Generic Considerations in Ishiguro’s
Never Let Me Go

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ABSTRACT

Never Let Me Go, Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel about human clones raised for organs, is most often critiqued as science fiction or dystopian literature by the scholarly community. Yet focusing on the institutional implementation of cloning obscures a more critically fertile theme: sentiment. As demonstrated in this article, the novel has deeper affinities with sentimental and abolitionist literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than with speculative fiction. This generic reevaluation makes way for a broader critical approach to the novel’s notion of humanness in the post-genome age.

. . . the face speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation. . . . At the same time, the face is what forbids us to kill.

—Emmanuel Levinas

[A]n historical analysis of posthumanity cannot be grounded solely in technological transformation. Rather, it must be more broadly described as part of a set of interconnected discourses and philosophical claims surrounding concepts of mind, body, nature and artifice. It must take into account the historiography of concepts that have emerged and the cultural, political and media instantiations through which moral claims about a shift of humanisms can be asserted.

—Andy Miah, “Posthumanism: A Critical History”

I. INTRODUCTION

On one level, Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel, Never Let Me Go (NLMG), may be read as a cautionary tale regarding the abuse of science and technology on...
humans and their civil rights. As others have noted, however, it is a story in which science and technology are conspicuously absent.\textsuperscript{1} Though the novel is narrated by a human clone and the major characters are clones, no scientists or doctors appear; there is no theory or explanation of genetic replication and we see nothing of its mechanics and implementation. Indeed, the most technologically advanced item to appear in the novel is the automobile. As one might expect, the dearth of science in a novel about clones has led to some anxiety among critics about how the work should be classified.\textsuperscript{2} Gabriele Griffin comments: “Many critics puzzled over the novel’s genre, registering an affinity to science fiction . . . but arguing that it was not quite that.”\textsuperscript{3} Weighing in on the genre confusion surrounding the novel, Mark Jerg dismisses Louis Menard’s “Quasi Science Fiction,” settling instead for the cumbersome “science-fiction without the technology.”\textsuperscript{4}

Other critics and reviewers, citing \textit{NLMG}'s bleak, institutional atmosphere, its reverberations with “twentieth-century legacies of modern totalitarian repression,”\textsuperscript{5} have linked it with science fiction’s close cousin, dystopian literature. Leona Toker writes that this “mild and melancholy dystopia” evokes Huxley’s \textit{Brave New World} “because the foundational ideas of both novels have to do with in-vitro creation of human beings.”\textsuperscript{6} Yet, that classification sits uneasily on the novel. In an early review, Marvin Mirsky remarks that unlike Orwell’s \textit{1984}, Russell Hoban’s \textit{Riddley Walker}, Philip K. Dick’s \textit{Blade Runner}, or Ray Bradbury’s \textit{Fahrenheit 451}, \textit{NLMG} eschews dystopian literature’s usual sociopolitical didactics and polemics.\textsuperscript{7} Mirsky’s observation is noteworthy because it highlights a difference between Ishiguro’s novel and Huxley’s that could not be more acute. Published before there was a technology of cloning, \textit{Brave New World}, in addition to descriptions of crude cloning processes, has doctors and scientists engaging

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Id.} at 645.
  \item Shameem Black, \textit{Ishiguro’s Inhuman Aesthetics}, 55 MOD. FICTION STUD. 785, 789 (2009).
  \item Marvin Mirsky, \textit{Notes on Reading Kazuo Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go}, 49 PERSP. BIOLOGY & MED. 628, 629–30 (2006). In a series of interviews on NPR, entitled, “Ishiguro’s Sci-fi Novel Is No Mere Clone,” Ishiguro acknowledges NLMG’s generic ambiguity but does little to clear up the uncertainty. “I worry less about categories and genres, you know. I use whatever I can. I’m kind of used to that, you know, that ambitious art reaching out and using science to create what—all right, you want to call it science fiction, fine, but I mean, it might not fulfill a lot of the genre expectations of sci-fi fans.” \textit{Onscreen, Ishiguro’s Sci Fi Novel is No Mere Clone, All Things Considered} (15 Sept. 2010, 5:29 PM), available at http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129880145.
\end{itemize}
in chapter-length, learned debates over the wisdom and judiciousness of centrally planned societies through genetics management. No such erudite disputation is found in the pages of NLMG. Rather, NLMG demonstrates that public forums of reason and debate as a means to advance an ethical standpoint—the guardians’ Victorian era movement to raise the clones in a boarding school environment and their grand project which purported to “prove ... to the world” that the clones were humans possessed with souls because they were capable of producing fine art and rational essays—fail to sway public opinion that the clones are anything more than “shadowy object[s]” from a test tube. At the novel’s conclusion, it is clear to the reader that the science and technology of cloning and debating its ethics are not Ishiguro’s primary concern.

NLMG’s premise is extraordinary: in England, late in the previous century, a young, cloned woman, conceived in vitro, named Kathy H, is raised along with others like her so that their organs can be harvested upon maturity for the benefit of so called “normals,” that is, non-cloned humans. The story unfolds straightforwardly as the personal journal entries of a young woman in the anguishing process of becoming an adult individual. The message of the novel, human clones are fully human and so should not be treated as animals on the hoof, is not argued or debated; rather, it is rendered by the readers’ own affective resonance with Kathy and the other clones’ emotional lives. One of the many unabashedly poignant scenes in this novel is that of Kathy as a child, hugging her imaginary baby as she sways dreamily to the song ballad, “Never Let Me Go.” Another, at the end of the novel, depicts adult Kathy clutching her lover/baby, Tommy, who is bawling uncontrollably in a windswept and manure filled pasture while the dark and threatening night encroaches upon them. These images, tableaux which enact the novel’s title and its primary theme of connection, appear calculated to evoke in the reader compassion, sadness, revulsion, and rage that the two clones and their friends, humans all, are treated in a grossly inhumane and wholly instrumental manner by a society that has placed cold reason and expediency above matters of the heart.

