Spare Parts

Never Let Me Go is an extremely disturbing film, especially so because of how nonchalantly the characters accept the troubled world that they are brought into. Clones are raised at special facilities where their sole purpose is to live out a temporary existence, awaiting the inevitable harvesting of their organs by their “originals”. The main characters, three clones, present different facets of this dilemma - though they prize companionship, and display what are clearly human qualities, it is shown from the beginning that there is no hope for these ‘creatures’. They feel social insecurities, sexual urges, and perhaps even love, but in the dystopian world that is presented this does not matter - their fates are ultimately bound to the cold surface of an operating table. One of the most powerful moments of the film is when Ruth’s lifeless body is left in an empty operating room, utterly useless having ‘completed’ her purpose. She is a mere ‘battery’ to the doctors that cut her life short; no ritual accompanies the departure her ‘soul’, if she has one at all. The troubling pieces of the film serve to forewarn man about the potential dangers of medical technology; though it may be *possible* to extend the human life through science, some (or most) of our humanity may be lost in the process.

The predestination of the clones as organ donors is the foremost concern of the movie, calling into question whether a cloned entity is deserving of human rights. Indeed, as in Blade Runner, the audience is unable to identify these creatures as clones for a good portion of the movie - for all appearances and purposes, they *seem* like humans. The biggest giveaway to their unnatural circumstances are the many artificial constraints that are placed upon their lives. From the beginning, they attend a ‘school’ that is ostracized from the rest of civilization, and the film suggests that they are unaware, or at least afraid of, the world that exists beyond the ‘safety’ of their walls. Though they perform exercises to attempt the process of socialization, such as placing a simple order at a cafe, these clones will prove utterly incapable of interacting with the ‘regular’ humans that populate the world surrounding. The most disturbing part of the film is how the characters discuss their (involuntary) donations, which they see as a standard part of life, unable to realize the injustice of their situation until it is far, far too late. Tommy announces the status of a fellow donor as, “Completely...alright!” after his third donation, indicating that a ‘functioning’ status is an excellent aim for a clone, who does not that there is a life beyond young adulthood for which to yearn. As Ruth’s body begins to deteriorate after her donations, she struggles to fix the biggest mistake of her life (keeping Tommy and Kathy apart), attempting to dispel some existential angst before her departure. This being said she has no desire to survive her third donation after enduring the painful procedures and recovery centers that define the life of a clone. Though slowly and deliberately paced, the film kept my strict attention for its duration, as I attempted to decipher the strange clues that instilled a slowly growing anxiousness. Ultimately, the story of Never Let Me Go is a powerfully moving one, and encourages the audience to appreciate the innumerable opportunities that accompany our privileged existence, while warning us that we may someday lose sight, and deprive others of such an existence.