job and starting his quest. This quest in the end transformed into the book he wrote and thus opened up a space for an authentic experience.

The same mechanism regarding the revelation of power in relationships can be traced also in *Never Let Me Go*. The setting of the novel is London in 90's. The main characters are the clones who were brought into being to provide vital organs for curing diseases. They go to a school named Hailsham and then move to cottages before they become

[75] Ibid, 47.

[76] Ibid, 33.

carers. Carers are the clones who take care of the donors until they "complete" in operations. This system reminds the concentration camps in Nazi time. In these camps Jews were responsible for taking their friends to the gas rooms and collecting their corpses. The vocabulary of the clones normalizes this fascistic environment. Also the way they describe death as "to complete" is like an attempt to legitimize the slaughter:

> "The use of the verb in the active voice, "they complete" rather than "they are completed" is ironic. Actually, they are completed, but just as every other "sham" of the whole process, this verb is also used as sham: they complete, as if they do that of their own accord; or as if completion comes naturally, like "they grow" or signifies fulfilment."[77]

The good atmosphere of the school as well as the discourse that normalizes the totalitarian practices prevents children from questioning their destiny. However at some point Kathy and Tommy decide to learn if a deferral for their operations is possible. They try to put the pieces together by remembering their dialogues with the guardians and they start getting curious about the truth. In the end they visit Madame, whom they used to give their drawings in Hailsham times and listen to the real story behind the school and everything regarding their lives. They come across with the fact that Hailsham was a project held by human rights activists and because they were no more supported by the rich people, they had to close down the school. For the first time they fully comprehend the extent of subordination they are subjected to, even though they have been told from the very beginning. "The novel then becomes a parable for rapacious capitalism that

[77] Parla, "From 'Father Time' to the *Child in Time,"* 79.

will only survive on the dismemberment of the have-nots by the haves."[78] We witness how normals are ignorant to their suffering. Government keeps the clones in vast government "homes" in the periphery of the city and kills them at their 20s. As Emily states, normal people think only for their own good and approve this fascistic practice:

> "How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask such a world to put away that cure, to go back to the dark days? There was no going back. However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease. So for a long time 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."

Approval of such a practice means reproduction of the totalitarian power. By ignoring the slaughter they abet power. In this case we can resemble the clones to the victims called Pharmakos in Ancient Greece:

> "'Pharmakos' was the name given to a human scapegoat (a slave, a cripple or a criminal) who was chosen to become an "outsider", being expelled from the community at times of disaster (famine, invasion or plague) or at times of calendrical crisis, when purification was needed. The evil that had infected the city from 'outside' is removed and returned to the 'outside', forever. […] they could be thrown off from a cliff or burned, or, according to the earliest source (the iambic satirist Hipponax), being beaten and stoned, but not executed."[79]

As we know from history "sacrifice" is one of the oldest traditions and it has undergone a great transformation since the beginning. In spite of all the

[78] Ibid, 80.

[79] "'Pharmakon': The cure or the poison?," accessed June 1, 2014. http://flutuante.wordpress.com/2009/08/01/pharmakon-the-cure-or-the-poison/

transformation it has undergone, discourse in modern world has the power to legitimize the process of victimization. Bodies excluded from the society for some reason are considered to be worthless to mourn after. The common structure of these victims is quite ambivalent: They both resemble the normals and at the same time differ from them. Clones perfectly fit this category. They are exactly same as the other people but they were not given birth to. Like in the case of sacrifice rituals, after excluding them from society people sacrifice them and take them inside in the literal sense: They implant their organs. This violence protects them from diseases. We can consider this as a mechanism of the social power. Butler asks: "Can we read the workings of social power precisely in the delimitation of the field of such objects, objects marked for death? […] can the sense of "triumph" be won precisely through a practice of social differentiation in which one achieves and maintains "social existence" only by the production and maintenance of those socially dead?"[80] In this case we can trace social power in the social discrimination against the clones. Clones' victimization becomes people's triumph for they lengthen (though not forever) their lives by killing them. However Kathy manages to find a way of resistance. In spite of all the destructiveness of power, she manages to see the world in a different light. Even though the authorities steal away her existence in space, she becomes eternal in time by means of her written story.

"As the teachers (who come out to be humanitarian activists) are whole or half-hearted collaborators in the scheme, the question of who are

[80] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power, 27.*

the ‘entitled receivers’ of the organs to be taken from the donors or how they have gained the status never comes up.”[81] Just like in the case of Sir Cecil, we encounter the hypocrisy of the humanitarian activists here. In the dialogue between Miss Emily, Kathy and Tommy, we can sense the insincerity concerning the wellbeing of the clones. At Madame’s place where she answers their questions she interrupts several times for a trivial purpose - she expects some men to take her bedside cabinet. Although she spent a long time together, she hardly remembers the children and she does not get emotional at all during their talk. She tells them mainly about their humanitarian project. When we read between the lines we can see that her main goal has never been the survival of the children but the success of her project. Their lives never came in the first place. We witness it in her insensitive tone when she says that the Hailsham project was only a trend and that they were so lucky having the chance to have lived there:

> “I can see,” Miss Emily said, “that it might look as though you were simply pawns in a game. It can certainly be looked at like that. But think of it. You were lucky pawns. There was a certain climate and now it’s gone. You have to accept that sometimes that’s how things happen in this world. People’s opinions, their feelings, they go one way, then the other. It just so happens you grew up at a certain point in this process.”[82]

Kathy’s answer on the other hand, displays the tragedy of the situation: “’It might be just some trend that came and went,’ I said. ‘But for us, it’s our life.’”

[81] Parla, “From ‘Father Time’ to the *Child in Time*,” 80.

[82] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 126.

Similar to the case in *When We Were Orphans* children reproduce power in their relationship. The way other students treat Tommy is an example of the issue. He is a bad-tempered child, he always gets out of control and he draws unusual pictures. Because of these attributes he always gets bullied by his friends:

> "There were more temper tantrums, like the time Tommy was supposed to have heaved over two desks in Room 14, spilling all the contents on the floor, while the rest of the class, having escaped onto the landing, barricaded the door to stop him coming out. There was the time Mr. Christopher had had to pin back his arms to stop him attacking Reggie D. during football practice. Everyone could see, too, when the Senior 2 boys went on their fields run, Tommy was the only one without a running partner. He was a good runner, and would quickly open up ten, fifteen yards between him and the rest, maybe thinking this would disguise the fact that no one wanted to run with him. Then there were rumours almost every day of pranks that had been played on him. A lot of these were the usual stuff—weird things in his bed, a worm in his cereal—but some of it sounded pointlessly nasty: like the time someone cleaned a toilet with his toothbrush so it was waiting for him with shit all over the bristles. His size and strength—and I suppose that temper—meant no one tried actual physical bullying, but from what I remember, for a couple of months at least, these incidents kept coming."

Because of his extraordinary personality, he is the only one who dares to ask questions and look for the truth. By disobeying the rules, even if he can't escape it, he always resists power.

The way children spy on each other is a revelation of the totalitarian power they are exposed to. They live in an environment which resembles the Big Brother shows. There is constant surveillance and their attitude towards each other is like the manifestation of this reality:

> "I suppose this might sound odd, but at Hailsham, the lunch queue was one of the better places to have a private talk. It was something to

> do with the acoustics in the Great Hall; all the hubbub and the high ceilings meant that so long as you lowered your voices, stood quite close, and made sure your neighbours were deep in their own chat, you had a fair chance of not being overheard. In any case, 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."[83]

We can see traces of social power also in the friendship between Kathy, Tommy and Ruth. Ruth appears as a dominant character. Kathy on the other hand is exactly the opposite of Ruth; she's caring, tolerant and patient. Since their childhood Kathy and Tommy have a very intimate relationship. They love and understand each other. Kathy always feels the urge to protect him from the others. However as they grow up, Ruth and Tommy become lovers. Despite the obviousness of the romance Kathy and Tommy share, none of them protest their relationship. Their conformist attitude resembles their relation to the totalitarian power. Their submission to Ruth's dominance is a very image of their submission to the authority. They are all parts of this complicity. When they find each other again after a long time and Kathy becomes Ruth's carer, they think over their relationship and Ruth apologizes from them. She wills them to come together and try for a deferral. Reconstructing their friendship becomes a potential for their own reconstruction. Despite its destructiveness in certain ways, their friendship provides them a possibility to face the truth. Especially in the case of Kathy and Tommy: "You and me, right from the start, even when we were little, we were always trying to find things out.