Such concerted use of pathos has literary precedence that should not be overlooked in a critical appreciation of this novel. In the early nineteenth century, abolitionist writers, frustrated with efforts to reason with undecided and pro-slavery adversaries, appealed instead to their emotional sensibilities. This approach turned away from the public sphere of debate, rhetoric, and political activism for what was believed to be the universal realm of sentiment. There is a similar, calculated use of feeling at work in NLMG. Feeling weighs heavily in the construction of Kathy H’s memoir, and the emotional connections between characters and between Kathy H and the reader figure

preeminently in the novel's notion of what it means to be human. Therefore, the more critically productive approach to NLMG would be to consider the work as a hybrid of sentimental and abolitionist literatures.9 This is not to claim that inquiry from a scientific and technological perspective is irrelevant to the reception of NLMG, but to contend that critical perspectives that center on the novel's sci-fi or dystopian premise of clones institutionally conceived and cultivated for their organs marginalize the thematic core of the work: the role of sentiment in defining human life.10 Like abolitionist literature, NLMG demonstrates that while humanness can be recognized by

9. Though NLMG appropriates important stylistic and thematic features of sentimental and abolitionist literature, significant differences remain. While NLMG shares with sentimental literature protagonists whose circumstances and personal identities are often unknown to them, other characters in the novel, and the reader as well, NLMG lacks the sentimental novel's resolute closure wherein the hero or heroine and all other questionable identities are positively established. Uncertainty, resolved in the sentimental novel, remains in NLMG with the continued anonymity of the "donors." And though it is tempting to read NLMG in terms of a slave narrative—both have the intention of moving the reader to empathic concern with the plight of an oppressed narrator—there are substantial differences, not least of which is the relative credibility of the narrators. Slave narratives typically begin and end with declarations of the veracity of their testimony. Harriet A. Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (L. Maria Child ed. 1861), for example, opens with "I am aware that some of my adventures may seem incredible; but they are nevertheless, strictly true." Id. at 5. Throughout her narrative, the reader is reminded that her account is accurate: "Reader, I draw no imaginary pictures of southern homes. I am telling you the plain truth." Id. at 56. NLMG's Kathy H makes no such claims. As she readily admits, the events are as she remembers them. Other differences concern attitudes towards oppressors. In abolitionist slave narratives, rebellion and subversion occur throughout the genre. Though there are a few outbursts of rage in NLMG from the clones, they are private and undirected. Finally, unlike the slave narrators, the clones are virtually free to roam at large and yet at no time do they attempt to escape their institutional enslavement.

10. The significance of emotion in NLMG has been acknowledged in some critical literature. See Myra Seaman, Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future, 37 J. Narrative Theory 246 (2007). Seaman writes, "[B]eing human is revealed [in NLMG] as a certain feeling vulnerability and ability to love others, even in the face of one's own inevitable and untimely death." Id. at 267. In this and other passages, Seaman locates sentiment as the central attribution of humanness in the novel, but her article does not question genre or link it to sentimental and abolitionist literature; rather, it reveals the resonances between types of humanness in what she refers to as Ishiguro's "science fiction dystopic narrative" with medieval conceptions of humanness based in feeling vulnerability. Id. at 267, 269. See also Keith McDonald, Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go as "Speculative Memoir," 30 Biography 74 (2007). This article does take up the issue of genre but makes no connection with sentimental and abolitionist literature. He reads NLMG as "a novel that utilizes many of the techniques of the autobiographical memoir, while simultaneously barring itself from classification as an example of this genre." Id. at 75. His piece analyzes the novel in terms of the "tropological framework of the autobiography;" that is, the "depiction of schooling and the coming of age narrative, the meta-fictional references to the writing process, and the consideration of the novel as a pathography." Id. at 76, 82. See also Anne Whitehead, Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go, 52 Cont. Lit. 54 (2011). This recent article also deals with the centrality of affect in the novel. A critique of her contribution comes later in my essay.
legislative bodies, genuine social recognition comes only through the awareness of individual feeling in common, that is, through empathic resonance.

This article will illustrate the performance of affective recognition in the novel with reference to an article about the re-humanization of ethnic others after the genocide in Rwanda and the former Yugoslav Republic. The authors make the point that though genocidal policies, which work to dehumanize certain ethnic groups en bloc, proceed from routine rationalizations circulating through the public domain, the reversal of this thought process, what the authors term “rehumanization,” is not accomplished through the same (public) channels; rather, it requires a personal recognition of the victim’s individualness through empathic correspondence—the taking in of “another’s distinct subjective perspective.”

Both sentimental and abolitionist literature coincided with a period of heightened instability and flux regarding notions of humanity. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, institutionalized slavery brought to public debate in England and the United States intense scrutiny regarding humanness—heretofore an issue confined more generally to speculative philosophy—how it was defined and what that condition entitled. Speaking before parliament in 1823, William Wilberforce, England’s most visible and outspoken abolitionist at the time, argued in passionate terms what was at stake:

| T | he very circumstances of these poor people being distinguished by their colour from the rest of the community, prevents their calling forth the feelings of sympathy; they are a marked species, they are looked upon as a different race of Beings, and are not considered as being entitled to the same humanity and tenderness, which the worst of men would allow to be the right of those whom they acknowledge to be their fellow creatures. |

The completion of the human genome late in the previous century inaugurates a comparable phase of instability, reflection, and inquiry regarding humanness with the opportunity for (re)imagining new humanities. For the first time in human history, there is an elemental, scientific unit, the gene, which not only purports to account for the particular morphology of an organism, but also, in part, for its mental and psychological makeup. Furthermore, this element is not monadic, but permeable: it can be modified and manipulated. The consequences of this development for humanism’s worn

12. Id. at 565.
13. The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, in the House of Commons, on Monday the Second of April, 1792, Reported in Detail 7–8 (1792).
conception of the individual—an autonomous, natural entity—are significant. With the technology of genetic engineering, splicing, and replication, the notion of human individuality is no longer tenable in any naïve sense of the word. Individuality, if such a thing can be said to exist, must be expressed in terms other than that of the indivisible persistence of a being-for-itself. Through the intimate disclosures and confessions of a young cloned woman, Ishiguro proposes an account of human individuality that distances itself from philosophical traditions that essentialize feeling and the faculty of reason as inherent indications of the soul.

