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The Ethics of Cloning and Creating Donors in *Never Let Me Go*

Modern medicine in contemporary society has the ability to extend the average human life. However, given this supposed bright reality, people should not ignore the ethics of certain medical practices. For instance, in Mark Romanek's 2010 film *Never Let Me Go*, artificially cloned donors are created for the sole purpose of carrying organs for naturally born humans to use. While there are obvious medical benefits of utilizing clones to improve the quality of life for others, the existence and treatment of artificial beings is ultimately unethical due to their exploitation.

Due to the fact that donors physically suffer and face imminent death from medical procedures, their existence is unethical. For example, after Kathy fulfills her carer duties for a patient that passes away, she discovers her childhood friend Ruth in a frail condition after a second donation. Ruth explains to Kathy that she "does not think [that she would] want to survive [her] third donation" since there will eventually be no more recovery centers or carers; even if donors survive and complete subsequent donations, they are forced to continue the process until "they are switched off." Ruth ultimately realizes her fate of being a donor; she must continually suffer through the donation process until her body can no longer function. In other words, the medical procedures continue until donors die. Although Ruth realizes that there is a chance of survival for successive donations, she would rather complete earlier to avoid enduring any more physical pain. Her misfortune of being a donor causes her to voluntarily want to die because she can no longer bear being alive. Consequently, the way naturally born humans create and utilize clones as donors is highly exploitative because they treat them only as organ carriers; the pain and suffering of artificial humans is completely disregarded and ignored. Thus, forcing donors to live through intense agony from donation processes is unethical since they are essentially exploited until their deaths.

In fact, although clones live seemingly normal human lives throughout their early years, society essentially dehumanizes them to justify their exploitation. For example, when Kathy and Tommy visit Madame to apply for a donor deferral given that they are in love and have the

artwork to prove it, the woman denies their request. Shortly after, Miss Emily appears and dismisses the rumor that it is possible for donor couples to obtain deferrals. She reveals that the purpose of the Gallery was not to look into the souls of children, but rather to “show that children are all but human and see if they have souls at all.” While the Gallery served as a sense of normality in the childrens’ lives and a way for them to creatively express themselves, the guardians of Hailsham betray the innocent trust of the clones for society’s selfish purposes. Instead of viewing them as normal people with human qualities, the guardians only perceive them as “all but human” and “soulless” creatures that need to validate their true humanity. In other words, the Gallery was not created as an ordinary and pure artistic achievement for the clones; it was ultimately used to reconfirm society’s belief that using clones as donors is justifiable since the artificial beings are spiritually and biologically different. Thus, naturally created humans exploit clone’s naivety from a young age in order to confirm their differences and justify their donor scheme as ethical. In fact, Professor Despina Kakoudaki offers similar insight about defining humans in her book *Anatomy of a Robot: Literature, Cinema, and the Cultural Work of Artificial People*. For instance, she explains how “texts that obsess about the difference between person and object are fetishistic, because they cannot let us see that it is arbitrary, the result of abstractions and decisions, not of forms of being” (Kakoudaki 172). The author essentially argues that the difference between humans and nonhuman objects is “arbitrary” since there seems to be absence of judgement based on established and systematic reasoning; from her point of view, definitions of humanity result from individual opinions. In the case of clones from the film *Never Let Me Go*, their dehumanization derives from the “abstractions and decisions” of actual human beings who fail to understand that they also hold human qualities such as emotions. Natural humans base their definition of humanity on personal beliefs and ideas rather than the experience of being human, which Kakoudaki refers to as “forms of being” in her book. Therefore, society dehumanizes clones according to its own definition of humanity in order to justify the exploitation of the artificial humans.

Overall, despite the fact that their existence medically helps others, utilizing artificial humans as donors is essentially unethical due to their exploitation. Not only do clones experience constant pain from the medical procedures, but their deaths are also imminent. Their dehumanization by naturally born humans further ignore their humanity and justify their exploitation. For this reason, people should not ignore the ethics of certain medical practices.

Works Cited

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