[83] Ibid, 11-12.

Remember, Kath, all those secret talks we used to have? But Ruth wasn't like that. She always wanted to believe in things. That was Ruth."[84]

In this chapter of thesis I tried to investigate power relations that prevent the protagonist narrators from having an *Erfahrung* in both novels. I argued that their existence is dependent on subordination and they accept belonging to a subordinated social category in order to "be". Therefore there is almost no room for resistance in both cases. Their growth is prevented by the totalitarian power and they have no future or no chance to have an authentic experience in the world. However their courage to face the hidden truth, the solidarity they have with their friends and particularly writing their stories inspired by their imperfect memories open up a space for experience.

[84] Ibid, 135.

CHAPTER 3

ADULT EXPERIENCE AND LACK

3.1 Loss of Experience: *Erfahrung*

Experience is one of the most controversial issues in philosophy. Thinkers have been meditating on the subject since Ancient Greece. They have tried to find answers to the questions "How does experience take place?" or "Is it possible to have experience at all?" Its definitions have undergone many changes. Every era came up with new ideas. Most of the Enlightenment philosophers handled the subject in a very optimistic manner. The idea that image was capable of representing the truth and that reason was competent to understand it as a whole dominated this era. This is the core idea of scientific thought which claims that knowledge is based on experience. This statement reduces experience to scientific experimentation. Francis Bacon whom Voltaire introduced as the "father of the scientific method" is one the most famous representatives of this philosophy. From his comments on the issue, we can trace the general understanding in his time:

> "There remains but mere experience, which when it offers itself is called chance; when it is sought after, experiment. But this kind of experience is nothing but a loose faggot, and mere groping in the dark, as men at night try all means of discovering the right road, whilst it would be better and more prudent either to wait for day or procure a light and then proceed. On the contrary the real order of experience begins by setting up a light, and then shows the road by it, commencing with a regulated and digested, not a misplaced and vague

> course of experiment, and thence deducing axioms, and from these axioms new experiments…"[85]

The wish to overcome the unknown or the Real in Lacanian terms was the main purpose of science. This new world view changed the subject radically and with the changing subject, experience gained a new form:

> "The transformation of its subject does not leave traditional experience unchanged. Inasmuch as its goal was to advance the individual towards maturity- that is, an anticipation of death as the idea of an achieved totality of experience - it was something complete in itself, something it was possible to have, not only to undergo. But once experience was referred instead to the subject of science, which cannot reach maturity but can only increase its own knowledge, it becomes something incomplete, an 'asymptotic' concept, as Kant will say, something it is possible only to undergo, never to have: nothing other, therefore, than the infinite process of knowledge."[86]

Before modernity experience was based upon common sense, it was something present in every individual. People used to approach it as they got older and death was its highest limit. However as a result of the rise of scientific thought, information replaced knowledge and therefore experience in its traditional sense lost its authority. Memory and cumulative knowledge were devaluated and experience gained by wisdom transformed into shock experience in the modern crowded city. Shock experience (*Erlebnis*) couldn't be remembered and narrated afterwards. Therefore in the modern world people were deprived of continuity within time. Trauma caused by the world wars is considered to be one of the main reasons of this change. As Adorno states: "Just as the war lacks continuity, history, an "epic"

[85] Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* (London: William Pickering, 1844), 60.

[86] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 23.

element, but seems rather to start anew from the beginning in each phase, so it will leave behind no permanent, unconsciously preserved image in the memory.... Life has changed into a timeless succession of shocks, interspersed with empty, paralyzed intervals...."[87] Transformation of experience into "timeless succession of shocks with empty, paralyzed intervals" was not peculiar to the times of war; it became the reality of ordinary life afterwards. Individuals lost control over their lives. Daily life was organized thoroughly and future was planned in detail for them. There was no room left for authentic experience. Meanings of things and concepts became totally subjective and therefore lost their ground. This prevented subjects from being able to communicate with each other. As a result they got alienated from the objects surrounding them. Benjamin describes this as the decay of the aura - "a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter close it may be"[88] - and thinks that this is the very reason of the atrophy of authentic experience. As a result of the decay of aura, the outside world was no more capable of attracting the gaze of the subject. Alienated from the world, subjects were no more a part of it but were rather exposed to it. In any case history proved the optimistic view of the Enlightenment philosophers wrong. And we can easily argue that among all the modern thinkers, Benjamin lamented the most after the loss of authentic experience.

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[87] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London, New York: Verso, 1974), 54-55.

[88] Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in *Selected Writings Volume Two 1927-1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings et al. (Cambridge, London, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 518.

In German there are two words to have the meaning for experience: *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung.* The nuance between them is of great significance for Benjamin's theory. Like Heidegger, Benjamin puts emphasis on the etymology of the word *Erfahrung.* It links *Fahrt* meaning journey to *Gefahr* meaning danger. "As such, it activates a link between memory and experience, which subtends the belief that cumulative experience can produce a kind of wisdom that comes only at the end of the day."[89] *Erlebnis* on the other hand comes from the root *Leben* (life) but instead of referring to the entire life it "connotes a more immediate, pre-reflective, and personal variant of experience than *Erfahrung*."[90] The loss of *Erfahrung* was the main cause of Benjamin's grief. This prevented subjects from "translating the past events into present memories [by] register[ing] the temporal distance between now and then, acknowledge[ing] the inevitable belatedness of memory rather than smooth it over, and preserv[ing] an allegorical rather than symbolic relationship between past and present (and thus between present and potential future)". [91] If *Erfahrung* requires a memory that preserves an allegorical rather than symbolic relationship between past and present, it means narrating one's own story based on their *Erfahrung*, should not be considered as a repetition but rather a reconstruction of the past events. It means that as a source of wisdom the influence of the past should be embedded in its narration. The inability to

[89] Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 11.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid, 340.

translate the past events into present memories brought an end also to the ability of such narration:

> "Everyone knew precisely what experience was: older people had always passed it on to younger sons. It was handed down in short form to sons and grand- sons, with the authority of age, in proverbs; with an often long-winded eloquence, as tales; sometimes as stories from foreign lands, at the fireside.—Where has it all gone? Who still meets people who really know how to tell a story? . . ."[92]

It indicates the devaluation of wisdom that is based on experience. As Benjamin states it: "To seek this counsel one would first have to be able to tell the story. (Quite apart from the fact that a man is receptive to counsel only to the extent that he allows his situation to speak.) Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom. The art of storytelling is reaching its end because the epic side of truth, wisdom, is dying out."[93]

Subsequently post-structuralist thinkers like Bataille or Foucault have commented on the debate as well. Realizing the difficulty of regaining experience in the totalitarian world (which they believed was possible), they suggested reconstructing the self. Their common idea was that resistance against power was only possible through reconstruction. Bataille found the solution in inner experience which he described as: "Man achieves inner experience at the instant when bursting out of the chrysalis he feels that he

[92] Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty" in *Selected Writings Volume Two 1927-1934,* ed. Michael W. Jennings et al. (Cambridge, London, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 731.

[93] Benjamin, *Illuminations,* 86-87.

is tearing himself, not tearing something outside that resists him."[94] Foucault on the other hand relied on limit experience which means "paradoxically not only a proactive "tearing" of the subject from himself, but also a reactive, post facto reconstruction of that deed."[95] In any case, reflecting on experience required a reflection on the relationship of power and experience. Among the thinkers I have mentioned I will mainly rely on Benjamin's theory in order to examine the relation between power and experience in *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*.[96] In this chapter I will ask the questions: How does power prevent the narrators from having experience? How does lack of experience influence their lives? Do they resist power and are they able to open up a space for an authentic experience?

According to Agamben "The question of experience can be approached nowadays only with an acknowledgement that it is no longer accessible to us."[97] Subjects are stuck in an infinite present time. They are almost programmed to forget: Forget both about the past and about the future which is associated with death. Subjects dread the idea of the unknown. Wisdom has lost its authority and easily proved information took its place. This radical change in epistemology and reliance on the power of

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[94] Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 1986), 39.