The shock for NLMG’s readers comes not from realizing that the clones are human but that these humans are clones. It is the difference between these respective acknowledgements by which Ishiguro distinguishes his post-genomic agenda from the Victorian inspired program of the guardians. The guardians want to prove that the clones are human because the clones are endowed with souls and so possess all the entitlements that legacy bequeaths: creativity, reason, and love. Ishiguro, on the other hand, demonstrates that the individuality of these human clones, whose genomic codes are identical with at least one other human, does not depend on the intrinsic properties of a soul but on each clone’s emotional singularity. The categorical abilities to produce art and compose rational essays, among the guardians’ indices for humanness, fail for the clones in their bid to be regarded by normal humans as human individuals. It is not until their emotional selves are recognized through empathic resonance, albeit only among themselves and the few normal humans with whom they form personal relationships, that their uniqueness as humans is acknowledged. Like abolitionist literature before it, the larger promise of NLMG is that its readers, in coming to an awareness of the multistability of humanity, will comprise a far greater number.

II. SENTIMENTAL MEMORY

Commenting on the structure and form of the eighteenth century sentimental novel, Leo Baudy writes that it “strives to imitate feeling rather than

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15. Because the modern notion of “individual” is a historical idea freighted with various values and beliefs of liberal humanism, it is not used as a term in this article in an unqualified sense; rather, it is to be understood—for reasons that should become clear—in the sense of a “dividual,” a self-aware actor constituted not of origins but emerging out of a collective, interacting social and material environment. See Marilyn Strathern, The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia (1988), for a discussion of this alternative notion of selfhood.

16. This is necessarily so because, as replicants, nothing can be considered uniquely inherent to the clones’ constitution.
intellect . . . the inarticulate language of the heart.” The “inarticulate” is frequently expressed in the sentimental novel through the narrative device of the fragmentary, unfinished, or discovered manuscript in which “no total act of creation distorts its raw and real experience; no sophisticated ‘author’ mediates between the reader and the work.” Though Kathy H’s memoir does not evince the extensive episodic disjointure and ellipsis of Henry McKenzie’s *The Man of Feeling*, it is certainly fragmentary, raw, and unsophisticated as Kathy admits herself. Kathy begins to assemble her personal journal, the bits of her life thus far, at the aptly named “Recovery Centre,” a nursing home, where she had come to visit a dear childhood friend, Ruth, who was recuperating from her first organ donation. Alluding to the uncertain conditions of memory, she puts the reader on notice that he should not expect direct knowledge, not an infallible view of events, but Kathy’s emotional responses to them, for memory’s affective interest in the past is necessarily selective. “[M]aybe I’m remembering it wrong,” she cautions the reader from the beginning, and later, “This was all a long time ago so I might have some of it wrong.” As such, her journal never pretends to be an unbroken record of historical truth; rather, it is a collage of her fears and longings linked together only by the most tenuous logic.

*In Search of Lost Time* is not considered a sentimental novel, and no claim is made here that it be considered as such. The concern, rather, is with what Proust has to say about emotion’s effect on memory and on memory’s role in the construction of self as it relates to Kathy’s endeavor to compose her life journal from the recalled fragments of her past. As regards Proustian memory, Thomas Lennon points out that what we remember “can be phenomenologically dissociated from any past event.” Remembering is like seeking in the sense that, though it is directed, it is done inexactly, more or less well, not like the reporting of an event but an approximate construction. Indeed, the facts themselves are not crucial for the psyche’s use

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18. *Id.* at 6.
19. *Ishiguro, supra* note 8, at 8.
20. *Id.* at 13.
21. Inge Crosman Wimmers, *Proust and Emotion: The Importance of Affect in A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (2003). Emotion is, however, very much at the center of the work. Critic Inge Wimmers writes that she “realized that strong emotions and passions were at the very heart of the novel’s mise en intrigue and that they explained the actions and reactions of its principal characters.” *Id.* at 5. So crucial does emotion figure in the work, Wimmers claims in her concluding remarks, that “The novel’s final word, as it turns out, is not a hymn to the hero-narrator’s newly found vocation or the religion of art but a plea for compassion—the frame of mind and heart that leads to altruism, even in those engaged in artistic creation.” *Id.* at 183.
of memorable production; rather, events are selected, reworked, and filtered through one’s affective sensibilities to be linked together into a formidable aesthetic whole of experience. Some things are not recalled accurately, or they are left out all together. This deficit is not to be lamented in NLMG, however, for the substance of Kathy’s personal journal, as she advises the reader, is “not in the actual details [but] inside, in the feelings.”

Here, Kathy’s sentiments on narrative recollection echo Proust himself, who said, “[O]ur true life [is] reality as we have felt it.” This construction of the past, simultaneously real and fictive, temporal and eternal, is a process of bricolage, whereby a collection of images is meaningfully arranged and held in place by the binding force of emotion.

Two quests in the novel, the clones’ efforts to find their model “normals” from whom they were putatively copied and Kathy and Tommy’s search for her missing cassette tape, must be considered in terms of this mnemonic construction of reality. The first would be important for reasons any human might find understandable: “Since each of us was copied at some point from a normal person,” Kathy proposes, “there must be, for each of us, somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life. This meant that, at least in theory, you’d be able to find the person you were modeled from.” The clones are, in effect, seeking their parents. So, when a “possible” normal is sighted, based on a perceived similarity to one of the clones, that person is checked out. In Kathy’s particular case, because she had strong sexual urges and feelings as an adolescent, she regularly thumbed through pornography magazines looking for her parent model. Though realistically she claims, “there’s no sense in it,” she nevertheless feels that finding her model would “explain why I am the way I am.”

Like the Guardians’ art project at Hailsham, which reasoned that if the clones were capable of producing art, they had souls and therefore were no different from normal humans, the clones’ search for parents is a misdirected pursuit after a reality based on origins, a quest which, unsurprisingly, ends in failure and frustration.

By contrast, Kathy’s search for her tape, Judy Bridgewater’s collection, Songs after Dark, stolen from her private trunk years ago at Hailsham and containing the track, “Never Let Me Go,” offers an instance of creative affective reality. As young adults, rummaging in a second hand shop in Norfolk with Tommy, Kathy finds the missing tape, but she is not sure it is the original tape taken from her or just another copy. After all these years, there is no way to tell for certain:

23. Ishiguro, supra note 8, at 36.
25. Ishiguro, supra note 8, at 139.
26. Id.
27. Id. at 181.
[Tommy] “Is that it?”

[Kathy] “Yes, this is it,” I said . . . “Can you believe it? We’ve really found it!”