[95] Jay, *Song of Experience*, 397.

[96] My purpose for choosing Benjamin's theory of *Erfahrung* is to understand the lack of experience in both novels.

[97] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 13.

scientific knowledge ended up with the loss of memory and experience: "When humankind is deprived of effective experience and becomes subjected to the imposition of a form of experience as controlled and manipulated as a laboratory maze for rats- in other words, when the only possible of experience is horror or lies -then the rejection of experience can provisionally embody a legitimate defence."[98]

We can see this kind of manipulation in both novels. The protagonist narrators are told horrible lies: This is where all their experience is based upon. They are constantly kept under control and they resemble nothing but a guinea pig. Christopher's whole life for instance, is decided for him by two men: The Chinese mafia boss Wang Ku and Uncle Philip: "'Your schooling. Your place in London society. The fact that you made of yourself what you have. You owe it to Wang Ku. Or rather, to your mother's sacrifice.'"[99] From this confession we see that both the mother and the child's lives are stolen from them.[100] Nobody ever tells Christopher the truth about his parents. He is not given a chance to decide for his own life. The totalitarian domination he is subjected to, leaves him no other choice but to accept subordination: He almost clings to his orphanhood. It turns out to be both his poison and antidote. It is the source of his ever-lasting pain and lack but at the same time his motivation to face the truth: "But for those like us,

[98] Ibid, 16.

[99] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 181.

[100] Victimization of Christopher's mother can also be considered as an example to the intersectionality of oppression. Although she's a white English woman, she gets victimized by a rich and strong Chinese man: "He regularly whipped her in front of his dinner guests. Taming the white woman, he called it." (p. 181)

our fate is to face the world as orphans, chasing through long years the shadows of vanished parents. There is nothing for it but to try and see through our missions to the end, as best we can, for until we do so, we will be permitted no calm."[101] Taking the setting of the novel into account, we can also argue that industrialism and capitalism play a role in the protagonist's stolen childhood. At the end of the day a woman and a child become the victims of the ambitions of the patriarchal capitalist system. This system deprives Christopher of joy, happiness and a future. He loses the ability to attach to someone. Their intimate relationship with Sarah based on a shared destiny does not come to an end. It seems as if he doesn't know how to love:

> "Then we were kissing - just like, I suppose, a couple on the cinema screen. It was almost exactly as I had always imagined it would be, except there was something oddly inelegant about our embrace, and I tried more than once to adjust my posture; but my right foot was hard against a heavy box and I could not quite negotiate the necessary turn without risking my balance."[102]

He has difficulties also relating to his adopted daughter. Although he cares a lot for her, again driven by his ambition, he leaves her alone in London and goes to Shanghai. At one point during his stay, he gets emotional by remembering her last image:

> "It was at around this stage of the journey that I found myself thinking again and again of Jennifer, sitting in the prefects' room on that sunny afternoon we had parted - and in particular, of her face as she had made that curious vow, uttered so earnestly, to 'help me' when she was older. Once, as I groped my way forward, an absurd picture came into

[101] Ibid, 193.

[102] Ibid, 133.

> my head of the poor child struggling after me through this ghastly terrain, determined to make good her promise, and I suddenly felt a rush of emotion that all but brought tears to my eyes."[103]

They decide to run away from Shanghai and start a new life with Sarah but he surprisingly changes his mind at the last minute. In almost a paranoid mode, he suddenly feels the urge to follow a guy whom he hardly knows and promises Sarah to come soon but he never shows up. By letting her down, he wastes all his hopes for a happy future. He prefers to go after his ideal. This ideal is nothing but a compensation of his lack. It doesn't let him get rid of his ties to his unfinished childhood and prevents him from progressing. He gets condemned to agony and rootlessness: "This city […] has come to be my home, and I should not mind if I had to live out the rest of my days here. Nevertheless, there are those times when a sort of emptiness fills my hours, and I shall continue to give Jennifer's invitation serious thought."[104]

The metaphor of a laboratory maze for rats very much resembles the conditions of the clones in *Never Let Me Go*. They are imprisoned in Hailsham and are totally unaware of this imprisonment. Their lives are a part a project whose conductor we don't encounter throughout the novel. There lies a difference between *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*. In the latter, the agent of authority is totally invisible.[105] We don't know

[103] Ibid, 150.

[104] Ibid, 193.

[105] This may imply the change in history. Christopher lives in the time of World War II whereas Kathy lives in post-industrial London in 90s.

who is responsible for the operations or who supports the founders of Hailsham. In any case, what we certainly know is that there's almost no room for experience for the clones. They are both psychologically and bodily under strict control. We can see it in Miss Emily's words to Kathy and Tommy: "[…] it might look as though you were simply pawns in a game. It can certainly be looked at like that. But think of it. You were lucky pawns."[106] They are deceived all their lives by the discourse of good education. Calling them simply "students" instead of clones is a part of this discourse which normalizes the violence they are subjected to. They are kept ignorant about the truth regarding their existence. Even though they were told what they should have expected from the future, they could never fully comprehend its meaning. This strategy of the authority took away their possibility of resistance. Only one guardian, Miss Lucy made an attempt to hint them the truth, and she was fired: "Lucy Wainright was idealistic, nothing wrong with that. But she had no grasp of practicalities."[107] Miss Emily's defense regarding Miss Lucy's dismissal is quite ironic: "Very well, sometimes that meant we kept things from you, lied to you. Yes, in many ways we fooled you. I suppose you could even call it that. But we sheltered you during those years, and we gave you your childhoods."[108] She talks as if they endowed them something that they didn't deserve. This statement alone reveals how the clones were deprived of a childhood that belonged to them.

[106] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 126.

[107] Ibid, p. 127.

[108] Ibid, p. 127.

The lack caused by a stolen childhood, just like in the case of Christopher, prevents Kathy and Tommy from resisting the totalitarian power together. Although motivated by their intimate love, Kathy and Tommy try to find a way out, in the end they give up. Tommy doesn't want her to see him suffering. He sends her away. Tommy's words to Kathy in the end, display the tragic fact that their future, their right to choose for their own lives, all the possibility of an authentic experience and above all the ability to love each other was stolen from them:

> "I keep thinking about this river somewhere, with the water moving really fast. And these two people in the water, trying to hold onto each other, holding on as hard as they can, but in the end it's just too much. The current's too strong. They've got to let go, drift apart. That's how I think it is with us. It's a shame, Kath, because we've loved each other all our lives. But in the end, we can't stay together forever."[109]

After Tommy's death Kathy dreams about Tommy in front of a vast empty field, and she doesn't let even let her imagination go beyond the limits already set for her. This reveals the striking fact that not only her life but also her fantasies were haunted by the dominating power. The fence she stands beyond is like a symbol of this power that prevents her from crossing the borders:

> "I found I was standing before acres of ploughed earth. There was a fence keeping me from stepping into the field, with two lines of barbed wire, and I could see how this fence and the cluster of three or four trees above me were the only things breaking the wind for miles. […] That was the only time, as I stood there, looking at that strange rubbish, feeling the wind coming across those empty fields, that I started to imagine just a little fantasy thing, because this was Norfolk after all, and it was only a couple of weeks since I'd lost him. I was

[109] Ibid, 134.

> thinking about the rubbish, the flapping plastic in the branches, the shore-line of odd stuff caught along the fencing, and I half-closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up, and I was now standing here in front of it, and if I waited long enough, a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the field, and gradually get larger until I'd see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call. *The fantasy never got beyond that—I didn't let it*—and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be."

The circumstances of both protagonists prove Comay's comment on experience: "Erfahrung—the experience lost—is nothing other than the experience of loss."[110] Both Christopher and Kathy's existence depends on loss. Not even their childhood belongs to them. They experience a life made up of lies. "Loss" is the only word to describe this experience. Christopher's memories are based on the loss of his parents and Kathy starts remembering her past and writing after the loss of her friends. However, some questions still linger: Do they somehow find ways to have *Erfahrung*? What encourages them to face the truth and realize their loss? How do they deal with their lack caused by loss?