“Do you think it could be the same one? I mean the actual one. The one you lost?”

“For all I know, it might be,” I said. “But I have to tell you, Tommy, there might be thousands of these knocking about . . .”

“Back then, when you lost it, I used to think about it, in my head, what it would be like, if I found it and brought it to you. What you’d say, your face, all of that.”

Tommy’s obsession with the “actual” tape reflects, as does the search for parent “possibles,” an obsessive concern with an identity of origins. For Tommy, the original tape becomes a material fetish from which to generate emotional—here, potentially romantic—experiences. Kathy, though she is seduced by her desire to find her parent model, understands that the tape’s originality is not a vital issue. Her excitement at finding the tape, she confides, is a “nostalgia thing.” The discovery of the tape, regardless of its derivation, becomes in her mind grist for further autobiography. “[T]oday, if I happen to get the tape out and look at it, it brings back memories of that afternoon in Norfolk every bit as much as it does our Hailsham days.” Bridgewater’s tape means nothing in itself. Whether the one found in the shop is the copy or the one that belonged to her initially, its worth is found in the experiential sentiment she comes to invest in it over time.

Kathy’s use of the tape, moreover, functions as a means to illustrate a notion of individuality which does not issue solely from interior and natural competencies adequate unto itself but from the accumulation of life’s emotional experiences. Here again, Proust’s particular use of sensibility is instructive. In her analysis of emotion in Proust’s work, Inge Wimmers asserts that separation anxiety, for example, the young narrator’s anguish over sleeping alone and his loss of Albertine, plays a “central role in the novel . . . it is an essential part of the entire mise en intrigue.” This apprehension, she continues, constitutes the young boy’s “central emotional paradigm through which the self-in-process will eventually find the core of its identity.” For Proust, individuality, one’s sense of self, does not issue in the main from internal capacities of self-realization and determination, but primarily from the corpus of life’s lived emotional experiences. The memory of waking up mornings at Combray “brings the surrounding narrative context into harmony with the central affective experiences . . . involuntary memory and the suffer-

28. Id. at 172–73; emphasis in original.
29. Id. at 173.
30. Id.
31. Wimmers, supra note 21, at 50.
32. Id. at 48.
ing caused by separation. These experiences have a joint function in that they constitute part of the hero-narrator’s permanent identity.” Ishiguro makes the same point, arguably more forcefully, with regard to the clones’ sense of themselves, of whom, like Kathy’s cassette tape, there could theoretically be “thousands . . . knocking about,” encoded identically. Rather than an identity established on origins, the clones’ individuality is an expression of the mnemonic aggregation of their life’s emotional affairs.

Kathy’s attitude towards the past, in particular her memory of Hailsham, the boarding school, and of her lover, Tommy, who had recently “completed,” or died following an organ donation, exemplifies this notion. Driving in the countryside to an assignment at the conclusion of the novel, Kathy has a Proustian moment when she is involuntarily reminded of her past at Hailsham: “These moments hit me when I’m least expecting it, when I’m driving with something else entirely in my mind.” Musing on the spontaneous memories of her school days, Kathy resists the urge to seek out the physical place: “I’m not really interested in seeing it, whatever way it is now.” Over the years, Hailsham will have changed. The way it is now is not the Hailsham from her memory and thus, not significant to her. Tommy is treated in a similar fashion. In the barren fields of Norfolk, she sees, in the strands of a fence and in the limbs of trees, all sorts of debris brought there by the constantly blowing wind. Thinking about “the rubbish, the flapping plastic in the branches, the shoreline of odd stuff caught along the fencing,” she imagines “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 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.” She has “lost Tommy,” but she “won’t lose [her] memories” of him; they are “safely in my head, and that’ll be something no one can take away.” Tommy’s reality for Kathy lies secure in her memory, not in his presence, hallucinatory or otherwise.

III. SENTIMENTAL CONNECTION AND THE AFFECTIVE VOICE

In “Reclaiming Sentimental Literature,” Joanne Dobson states that “[l]iterary sentimentalism . . . is premised on an emotional and philosophical ethos that celebrates human connection, both personal and communal, and

33. Id. at 104.
34. Ishiguro, supra note 8, at 286.
35. Id.
36. Id. at 287–88.
37. Id. at 286–87.
acknowledges the shared devastation of affectional loss."³⁸ She continues: “The principal theme of the sentimental text is the desire for bonding, and it is affiliation on the plane of emotion, sympathy, nurturance, or similar moral or spiritual inclination for which sentimental writers and readers yearn.”³⁹ Equally important, she adds, are the disconnections, separation, and letting go of loved ones, whether by growing up and apart, by dying, or through extenuating external circumstances that demand division. In the typical sentimental novel, “the greatest threat is the tragedy of separation, of severed human ties: the death of a child, lost love, failed or disrupted family connections, distorted or unsympathetic community, or the loss of the hope of reunion and/or reconciliation in the hereafter.”⁴⁰ Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), for example, separate their young heroines from loving families and cast them into the society of uncaring relatives. In the mid-nineteenth century, the sentimental novel’s themes of connection and disconnection, physical and mortal, were appropriated by abolitionist writers to foreground the personal misery of frequent, premature death and forced marital and familial separations typical in the lives of slaves.⁴¹ Marianne Noble writes that Harriet Beecher Stowe believed that “[t]he anguish of separation is a unifying force, for all races, classes, and genders experience bereavement as ‘one sorrow.’”⁴² Throughout the plot of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (UTC), Stowe exploits separation anxiety to great effect. Uncle Tom, a slave approaching middle age, is sold and sold again, eventually to die at the cruel hand of Simon Legree. In other episodes, slave children are taken from parents, and husbands and wives are separated to be sold indiscriminately.⁴³

Disconnections are similarly crucial to the narrative in NLMG. As “orphans,” separated from their parent models and shunned by society, the clones are forced to forge whatever connections they can between each other socially, sexually, and confidentially. The novel’s eponym, Bridgewater’s song, functions as a recurring motif expressing in imagery the clones’ persistent and deep-seated fears over the loss of connection. After he had begun donating, Tommy recounts to Kathy a vision he has of “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.”⁴⁴ Disconnection also haunts Kathy who happens one day to see a

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³⁹. Id. at 267.
⁴⁰. Id.
clown tightly grasping the strings of balloons with faces and shaped ears, “and they looked like a little tribe, bobbing in the air above their owner, waiting for him. . . . I kept worrying that one of the strings would come unraveled and a single balloon would sail off up into that cloudy sky.”45 Later in bed that night, she thought of Hailsham’s recent closing as “someone coming along with a pair of shears and snipping the balloon strings just where they entwined. . . . Once that happened, there’d be no real sense in which those balloons belonged with each other anymore.”46 For the parentless clones, considered soulless and undistinguished “copies” in the eyes of normal humans, the demise of connective ties with familial others created in their years at Hailsham is more than losing friends and lovers; it is the loss of the medium through which they interconstitutively construct their selves as individuals. These tribal connections between clones, however, are not the only binding ties formed and maintained in the novel. There is Kathy’s close rapport with the reader to consider.

Important in the sentimental novel, connection with the reader is vital in abolitionist literature. It is why the first chapter of _UTC_ is entitled “In which the Reader is Introduced to a Man of Humanity,”47 and why Harriet Jacobs’s narrative, _Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (ILSG)_ begins, “Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction.”48 Close, personal relationships with readers are maintained throughout these works to personalize the narrative and make the ensuing intrigue immediately and viscerally felt. Stowe makes frequent appellative use in _UTC_ of “Reader,” “our Reader,” or “Dear Reader”49 to usher the reader’s experience through the narrative. Likewise, in _ILSG_ Jacobs strategically interrupts the flow of her story to affirm personally the veracity of her account. Typical is this address near the end of Chapter IX: “You may believe what I say; for I write only that whereof I know.”50 Such direct delivery promotes a sense of intimate trust; moreover, it calls out the reader, making it difficult for them to remain emotionally impassive before the horrific events unfolding on the page.

Susan Keen calls the “ambassadorial strategy” a narrative means by which a representative of an out-group speaks to the in-group with the goal of cultivating empathy for the out-group.51 The approach uses first person narrative voice, which is a direct, interior, and rather plain form of address that encourages reliability and recognition on the reader’s part by “invit[ing] an especially close relationship between reader and narrative voice.”52 The

45. _Id_. at 212–13.
46. _Id_. at 213.
47. _Stowe_, supra note 43, at 1.
48. _Jacobs_, supra note 9, at 5.
49. _Stowe_, supra note 43.
50. _Jacobs_, supra note 9, at 81.
52. _Id_. at 220.
effect of this address in *ILSG*, as Jacobs states, “is to come to you just as I am a poor Slave Mother,”53 and not as an abstraction with which to sympathize from a distance. In *NLMG*, the ambassadorial perspective is similarly used to create an intimate, emotional connection between Kathy and the reader by humanizing her and by extension the other clones in the novel. To flesh out her voice, Kathy appeals to the reader through narrative episodes that render her and the other clones de facto humans. That the reader regards from the outset Kathy’s emotional experiences as resonantly familiar to their own is essential to arousing empathic consideration on the clones’ behalf. From Kathy’s first line, “My name is Kathy H.,” the connection Kathy establishes with the reader is characterized by an intimacy, confidence, and candor in which nothing is held back, nothing suppressed. Indeed, it is Kathy’s presumption that the reader feels the way she does, that, in a given situation, her and the reader’s emotions are in correspondence. In a direct address to the reader, Kathy elaborates on the special nature of this bond:

I’m sure somewhere in your childhood, you too had an experience like ours that day; similar if not in the actual details, then inside, in the feelings. Because it doesn’t really matter how well your guardians try to prepare you; all the talks, videos, discussions, warnings, none of that can really bring it home. . . . Maybe from as early as when you’re five or six, there’s been a whisper going at the back of your head, saying “One day, maybe not so long from now, you’ll get to know how it feels.”54

How it feels is the preeminent aspect of lived experience for Kathy, and she presumes this holds for the reader as well. Her statement suggests that human commonality is borne out within the overlap of empathic sentiment and not in the actual details of experience, which can differ so radically from one person’s life history to another.

IV. AFFECTIVE HUMANIZATION

Jodi Halpern and Harvey Weinstein’s article, “Rehumanizing the Other: Empathy and Reconciliation,” concerns the ethnic hatred behind the wars in Rwanda and the former Yugoslav Republic. In both conflicts, motivations and justifications for war crimes derived, in part, from the programmatic dehumanization of the ethnic other. When populations are delegitimized, the authors point out, “polarization and escalation occur . . . differences become magnified, and, along with a host of other social factors, vulner-

54.  Ishiguro, supra note 8, at 36.
ability to violence emerges." The authors contend that for reconciliation between former enemies to take place, the process of dehumanization must be reversed. Each victim must be seen as an individual with unique feelings that could be felt as one’s own: “Resonating with another person emotionally breaks the spell of dehumanization. To be genuinely moved by another’s suffering is to see the other as human.”

Though there are significant differences between the real conditions of ethnic strife in the article and that of the fictional exploitation of the human clones, there are important similarities, too, which link the institutionalized genocide in the article with the novel’s donations program, an enterprise funded and run by the British government. Indeed, as I will demonstrate, the strategy of rehumanization via the empathic reconciliation outlined by Halpern and Weinstein is the means by which Ishiguro humanizes the clones for the reader; that is, Ishiguro employs a procedural empathy to cultivate in the reader what Halpern and Weinstein refer to as “a fundamentally individualizing view of another.” The article, which refers to historical events, and the novel, purposing a hypothetical, fictional situation, both view the individual as the locus through which recognition as human takes place.