3.2 Realization of Loss and Adult Agony

Although both Christopher and Kathy are victims of a world comprised of dark shadows with almost no room for the truth and resistance against power, I argue that they manage to punch a hole to let the light inside. In this part of the thesis, I will try to concentrate on the points that

[110] Comay, Rebecca "Gifts without Presents: Economics of 'Experience' in Bataille and Heidegger." *Yale French Studies 78* (1990): 84.

led them to face the truth, evoked their memories and motivated them for writing. Martin Jay describes experience as such:

> "However much we may construe experience as a personal possession—"no one can take my experiences away from me," it is sometimes argued—it is inevitably acquired through an encounter with otherness, whether human or not. That is, an experience, however we define it, cannot simply duplicate the prior reality of the one who undergoes it, leaving him or her precisely as before; something must be altered, something new must happen, to make the term meaningful. Whether a "fall" from innocence or a gain of new wisdom, an enrichment of life or a bitter lesson in its follies, something worthy of the name "experience" cannot leave you where you began."[111]

Encounter with others play a central role in both novels. In an environment where there's no chance to explore the world in one's own way, both Christopher and Kathy gain a new perspective through friendship. For instance in the case of Christopher and Akira, although they reproduce power in certain ways, they still support each other in hard times and they provide an opportunity to expose their suppressed feelings such as pain, fear or desire through playing. When Christopher's father gets lost, he has difficulty expressing his feelings. It is as if he cannot transform the shock into words:

> "I felt tears coming, but remembering in time our long-standing feud about whether the English or Japanese cried easiest, I managed to stifle them. I thought again of telling him about my father's disappearance, and suddenly it seemed a hugely substantial reason not only for my having let him down, but for great self-pity on my part. I pictured the shock and shame that would transform Akira's face once I uttered the words: 'I couldn't come the other day because ... because my father's been kidnapped!' - but somehow I could not say it. Instead, I believe I simply turned and ran back to my house."[112]

[111] Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 7.

[112] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 63.

Akira on the other hand somehow understands his friend's state of mind and offers him to speak in another language apart from both English and Japanese; the language of games: "New game. About Christopher father. If you like.' […] 'Yes.' he said. 'If you like, we play detective. We search for father. We rescue father.'"[113] These games can be considered as the starting point of Christopher's quest in finding his lost parents and thus the truth. When he grows up, these games become a muse for Christopher. The memory of Akira links him to his past. When he coincidentally finds him almost dying in the middle of the war in Shanghai, Akira talks about nostalgia and it refers to the meaning of their friendship: Its memory connects them to their good old days which provides a hope for the future: "'Important. Very important. Nostalgic. When we nostalgic, we remember. A world better than this world we discover when we grow. We remember and wish good world come back again."[114]

Going back to Shanghai after so many years is perhaps the turning point in Christopher's life. This journey enables him to see things in a different light. It refreshes his memories and changes his self-image: The journey breaks his mirror[115]. He comes face to face with the truth that was hidden from him all through his life. This potentially dangerous journey opens up a space for *Erfahrung*. I use the word dangerous equivocally: Both

[113] Ibid, 64.

[114] Ibid, 161.

[115] By mirror I refer to the mirror stage where the child constructs an ego ideal. Christopher's ego ideal suffers so much damage after this journey that he undergoes self dissociation.

referring to the conditions of war in Shanghai and to the pain he feels when he faces the truth, namely the lies he had been told since his childhood. During his stay he also visits his old house. The aura of the objects he encounters there takes him back to his childhood:

> "Beyond the diners, right at the back, was a kind of minstrels' gallery, from the rail of which hung a brace of paper lanterns. It was this section of the room that had *drawn my gaze,* and I now continued to stare past the table towards it, hardly hearing my host's words of welcome. […] I drifted forward, and probably remained standing there for some time, gazing up at the gallery, tracing with my eye the route our stairs had once taken. And as I did so, I found an old memory coming back to me […]"

In his days in Shanghai he continues to investigate the case of his parents. Although he decides to run away with Sarah to start a completely new life, at the last minute he renounces and follows his ambition. In the hope of finding the house he believes his parents are kept, he crosses the borders of the Settlement and finds himself in the middle of the war. The vividness of the war scenes he describes reveals the extent of trauma:

> "[…] It was a long, thin sound, like an animal's call in the wild, but ended in a full-throated cry. Next came shrieking and sobbing, and then the wounded man began to shout out actual phrases. […] The realisation that these were two different men rather chilled me. So identical were their pitiful whimpers, the way their screams gave way to desperate entreaties, then returned to screams, that the notion came to me this was what each of us would go through on our way to death - that these terrible noises were as universal as the crying of new-born babies."[116]

These scenes are almost surreal. For instance in the middle of the chaos he suddenly encounters Akira wounded and arrested. Together, they try to

[116] Ibid, 157.

reach the target where they expect to find Christopher's parents but instead they find a totally paralyzed little girl, asking for help. As they get into the house, they realize that the house was bombed and the girl's whole family was killed:

> "Near the back, over by a wall, was the body of a woman who might have been the young girl's mother. Possibly the blast had thrown her there and she was lying where she had landed. There was a shocked expression on her face. One arm had been torn off at the elbow, and she was now pointing the stump up to the sky, perhaps to indicate the direction from which the shell had come. A few yards away in the debris, an old lady was also gaping up at the hole in the ceiling. One side of her face was charred, but I could see no blood or any obvious mutilation. Finally, closest to where we were standing - he had been obscured at first by a fallen shelf - lay a boy slightly older than the little girl we had followed in. One of his legs had been blown off at the hip, from where surprisingly long entrails, like the decorative tails of a kite, had unfurled over the matting."[117]

The metaphor he uses for the scattered entrails is totally estranging, revealing the impossibility to depict the traumatic scene. His childish tone brings in mind a state of regression. He tries to calm down the child by saying that he's a detective and that he will bring justice to her:

> "'Look, really,' I said, 'you're being awfully brave. I swear to you, whoever did all this, whoever did this ghastly thing, they won't escape justice. You may not know who I am, but as it happens, I'm... well, I'm just the person you want. I'll see to it they don't get away. Don't you worry, I'll... I'll...' I had been fumbling about in my jacket, but I now found my magnifying glass and showed it to her. 'Look, you see?'"[118]

He can't even make full sentences. His efforts of consolation sound almost "funny" in such circumstances. He faces his incapability to root out the evil

[117] Ibid, 166.

[118] Ibid.

in the world as a detective and therefore he faces his lack. In the end, he suffers a self-dissociation. He loses his memory: He can't translate the shock into the Symbolic: "My memory of these moments is no longer very clear."[119]

Afterwards he manages to find his mother in a lunatic asylum. He asks for her forgiveness which uncovers his feelings of guilt regarding the loss of his parents. As he gets a positive answer from her (even though she's unconscious to the extent that she can't recognize him) and gets convinced about her love, he feels relieved: "What I mean is, I realised she'd never ceased to love me, not through any of it. All she'd ever wanted was for me to have a good life. And all the rest of it, all my trying to find her, trying to save the world from ruin, that wouldn't have made any difference either way."[120]

Christopher's world is constituted of lies; however he still manages to find strength to swim against the current. His friendship with Akira, his journey to Shanghai and finally finding her mother which indicated the end of the case he devoted himself to, open up a space for *Erfahrung* by evoking his memories. In the end, his curiosity leads him to gaze at the truth which reveals that he himself was the victim of his own case. Realizing that he lost his parents forever and baring witness to the barbaric war, his ideal ego gets shattered and he comes face to face with his lack. This encounter with his

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid, 188.

lack causes a self-dissociation for he cannot translate the shock into the Symbolic. However in the end, he pulls himself together, accepts his lack and renounces his ambitions regarding his job.

This brings into mind the words of Foucault on the issue of limit experience: "[Limit experience is] paradoxically not only a proactive "tearing" of the subject from himself, but also a reactive, post facto reconstruction of that deed." The reconstruction of his "self" goes hand in hand with the process of writing. In the end, writing itself becomes an experience, which I will return in the third chapter.

In Never Let Me Go the friendship between Kathy, Tommy and Ruth is so important that it almost constitutes the backbone of the novel. Their love to each other motivates Kathy and Tommy to search for other possibilities in an extremely oppressive world they're stuck in. Kathy always feels the urge to protect Tommy against the rudeness of the other children. They understand and care for each other. They hold each other a mirror and through this mirror they find the courage to see themselves. They have no parents, therefore they are rootless. They are neither part of a discourse of generation nor have any tradition. They are not part of a culture and they have no history. Their future is stolen away from them. They are all sentenced to death in their 20s. Their existence depends on subordination. They don't know how to resist. However, in spite of these extremely oppressive circumstances Kathy still manages to blink at an authentic experience through writing. On her way to writing, her encounter

with the others, her love for Tommy and her journey to Norfolk motivates her to face the truth and to realize her lack.

As I have mentioned in the first chapter, "students" in Hailsham constantly reproduce power in their relationships. They bully or spy on each other, leaving no room for privacy. They project the internalized power onto their friends which reveals the fact that they are totally intertwined with the totalitarian power they are exposed to. In the case of Kathy, Tommy and Ruth, we can trace this domination in the attitude of Ruth towards the other two. She's quite bossy and takes all the decisions concerning their friendship. Although Kathy and Tommy's love to each other is quite obvious, Ruth becomes his girlfriend. Kathy and Tommy on the other hand, don't rebel against Ruth's dominant character which resembles their submission to the macro power. Despite all these handicaps regarding their friendship, the intimacy they share is of great significance in Kathy's story. After their separation from Cottages Kathy becomes a very successful carer and she finds Ruth and Tommy and becomes Ruth's carer. During the time they spend together, Kathy and Ruth talk about their past and their friendship, confess their thoughts and feelings to each other. These moments they share, give Kathy great strength:

> "And that was the start of it, that era, with the summer coming on, and Ruth's health at least on an even keel, when I'd come in the evenings with biscuits and mineral water, and we'd sit side by side at her window, watching the sun go down over the roofs, talking about Hailsham, the Cottages, anything that drifted into our minds. When I

> think about Ruth now, of course, I feel sad she's gone; but I also feel really grateful for that period we had at the end."[121]

The friendship of the threesome resembles an oasis where Kathy finds shelter: "On that journey home, with the darkness setting in over those long empty roads, it felt like the three of us were close again and I didn't want anything to come along and break that mood."[122] Even though three of them are best friends all through their lives, Kathy and Tommy share a very different intimacy. Their shared desire to unveil the mask of the false reality leads them to search for an alternative. Their love to each other motivates them in this quest: "You and me, right from the start, even when we were little, we were always trying to find things out. Remember, Kath, all those secret talks we used to have?"[123]

Norfolk is another important instance in Kathy's life. They believe that whatever they lose they can find in this city. One day during their stay in Cottages Kathy and Tommy decide to go there to find a music tape Kathy had lost. After a short search, the tape named Never Let Me Go attracts her gaze among the other stuff: "Then of course I found it. I'd been flicking through a row of cassette cases, my mind on other things, when suddenly there it was, under my fingers, looking just the way it had all those years ago […]"[124] Objects are of great significance for the children. They collect

[121] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 111.

[122] Ibid, 87.

[123] Ibid, 135.

[124] Ibid, 81.

them in trunks and keep them under their bed. These objects can be considered as transitional (security) objects. In this case they don't help them to transit from dependence to independence (which they are never allowed to possess) but from past to present. The significance of the music tape is that it evoked Kathy's fantasies. She thought that it was sung by a mother to her baby saying never let me go. These fantasies reveal the agony of Kathy for having nobody to keep her beside. She feels like thrown into the world, into a ceaseless loneliness. When she finds the tape which has an auratic effect on her, she remembers her past days and reacts with ambivalent emotions:

> "And now it was there in front of me, there was something vaguely embarrassing about the tape, like it was something I should have grown out of. I actually went as far as flicking the cassette on and letting its neighbour fall on it. But there was the spine, looking up at me, and in the end I called Tommy over. "Is that it?" He seemed genuinely sceptical, perhaps because I wasn't making more fuss. I pulled it out and held it in both hands. Then suddenly I felt a huge pleasure—and something else, something more complicated that threatened to make me burst into tears. But I got a hold of the emotion, and just gave Tommy's arm a tug."[125]

In the end, they accomplish to face the truth by learning that Hailsham was a project and that they were only pawns in it. Their existence was based on some trend. Kathy realizes that what she experienced throughout her life was nothing but the loss itself. However, like in the case of Christopher, she manages to open up a space for authentic experience in her prisonlike world. Her friendship with Ruth and Tommy, her love for Tommy and the journey to Norfolk where she finds an old item from her childhood encourage her to

[125] Ibid, 81.

ask questions about herself, her past and the world around her. In the end, although she can't get rid of the dominating power she's exposed to, she writes her story and gives a voice to her memories as well as her friends. Her memories become her shelter: "I was talking to one of my donors a few days ago who was complaining about how memories, even your most precious ones, fade surprisingly quickly. But I don't go along with that. The memories I value most, I don't see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them."[126]

In this chapter I tried to deal with the issue of experience in *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*. I argued that both protagonists were prevented from having their authentic experience, namely *Erfahrung* in Benjaminian terms. Their lives were decided for them and there was no room left for freedom. However their friendships as well as the journeys they make connect them to their past memories and change their perspectives. As a result they start questioning the meaning of their lives. In the end both face their everlasting agony caused by loss and accept their lack. What makes both novels queer is this acceptance. However, this acceptance doesn't silence them. They write the story of their lives deprived of free will and authentic experience. The process of writing in the end becomes an experience itself. In the next chapter I will concentrate on this process.

[126] Ibid, 136.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSFORMATION OF THE LOST EXPERIENCE INTO WRITING

> "I always speak the truth. Not the whole truth, because there's no way to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible: words fail. Yet it's through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the real."
>
> Jacques Lacan

In the first and the second chapters I tried to analyze the power relations and the way they destruct authentic experience in *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*. In both novels the protagonist narrators are exposed to extreme subordination. Their bodies and minds are manipulated by the dominant power. Taking Butler's theory on subordination into account I claimed that both Christopher and Kathy submit to subordination in return for social existence. In the case of Christopher, this submission takes place regarding his orphanhood. He subjectivates through his identity and therefore his existence depends on the loss of his parents and the lack caused by it. After this loss, he loses his connection to any tradition as well. His trans-nationality is another aspect of this disconnection and they all together condemn him to rootlessness: Even though he gets used to London, he never truly feels at home there. Kathy suffers subordination as well; however her case is much more extreme than Christopher's. Her acceptance

of a subordinated social category in order to exist paradoxically results in her destruction. It is as if she doesn't know how to oppose or resist against it. The manipulative power prevents her from seeing the truth although it is manifest since her childhood. She's always told about the donations but she never fully comprehends its meaning. She's totally rootless, not even belonging to the discourse of nativity. She's thrown into the world for the sake of others. She's like a recyclable product of mass production brought into being for consummation. The difference between Christopher and Kathy's situations can be interpreted as a result of historical change. Christopher lives in the time of the World War II whereas Kathy lives in 1990s in London. In *When We Were Orphans* we come across with the oppressor in the end, namely Wang Ku who kidnapped her mother and ruined Christopher's whole life. The nationality of the oppressor articulates the intersectionality of oppression. The dynamics of gender and nationality intersect here: The Chinese man oppresses the English woman: "He regularly whipped her in front of his dinner guests. Taming the white woman, he called it." Whereas in *Never Let Me Go* in accordance to the structure of power in post-industrial world, we don't encounter any agent of power throughout the novel. The clones are born into a language that veils the extreme violence they're exposed to. Definitions such as "student" or "carer" normalize the destructive characteristic of power. Unlike Christopher, Kathy doesn't lose her parents for she never has any. Her existence depends on pure lack, except for her memories of her friends. In both cases there's hardly any possibility for resistance. They devote

themselves to an ideal in order to deal with the pain due to subordination. Christopher becomes a popular detective and searches for his lost parents all through his life, which in the end turns out to be an inner quest. As he solves the case and faces the truth, he realizes that he himself was the victim of his own case. In the end, all his fantasies about his past, about himself and his life collapse. The distortion of his self-image results in a self-dissociation. It corresponds to the trauma caused by the war. Kathy on the other hand becomes a very successful carer. The authorities allow her to choose for her own donors and she chooses Ruth and Tommy. Their coming together evokes Kathy's memories about the past and perhaps it becomes an inspiration for writing. After Ruth's death, she goes to Madame with Tommy in order to ask if there is any possibility for a "deferral". Instead of being able to defer their operations, they come across with the tragic truth about their lives. By Tommy's question the ideal she had devoted herself loses ground as well: "'But is it really that important? Okay, it's really nice to have a good carer. But in the end, is it really so important? The donors will all donate, just the same, and then they'll complete.'[127] Her self-devotion is surely a psychic strategy to ignore the fear of death.