The congruence between the two is revealed when, considering empathy, it is understood, as Kathy H says above, that it is not the particulars of the experience that matter, or, more to the point, whether or not it is real or fictional, but the fact of being aware of that experience’s emotional impact. To cite again from UTC, early in the novel, Eliza Harris, a runaway slave, asks Mrs. Bird if she had ever lost a child. When she answers affirmatively, Eliza replies, “Then you will feel for me.” Though their circumstances were different, they both have experienced the same emotional devastation of having lost a child. Kathy H makes a similar appeal to reach across to

55. Halpern & Weinstein, supra note 11, at 566.
56. Id. at 580.
57. Id. at 567.
58. By invoking a historical process of rehumanization to elucidate a fictional narrative of humanization, I am assuming that actual encounters with suffering people and reading about suffering people evoke related cognitive responses. See Howard Sklar, Narrative as Experience: The Pedagogical Implications of Sympathizing with Fictional Characters, 6 PARTIAL ANSWERS: J. LIT. & Hist. IDEAS 481 (2008).
60. Id.
61. Jacobs achieves a similar effect on the reader but through dramatic dissonance. In this passage she brings to the fore the stark differences of the reader’s life world with that of a slave:

O, you happy free women, contrast your New Year’s Day with that of the poor bond-woman! With you it is a pleasant season, and the light of the day is blessed. . . . Children bring their little offerings, and raise their rosy lips for a caress. They are your own, and no hand but that of death can take them from you.

But to the slave mother New Year’s Day comes laden with peculiar sorrows. She sits on her cold cabin floor, watching the children who may all be torn from her the next morning; and often does she wish that she and they might die before the day dawns.
the reader’s own reserve of emotional experience; for throughout all of the alienation, love, loss, loneliness, frustration, and so on, experiences which are to varying degrees representative of ordinary human life, the reader is made privy, through the affective pact Kathy H forges with the reader, to her most inner thoughts and private feelings. Kathy H’s accounts of the bedside vigils, for example, with her close friend, Ruth, and later with her lover, Tommy, as they are about to “complete” after multiple donations, brim with the emotion and anguish of separation and loss. Nothing is held back. These scenes, which resonate with any reader who has stood at the bedside of a terminal loved one in the impersonal white light of a hospital room, acknowledge a common affective narrative among humans. In this way, Ishiguro’s strategy is like Stowe’s which, as Noble explains, was to “thrust[] into readers’ pre-existing wounds, forcing them to ‘feel for’ slaves by re-experiencing their own painful separations and other forms of suffering.”

Empathy and sympathy are psychologically complex states involving an outpouring of feeling toward another. Halpern and Weinstein state, however, that unlike sympathy, “empathy involves imagining and seeking to understand the perspective of another person.” Importantly, “[t]his imaginative inquiry presupposes a sense of the other as a distinct individual.” Accompanying this concern, then, is an emotive curiosity about and active interest in the other and her thoughts, being involved in an emotional experience not one’s own, and being tolerant of emotional ambivalence. Herein lies the particular effectiveness of NLMG’s use of empathy to win readers over rather than use of the more publically oriented sympathy: for though one can express sympathy either for a group or an individual, animals or an abstract cause, because of its distinctly individual character, (re)humanization, as Halpern and Weinstein point out, cannot happen en masse but must proceed one person at a time. This explains the failure of the guardians’ arts and essay program, which held that if clones can produce art and can reason in essays, they must have souls, ergo, they are human. Such an approach works by group evaluation, a means that engenders sympathy for the clones but cannot elicit the empathy necessary for humanization.

Jacobs, supra note 9, at 26.

Stowe and Jacob’s multiple references to the loss of children, rendered for maximum emotional impact, are particularly astute given that the infant mortality rate in the pre-Civil War republic was very high, over 20 percent, or slightly more than one in five infants born (Haines). At this level of loss, many women readers of Stowe and Jacobs’ works would have felt empathetically with Mrs. Bird, Eliza, and Linda Brent, Jacob’s pseudonym. Michael Haines, The Urban Mortality Transition in the United States, 1800–1940, National Bureau of Economic Research 3–4 (2001).

62. Noble, supra note 42, at 299.
63. Halpern & Weinstein, supra note 11, at 568.
64. Id.
65. Id. at 568–69.
The character of Madame exemplifies these disparate emotional responses to group and individual when the reader compares her behavior around the young adolescent students at Hailsham and years later when Kathy and Tommy confront her alone in her home as adults. Initially, her reaction to the mass of students gathered around her was to suppress a shudder “that one . . . would accidentally brush against her.”66 Her revulsion at being touched by the group of clones has a devastatingly dehumanizing and alienating effect on Kathy, forcing the young girl to realize that as a replicate,

you really are different to them; that there are people out there, like Madame, who don’t hate you or wish you any harm but who nevertheless shudder at the very thought of you . . . and who dread the idea of our hand brushing against theirs. The first time you glimpse yourself through the eyes of a person like that, it’s a cold moment. It’s like walking past a mirror you’ve walked past every day of your life, and suddenly it shows you something else, something troubling and strange.67

And yet Madame’s horror of the clones does not deter her from feeling sympathy for them; she is the principal sponsor and promoter of the Arts program that sought more humane treatment of the clones. More telling is the afternoon she discovers young Kathy at Hailsham dancing in a room by herself with a pillow clutched to her breast. The song she dances to is “Never Let Me Go” on her cassette tape. Kathy pretends she is a mother holding an infant baby. Because the moment is intensely personal and emotional, both are embarrassed and uncomfortable when Kathy discovers she is being watched. Madame leaves without a word, but not before Kathy notices her eyes full of tears. At their meeting years later, they discuss the episode, the song’s meaning, the dance, and Madame’s tears. Kathy’s own interpretation of the song’s lyrics was that they were about an infertile woman who miraculously conceives and gives birth. The chanteuse, so Kathy imagines, sings “Never Let Me Go” because she is afraid something might separate mother and child. Kathy assumes Madame’s emotions at the time are empathetic with hers: “You say you’re not a mind-reader. . . . But maybe you were that day. Maybe that’s why you started to cry when you saw me. . . . and that’s why you found it so sad.”68 However, Madame was crying for a different, more sympathetic reason:

I saw a new world coming rapidly. More science, efficient, yes, more cures for the old sicknesses . . . But a harsh cruel world. And I saw a little girl, her eyes tightly closed, holding to her breast the old kind world, one that she knew in her heart could not remain, and she was holding it and pleading, never to let her go. That is what I saw. It wasn’t really you, what you were doing, I know that.69

66. Ishiguro, supra note 8, at 35.
67. Id. at 36.
68. Id. at 271.
69. Id. at 272.
The anonymous nature of her emotional outpouring, denoted in the last line, indicates merely Madame’s feelings of concern at the time for the dire conditions the clones as a class must endure, not resonance with her emotional self.