It is evident that there's no room for authenticity and freedom in these circumstances. *Erfahrung,* in the way Benjamin uses the term, is nothing but the experience of loss in both cases. Christopher loses his parents and gets forced to leave Shanghai, the city of his childhood. This forced migration is another aspect of his rootlessness. He loses continuity in

[127] Ibid, 134.

history. Trauma either prevents him from remembering (he constantly complains about his deficient memory) or weighs him down with the heaviness of some instances from his past. Kathy on the other hand realizes that she never had a childhood but she was given one. We can see it in Miss Emily's words: "[…] sometimes […] we kept things from you, lied to you. Yes, in many ways we fooled you. I suppose you could even call it that. But we sheltered you during those years, and *we gave you your childhoods.*"[128] She doesn't belong to the discourse of nature and she's not a part of any tradition[129]. During their stay in Cottages they make a journey to Norfolk in the quest of Ruth's "possible", namely the person she was copied from, and they can't find her. This articulates the very fact that being part of the world, getting to know their roots is "impossible" for them. They hardly have any connection to the world outside: "This might all sound daft, but you have to remember that to us, at that stage in our lives, any place beyond Hailsham was like a fantasy land; we had only the haziest notions of the world outside and about what was and wasn't possible there."[130] In this sense, Kathy is an outsider in every sense of the word. She only has her memories with her friends that belong to her: "I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them."[131]

[128] Ibid, 127.

[129] By tradition I refer to a collective memory. Lack of parents prevents her from being part of it as well. She doesn't know any stories from the old times or any proverbs or maxims. In this sense she resembles the modern subject with no ties to the past.

[130] Ibid, 32.

[131] Ibid, 136.

In a totalitarian world based on violence, experience is the synonym for fall: “It is just such a 'philosophy of poverty' that can explain the modern rejection of experience by the young […]. For they are like those cartoon characters of our childhood who can walk on thin air as long as they don't notice it; once they realize, once they experience this, they are bound to fall.”[132] In these circumstances both characters are incapable of distancing themselves from the past. They are stuck in an infinite present time and they can’t progress. For instance they don’t know how to attach to someone, preventing them from having the most powerful experience, namely love. According to Benjamin destruction of the aura, hence destruction of the distance between past and present is the main reason for the atrophy of experience: “[*Erfahrung* means] translating the past events into present memories but also to register the temporal distance between now and then, acknowledge the inevitable belatedness of memory rather than smooth it over […]”[133] Inability to translate the past events into the present memories brought an end also to storytelling. Modern subject is deprived of a story based upon experience and wisdom. However what makes both Christopher and Kathy’s cases queer[134] is that they have a hunger for truth. They dare to ask for it and in spite of all the risk it bears, they pursue it. In the end,

[132] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 15-16.

[133] Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 340.

[134] Caroll uses the term “queer” for the characters in *Never Let Me Go* taking their gender roles into account. She argues that “[they] can be interpreted as embodying a heterosexual identity which is disempowered and marginalised by heteronormativity […]” *see: Carroll, R. "Imitations of life: Cloning, heterosexuality and the human in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never let me go." Journal Of Gender Studies 19, no. 1 (March 1, 2010), p. 60.*

although they can't get rid of the totalitarian power, they decide to write and give voice to their memories, which becomes an experience itself.

As I have mentioned before, without friendship, art and journey, they wouldn't perhaps have had the courage to look for the truth and transform it into writing. In an environment full of terror and violence they find shelter in friendship. Christopher's childhood memories constitute mainly of the time he spent with Akira. Through their games they have the chance to express their suppressed feelings. They explore the world together. It is the case also in Kathy, Ruth and Tommy. Their memories are the only treasure Kathy possesses. Remembering her days in Hailsham is like taking refuge in a parallel universe. Among all the memories the ones with Tommy are of great significance. The intimacy she shares with him encourages her to dare to ask for an alternative. Although they can't find any alternative and give up in the end, by the Muse of their love Kathy writes her story.

Benjamin argues that remembering one's childhood is the source of creativity: "To have admitted their yearning for a beautiful childhood and worthy youth is the precondition of creativity. Without that admission, without the regret for a greatness missed, no renewal of their lives is possible."[135] In spite of all the efforts of power to ruin Christopher's whole life by taking his parents away and forcing him to migrate, his short but beautiful memories from Shanghai inspire him for his journey. In the end,

[135] Walter Benjamin, "The Life of Students," in *Selected Writings Volume One 1913-1926*, ed. Michael W. Jennings et al. (Cambridge, London, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996), 46.

he faces the truth, namely the loss and transforms it into words. And in the case of Kathy, although her life is under the strict control of an invisible power and there is no room for self-realization and resistance, their solidarity with Tommy as well as her memories in Hailsham evokes her imagination and the will to write. After their visit to Madame she no more denies the truth considering her life and accepts the loss. Then she starts writing her story.

In her article, Silvia Caporale Bizzini argues that: "In his novels, Kazuo Ishiguro uses the narrators as storytellers, both in a Benjaminian and in an Arendtian sense linking the construction of identity to a fragmented memory process as a (mostly ineffective) means for the characters to recover from a phantasmal past."[136] I disagree with Bizzini for two reasons. First of all, I claim that it isn't possible to categorize the two narrators as storytellers in a Benjaminian sense. According to Benjamin a storyteller gains all their authority from wisdom derived from experience. Unlike novelists storytellers don't reflect on themselves and hence their stories aren't autobiographical:

> "The storyteller takes what he tells from experience -his own or, that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale. The novelist has isolated himself. The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounseled, and cannot counsel others."[137]

[136] Bizzini, "Recollecting Memories, Reconstructing Identities," 66.

[137] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 87.

In spite of giving information they give counsel to the listener. As distinct from novels, stories have the purpose of being useful for the listener: "[Every real story] contains, openly or covertly, something useful. The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers."[138] Taking Benjamin's definition of a storyteller into account, I argue that both Christopher and Kathy are post-modern novel protagonists rather than storytellers, for they lack experience and wisdom, namely everything a storyteller possesses. They neither have authority nor any counsel to give. They don't even have control over their own memories: At times their memories resist narration: "My memory of these moments is no longer very clear."[139][140]

Their childhood is based upon trauma. In the case of Christopher it is the loss of his parents and forced-migration. In the case of Kathy it is the lack of any care-taker to protect her from the destruction caused by an invisible power. She isn't allowed to grow old nor has she a future. Christopher on the other hand renounces getting married and having children. He plans to spend rest of his life without a genuine purpose. In these circumstances it is clear that both narrators are far from meeting the definition of a storyteller. The second point I oppose Bizzini is about her

[138] Ibid, 86.

[139] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans,* 166.