It is after this exchange of memories, what Halpern and Weinstein refer to as an “imagining and seeking to understand the perspective of another person,”70 that the emotional tenor of their meeting as adults is amplified, taking on the degree of personal inimitability necessary for empathy to emerge. As Madame reaches out her hand and places it on Kathy’s cheek, Kathy says, “I could feel a trembling go all through her body, but she kept her hand where it was, and I could see again tears appearing in her eyes.”71 In stark contrast to her former fear of the clones “brushing against her,” Madame’s reaching out to touch Kathy here is a crucial gesture affirming her empathy with Kathy. As embodied touch is the principle means of connection in NLMG, the wordless, physical bond established between Kathy and Madame, though fleeting, rehearses a convention common to sentimental and abolitionist authors: “the importance of bodily presence and the bodily signs of emotional presence.”72 In UTC a scene strikingly similar transpires between Little Eva and Topsy in which the slave girl declares, “No, [Miss Ophelia] can’t bar me, ‘cause I’m a nigger! .—she’d’s soon have a toad touch her!”

“Oh, Topsy, poor child, I love you!” said Eva, with a sudden burst of feeling, and laying her little thin, white hand on Topsy’s shoulder; “I love you.”73

Noble remarks that in UTC, Stowe “struggl[ed] to represent a mode of cognition relying upon one’s own body as an instrument for interpreting data . . . . For Stowe, thinking through the body is a bodily response to another person’s ‘real presence’. . . . Proximity to another person’s body enables an interpreter to evaluate that person holistically, as a complex nexus of physically grounded cognitive processes and emotional attachments.”74 Similarly, in NLMG, Ishiguro uses Madame’s involuntary bodily trembling at the moment of contact to signal her new “mode of cognition,” the recognition of Kathy’s “real presence” as a human, an acknowledgement which up until this moment was withheld despite her sympathetic, humanitarian efforts on Kathy and the other clones’ behalf.

The individual character of empathic humanization can also explain the achievement of Kathy’s narrative as a means to humanize the clone even as the guardians’ well-meaning but ultimately misguided projects fail. Halpern and Weinstein state that

70. Halpern & Weinstein, supra note 11, at 568.
71. Ishiguro, supra note 8, at 272.
72. Noble, supra note 42, at 300.
74. Noble, supra note 42, at 301.
While reconciliation must occur between individuals, the process can only occur within the context of a society that not only gives permission for people of opposing groups to interact but indeed promotes their collaboration in pursuit of a common goal—building a humane society based on principles of justice and equity.75

As the historical reception of Stowe's novel attests, reading a novel and being moved by it to take action are an individual and then a social phenomenon.76 In *NLMG*, the guardians’ project is “to prove” to late millennial English society that the clones were humans: “art would reveal what you were like . . . inside.”77 Kathy H, by contrast, does not set out to prove anything to her society of readers. Her feelings, speaking for themselves, speak to our own.78

Anne Whitehead, writing on affectivity in *NLMG*, argues quite differently that Ishiguro renders empathy “morally ambiguous” for the reason that the reader is not to identify with Kathy H as “carer.”79 According to Whitehead, Ishiguro has Kathy annul any possibility of reader empathy with the clones because her “care work . . . provide[s] distraction and diversion from activist agendas . . . by enabling us [readers] to feel good about our actions without interrogating too closely the power structures and relations that underpin them.”80 She concludes that Kathy H’s care for the donor at hand, and by extension the reader’s empathy with them, “can be a displacement for political ‘agitation,’ and it can perpetuate, if not deepen, existing social inequalities.”81 However, this article argues that Ishiguro evokes reader empathy with the clones in ways akin to that employed by abolitionist writers. As demonstrated above, Ishiguro places no confidence in public

75. Halpern & Weinstein, supra note 11, at 582.
76. While abolitionist lecturers and tracts had only limited impact, the wide readership of Stowe’s novel consolidated attitudes and breathed life into the movement, galvanizing feelings about slavery on both sides of the issue. In Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860, at 122 (1985), Tompkins states that “[U]nlike its counterparts in the sentimental tradition, [UTC] was spectacularly persuasive in conventional political terms: it helped convince a nation to go to war and to free its slaves.” Id. at 141.
77. Ishiguro, supra note 8, at 260.
78. Ishiguro's strategic use of empathy is not, as it may seem, rejecting one form of Victorian progressivism, humanization via arts and education, and with his intention that readers will be moved to empathic identity by reading of Kathy H’s plight, substituting another. The emergent aspect of humanness, which Ishiguro proposes in his portrayal of the clones, is in contradistinction to natural or inherent qualities of “soul and character,” the object of reformation for the guardians derived from Victorian progressivists like Matthew Arnold. See Matthew Arnold, Thoughts on Education: Chosen from the Writings of Matthew Arnold 235 (Leonard Huxley ed., 1912). Indeed, the clones’ humanness has no inherent properties traditionally associated with the individual; rather it is an enacted, embodied, and situated style correlated with the ability to form close emotional connections with others. Id.
79. Whitehead, supra note 10 at 58.
80. Id. at 73.
81. Id. at 78.
movements that aim to reason, convince, or convert en masse. To be sure, activism and political action may be necessary to bring about legislation and the enforcement of civil rights, but laws, even as they force the body to comply, do not move the heart. Indeed, as the historical import of abolitionist literature like \textit{UTC} and \textit{ILSG} affirms and Ishiguro here suggests, it is only after the heart is moved to action that real social and political change is possible. Among abolitionist authors, Stowe in particular understood the limitations of political agitation and reason as forces for social revolution; she endeavored instead “to pierce through anaesthetizing abstractions and make readers think through the subjective responses of intuition, imagination, and sympathetic extensions to others.”\textsuperscript{82} Mrs. Bird, a white abolitionist in \textit{UTC}, echoes this precise sentiment when she argues vehemently against the rationalizations of her husband, a US senator from Ohio: “I hate reasoning, John,—especially reasoning on such subjects. There’s a way you political folks have of coming round and round a plain right thing; and you don’t believe in it yourselves, when it comes to practice.”\textsuperscript{83} The guardians’ activism, their decades-long “movement”\textsuperscript{84} to show to the world that if the clones “were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being,” fails to exact its objectives.\textsuperscript{85} Explaining the termination of Hailsham and other progressivist programs instituted for more humane treatment and understanding of the clones, Miss Emily relates that the public chose instead to assuage the guilt of their consciousness: “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.”\textsuperscript{86} Avoiding the fact of their individuality made slaughtering the clones for their organs ethically palatable for the normals. Reading Kathy H’s memoir, an account of the affective reality of herself and the other clones, reveals what this collective evasion has wrought: institutionalized genocide.