[140] I realized that I have used this quotation more than once and I thought it may have something to do with its content. It reveals the fact that both novels open up a space for the lost experience and for the untold hence it is the voice of the silence. Maybe this is the reason why it constantly haunts me.

assertion concerning the narrators' construction of identity linked to a fragmented memory process and their recovery from a phantasmal world. As I have discussed in the first chapter, I think the construction of identity is so complex that it cannot be explained only by means of a memory process. It is closely related to the internalization of power. Because of its relation to power, identity does not recover the subject from a phantasmal past; on the contrary, it imprisons the subjects and narrows her perspective. The narrators' change doesn't take place by means of the construction of their identity; it takes place at the point when they start questioning their identity. As Christopher bears witness to war and in place of his parents he finds a wounded girl paralyzed by the death of her whole family, every word and identity loses ground: "You may not know who I am, but as it happens, I'm... well, I'm just the person you want. I'll see to it they don't get away. Don't you worry, I'll... I'll...' I had been fumbling about in my jacket, but I now found my magnifying glass and showed it to her. 'Look, you see?"[141] In the end he realizes that the image of the past as well as his self-image was imaginary; however in spite of this realization he can never fully recover from this past. He gets condemned to rootlessness. A similar process takes place also in the case of Kathy. Even after she faces the truth about her life and comprehends the meaning of being a clone, she can't recover from it; because she lacks a tool to resist against it. Bizzini's claim that they reject falling into a paralyzing sense of victimization isn't therefore sufficient

[141] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 166.

enough to explain especially Kathy's situation.[142] The reason why she doesn't victimize herself is closely related to the complex relationship between her existence and subordinating power. As a result of the internalized manipulative power, she lacks a sense of resistance. We can see it clearly in the way they mention the concentration camps in Nazi Germany. They don't see the resemblance between the soldiers kept in these camps and they themselves: "One of the boys asked if the fences around the camps had been electrified, and then someone else had said how strange it must have been, living in a place like that, where you could commit suicide any time you liked just by touching a fence."[143] Even though Miss Lucy hints the similarity between the two situations, nobody pays attention to her except for Kathy: "It's just as well the fences at Hailsham aren't electrified. You get terrible accidents sometimes."[144] In addition to the connection between her existence and power, it can also be argued that rejecting victimization can be considered as a psychic strategy to deny the violence Kathy is exposed to. She displaces the fear with her ambition in her career. Claiming that Christopher and Kathy are not storytellers in a Benjaminian sense doesn't disclaim the fact that they tell their stories. The way they narrate their past is actually of great significance for both novels. They are unreliable narrators, constantly referring to the deficiency of their memory:

[142] Bizzini, "Recollecting Memories, Reconstructing Identities," 65.

[143] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 38.

[144] Ibid, 38.

"This was all a long time ago so I might have some of it wrong […]"[145] "I don't remember if it was before or after the class, or how full the room was."[146] "Eventually I did settle on one memory from very early in my life, from when I could have been no older than four or five - a memory which even then, when I was nine years old, had already grown hazy in my mind."[147] "The man was associated for me with some scene of embarrassment or unpleasantness, but beyond that my memory would yield nothing."[148] As we already know from psychology as well as oral history, narrating the past is never giving a full and reliable account of what has happened; but rather reconstructing it. Narratives of Christopher and Kathy articulate this fact throughout both novels. By constantly mentioning the distortion in their memories they challenge the authority of the narrator. Since power is internalized, challenging the authority of the narrator also means defying power in a macro sense. This challenge is closely related with the acceptance of their lack. This lack both refers to the lack of phallus and the lack of memory. In the end they come across with the fact that their lives have always been under the control of the dominating authorities and that they have had no right to speak about it. The deficiency of their memory also depends on the traumatic realization of the lack of phallus. Remembering the past is painful in many aspects. However, because lack

[145] Ibid, 7.

[146] Ibid, 26.

[147] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 51.

[148] Ibid, 69.

seduces desire, in the end as they face it, they both manage to transform it into a narrative. This narrative bears the stamp of the void within their souls through the moments of silence where their memories resist narration. In these instances the whisper of the untold bears witness to the Real. As the narrators have no authority, the authority of their words has to be questioned as well. In the case of Christopher, at the instance he faces the destruction of the war; the meaning he has attributed to the word "detective" loses all its sense. Or in the case of Kathy, as she becomes aware of the fact that her entire life was based on a project of some unknown authorities, being a "carer" came out to refer to nothing. However the subtext of the novel reveals the truth beyond the words. At this point narration gains great significance. We can resemble both Christopher and Kathy to a collector. They collect pieces from the debris of their past and "bring them together in scattered new constellations."[149] Through these constellations we face the subjection both narrators have been exposed to. Especially in the case of Kathy, her incapability to resist against this subjection holds a mirror to the reader. It is important to underline here that this incapability isn't expressed by her words but by her silence: She never utters the possibility of a rebellion against the authorities.

Another aspect of the novels that challenges the authority of the word is that in both of them the end is manifest from the very beginning. In *When We Were Orphans* the name of the book hints that Christopher will never be able to find his parents, thus he will always be an *orphan*. His quest will aim

[149] Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 335-336.

to return to the times when he was not an orphan. This overlooked truth comes to the surface when he releases from all his ambitions, feelings of guilt and pain when he ensures his mother's love: "

> "'That boy. They say he's doing well. But you can never be sure with that one. Oh, he's such a worry to me. You've no idea.' […] it was only when she said that, it was only then I realised. What I mean is, I realised she'd never ceased to love me, not through any of it. All she'd ever wanted was for me to have a good life. And all the rest of it, all my trying to find her, trying to save the world from ruin, that wouldn't have made any difference either way. Her feelings for me, they were always just there, they didn't depend on anything. I suppose that might not seem so very surprising. But it took me all that time to realise it.'"[150]

Like in the case of *When We Were Orphans* the end is manifest from the beginning also in *Never Let Me Go.* Both Kathy and the reader are informed about the donations. We know that the protagonist will die within six months. However the information conveyed by words doesn't reveal the truth behind it: "It's hard now to remember just how much we knew by then. We certainly knew—though not in any deep sense—that we were different from our guardians, and also from the normal people outside; we perhaps even knew that a long way down the line there were donations waiting for us. But we didn't really know what that meant."[151] In both novels truth is overt from the beginning; however it takes time for the protagonists to explore it. In the end, they find whatever they need at home. Christopher's oppressor turns out to be his Uncle Philip and the victim is he himself. Kathy has always been told about the truth by Miss Lucy since her

[150] Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*, 188.

[151] Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 34.

childhood, but she resisted understanding it.[152] This very fact underlines the deceitful character of the speech. However, it is through speech they regain their lost experience. In the end, they transform their memories (as pieces from the debris of their past) into writing and this process itself becomes an authentic experience for both of them.

As Martin Jay states, an experience "cannot simply duplicate the prior reality of the one who undergoes it, leaving him or her precisely as before; something must be altered, something new must happen, to make the term meaningful."[153] In a totalitarian world deprived of any possibility for alteration, both Christopher and Kathy undergo such experience during the process of writing. In this process they "translate the traces of past events into the present memories […]"[154] By constantly underlining the "inevitable belatedness of memory rather than smooth it over"[155] they challenge the narrator's authority and point out the imperfection of their memory and knowledge. This challenge becomes a resistance against the macro power as well. Realizing and accepting the lack of power in oneself undermines the idea of an absolute power in general. They resist the hegemony by

[152] These facts about the novels bring into mind the short story "Purloined Letter" by Edgar Allan Poe. The story is about the amateur detective Dupin's investigation of a letter stolen by Minister D. He doesn't search for the letter in hidden places like his colleagues do. And in the end he finds it in a cheap card rack hanging from a dirty ribbon. In his interpretation of the story, Lacan stresses the overtness of the truth it reveals. As Zizek puts it, like in the case of the purloined letter, the unconscious is overt too. One shouldn't look for it in the darkness; it always gives itself out through speech. For further reading: Zizek, *Looking Awry* and Lacan *Ecrits*

[153] Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 7.

[154] Ibid, 340.

[155] Ibid, 340.

demystifying the words and revealing the hidden truth beyond them. In the end, although they don't fully recover from their phantasmal past unlike Bizzini argues[156] they still manage to reconstruct their subjectivity using their narrative as a tool for resistance. In the end they give birth to the book they have written. According to Butler "if the subject is neither fully determined by power nor fully determining of power (but significantly and partially both), the subject exceeds the logic of noncontradiction, is an excrescence of logic, as it were."[157] In the case of Christopher and Kathy, they exceed the hegemonic power by the end of their experience of writing. The books as objects become their excrescence.[158] The reconstruction of their subjectivity through writing doesn't heal their wounds, and for instance in the case of Kathy, doesn't transform into revolution; it gives voice to their void and makes them eternal within time: "[…] it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language."[159] After writing the books, the narrators manage to exceed the power and undermine the subordination they are exposed to. In the end both the narrators and the

[156] Bizzini, "Recollecting Memories, Reconstructing Identities," 66.

[157] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 17.

[158] Butler says in her book that "Lacan refers to the subject as excrescence." (p. 203)

[159] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma Narrative and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 7.

novels resist any categorization.[160] As a result the novels become the "authentic" experience of the narrators:

> "[…] experience turns out to be a dynamic force-field of all these elements, neither wholly inside nor outside the self, a self that is never prior to experience anyway and refuses to be reduced either to its transcendental or empirical modes. Charged with the energy of desire, it resists domestication into conventional discourses of sexuality, heteronormative, procreative, and beholden to narratives of species propagation. Although refusing any one single temporal mode, it generally follows a logic of repetition and displacement rather than dialectical sublation. It involves language, yet exceeds it; it is available for objective observation, yet is a fiction produced after the fact; it actively seeks moments of ecstatic, perhaps even mystical intensity, yet acknowledges the power of passivity and openness to what may come without willing it. As such, it is part of Bataille's general rather than restricted economy, one in which loss is never entirely recuperated, the wounds of alienation never fully healed, and meaning never perfectly realized."[161]

As they remember and narrate their past, the "silences of history come to word" and beyond the silence we encounter the truth about the history and thus gain the courage to imagine for a different future:

> "Remembering is an act of lending coherence and integrity to a history interrupted, divided, or compromised by instances of loss. We engage in history not only as agents and actors but also as narrators and storytellers. In narrative, we may be able to redress forcibly forgotten experiences, allow the silences of history to come to word, and imagine alternative scripts of the past."[162]

Up to now I tried to analyze the power relations in *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go* and the agony both protagonist narrators

[160] It is hard to decide which literary genre *Never Let Me Go* as well as *When We Were Orphans* belong to.

[161] Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 400.

[162] Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside The Nation* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2000), 4.

suffer as a result of these relations. I claimed that in neither novel is there a room for authentic experience for everything is dominated and manipulated by the hegemonic power. However, Christopher and Kathy manage to open up a space for authenticity through their encounters with the others as well as love, art and journey. The memories of these instances motivate them for telling their stories and in the end they come up with the books I have analyzed. These books as object prove that they excess the totalitarian power that leaves no room for self-alteration. It becomes a tool of resistance against the absolute power. By challenging their own power as narrators and having the courage to face their lack, they challenge the concept of power in general. Their authority is challenged by the constant reminder of the narrators about the deficiency of their memory, by the pieces of memories that resist narration and the fact that words fail to expose the truth even though it is inherent in them. Silence gains significance in the end because it is silence that exposes the possibility of a revolution especially in the case of Kathy where she constantly overlooks the possibility of a rebellion. She doesn't let her fantasy go beyond the borders set by the power. However the way she constellates the pieces of her memories reveal the truth beyond the words. We hear her whisper through this post-modern novel that resists any categorization. The silence of her words holds on to the Real in Lacan's terms.

All these claims bring into mind the question if literature is capable of giving voice to the silenced, namely the subaltern. Is it possible to consider literature as a tool of resistance against the totalitarian power? Does

narrative provide alternative scripts for the past as Seyhan argues and thus provide alternative scripts for the future? The power of the novels lay behind the fact that they raise these questions instead of answering them in certain ways.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

"Hiçbir yere taşmıyorum, kendime sızıyorum yalnız
Ben dediğim koskocaman bir oyuk"
Edip Cansever

In this MA thesis I aimed to provide an analysis of the interplay between power relations, experience and narration in Kazuo Ishiguro's two novels *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*. In the first chapter I tried to analyze how power relations emerge in both macro and micro levels and how they are internalized by Christopher and Kathy. I argued that their existence depends on subordination and therefore they lack any strategy to resist against the totalitarian power. They both devote themselves to different occupations and hence sublimate their unconscious feelings of fear and terror. In the case of Christopher this self-devotion takes place by means of his job. He becomes a detective and dedicates all his life to finding his parents. In the end it becomes clear that his choice of profession was closely related to his lack and his aim was nothing but to make sure that he was innocent and that his mother never ceased to love him. Kathy on the other hand becomes a perfect carer and takes care of other clones who undergo operations. However by the end of the novel, as she gets to understand the real story behind her fake life, she gets irritated by Tommy's question about how meaningful it is to be a carer, for after all she knows that she is going to

die soon. In the novels fascistic power agonize the protagonist narrators both in their childhood and adulthood. This internalized power emerges also in their relationships with other people. As children they hurt each other either physically as in the case of the Christopher and Akira's friendship or psychologically as in the case of Tommy. Nevertheless in the end their friendships constitute a shelter for both characters.

In the second chapter my aim was to examine the loss of experience in the novels. I claimed that there is no room for any authentic experience in the two novels, for Christopher and Kathy's lives are under the strict control of power and they resemble guinea pigs trapped in a laboratory. Although they try to find a way out in their search for the truth, they never have the chance to have an *Erfahrung* in its Benjaminian sense. In the end it comes out that their whole experience is based on the experience of loss. As a result Christopher lacks the ability to love and leaves Sarah. Kathy on the other hand cannot even learn how to protect herself against the destructive power and in the very end she submits herself to her destiny by leaving Tommy and waiting for her operation. However both Christopher and Kathy rebel against the dominant power indirectly by giving voice to their stories and hence social subordination they suffer.

In the third chapter I discussed the issue of narration. First I analyzed the function of unreliable narrators in both cases and how they subvert the power of the narrator. I argued that this subversion leads to the subversion of macro power as well and thus open up a space for resistance as well as an authentic experience. I called Christopher and Kathy's writing experience

"authentic", for both *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go* resist any categorization. They are quite "queer" in this sense. The former exceeds the category of detective novel and the latter cannot be described as science fiction. In any case every story can be considered as unique and thus the stories of Christopher and Kathy are sui generis as well. This brings into mind the question if literature can be the voice of the unsaid, the voice of subaltern. In both novels narration reveals the hidden truth through the unsaid and thus provides an opportunity for an alternative narrative for the past as well as a resistance against the violence both protagonist narrators are exposed to.

During my own writing process, I always kept in mind that every academic work is destined to have contradictions and no theory is capable of overcoming them. Questions always bring into mind new questions and there is never enough time and space to discuss them all. In this thesis I also had to exclude some points that I would examine if I had an opportunity. One of them is certainly the problematic of subjectivity. I constantly mentioned about the subjectivation of the protagonist narrators through the technologies of power. However one may ask the question what subjectivity actually means. Can we talk about a coherent subjectivity? Should we handle the subject by means of essentialism or should we deconstruct its meaning? When we talk about a "subject" we usually refer to the dominant western understanding of the term.[163] Unlike such an understanding, many

[163] The term is quite controversial and there's an extensive literature on the issue. From Ancient Greece until today thinkers have pondered on the meaning of subjectivity. By dominant understanding I mainly refer to the understanding that assumes a subject with

eastern thinkers consider the individual as a part of a holistic system, either God or nature. Keeping in mind that although Kazuo Ishiguro spent most of his life in England, he was born in Japan and grew up with a family who perhaps internalized Japanese culture, is it possible to suggest that his protagonist narrators bear the stamp of an eastern understanding of subjectivity? I suppose the fact that the characters are copies of the people living in England in the case of *Never Let Me Go* strengthens this suggestion. Throughout the novel we are told that these individuals, namely the "normals" are ambivalent towards the clones, doubting if they have a soul or not. This suspicion may be read as a suspicion towards the problematic of subjectivity as a whole. Can we assume a subject at all as long as they are constructions of a totalitarian system? What does soul mean and does it exist at all? When does a human become a human? It is perhaps impossible to find concrete answers to these questions but I suppose they open new doors in understanding ourselves as well as the outside world.

Before finishing, I would like to add that writing a thesis about the experience of writing has been a challenge for me in many aspects. The social and political environment in which I wrote it was highly distressful and it prolonged the process. Almost every day I came across the violence of the state both physically and psychologically. Nevertheless despite all the difficulties I faced, I can say that it helped me comprehend the meaning of experience in its fullest sense for writing became an experience for me just

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integrity. According to this claim there's a knowing subject totally aware of itself. This perspective is later challenged by different theories, for instance psychoanalysis, which is based on the idea of the unconscious.

like in the case of Christopher and Kathy. I can say that this experience transformed me in many ways and thus I will carry it with me all through my life.

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