\textbf{V. REMAPPING THE HUMAN}

In the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the “discovery” and ensuing exploitation of peoples living in New World worked simultaneously to disrupt and bring into being notions of race and humanness at a period when, historian Thomas Gossett writes, “neither Europeans nor Englishmen

\textsuperscript{82} Noble, \textit{supra} note 42, at 295.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Stowe, supra} note 43, at 91.
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ishiguro, supra} note 8, at 263.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Id.} at 261.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Id.} at 263.
were prepared to make allowances for vast cultural diversities.”

Though from the beginning race was used prejudicially to justify oppression and exclusion, it was also used in neutral discourse to cite differences among peoples living in varied geographies. Indeed, for a brief period in colonial America during the seventeenth century, racial differences between Africans and Englishmen, especially among indentured servants, were typically not a divisive issue. There was in fact considerable comingling and intermarriage between the two. As Edmund Morgan writes, “[T]here is more than a little evidence that Virginians during these years were ready to think of Negroes as members or potential members of the community on the same terms as other men and to demand of them the same standards of behavior.”

It was only with the consolidation of large scale plantations in the early eighteenth century as smaller farmers were forced off the land and pushed further West and the demand for workers in labor intensive crops like cotton, a necessity which would increase exponentially in the early nineteenth century with Whitney’s cotton gin, that clear and legal restrictions were drawn between blacks and whites, ushering in the era of chattel slavery, the outright permanent ownership of a person. Audrey Smedley notes that after the turn of the eighteenth century, negative characterizations of Africans formed part of “a new rationalization for enslavement.” As a consequence, “hundreds of laws were passed restricting the rights of Africans and their descendents. By 1723, even free Negroes were prohibited from voting.” Thus, almost a century would pass after the introduction of Africans to North America before racism would be rigidly institutionalized and woven into the fabric of American social, cultural, and civic life. Before that, some Africans who had satisfied the terms of their labor contracts bought land, farmed, and lived in early America, exercising the same rights as other propertied colonialists.

The present state of genomic science has ushered in a period of instability, of possibility and relative openness not unlike that in colonial America before 1723 when sedimented notions of civilization and humanity were cast in relief and challenged by an abundance of geographical discoveries and technological progress. At issue once again is the human. As a quasi-invention, the human is an emergent creature continually undergoing

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   Thus, François Bernier’s reasoned, in an excerpt from his essay “New Year’s Gift to Madame de La Sablière” entitled “The Division of the Earth According to the Different Types or Race of Men who Inhabit It,” that Africans make up a separate race because of “their thick lips and snub noses [and] the blackness that is their essential trait.”
transformation and renewal. The condition of this ceaseless becoming, of the impossibility of any ultimate presence, has been called “posthuman.” 91 In interdisciplinary circles of techno-science and science studies, this avatar has been topical for over two decades. Of much longer and consistent duration has been science fiction’s interest, amounting to an obsession in film, literature, and gaming selections. Celebrating the critical promise of that genre as a means for moving beyond the dead ends of modernism, feminist science studies scholar Donna Haraway writes,

When the pieties of belief in the modern are dismissed, both members of the binary pairs collapse into each other as into a black hole. But what happens to them in the black hole is, by definition, not visible from the shared terrain of modernity, modernism, or postmodernism. It will take a superluminal SF journey into elsewhere to find the interesting new vantage points. 92

In NLMG, Ishiguro has shown that a space ship to elsewhere is not required to radically rethink perspectives on humanness. If the map of the human genome, comprising approximately 23,000 protein coding genes, can be analogized as a chart to a “New World” whose features and coordinates have only been tentatively plotted, then Ishiguro’s novel of sentiment, in which clones rather than slaves from Africa and indigenous peoples play the part of the transgressive other, may be seen as a re-orientation of the expired coordinates of modern humanism. Such re-projections must lead, in subsequent constructions, to new cartographies of humanness.

Ishiguro set his novel in “England, late 1990s,” years before its publication date to show that the challenges of a post human future are already upon us. The clinical management of human beings is no dystopian, futurist tale as Huxley had imagined in Brave New World but a mundane item of today’s scientific terrain. 93 That territory, so crucial to the future of the hu-

91. For Cary Wolfe the term posthumanism “generates different even irreconcilable definitions.” Cary Wolfe, What is Posthumanism? xi (2010). I see this ambiguity and dehiscence as necessary to the evolving discourse surrounding critical posthumanism and the post-human. Apropos of this configuration, N. Katherine Hayles, How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics (1999) writes, “emergence replaces teleology; reflexive epistemology replaces objectivism; distributed cognition replaces autonomous will; embodiment replaces a body seen as a support system for the mind; and a dynamic partnership between humans and intelligent machines replaces the liberal humanist subject’s manifest destiny to dominate and control nature.” Id. at 288.


93. Susan M. Reverby, “Normal Exposure” and Inoculation Syphilis: A PHS ‘Tuskegee’ Doctor in Guatemala, 1946–1948, 23 J. Policy Hist. 6, 22 (2011). The centrality of emotion notwithstanding, referring to NLMG as “science fiction” is problematic for the reason that there is nothing fantastic about the science and technology behind the novel’s premise; mammalian cloning has existed as laboratory practice for over two decades. Furthermore, the deliberate and instrumental use of humans for scientific ends is a matter of historical record. One does not have to bring up mad Nazi doctors in death camps or Japan’s infamous Unit 731. For forty years beginning in the 1930s, in this country,
man, whatever shape and composition one takes that contested figure to be, merits a broader field of inquiry than fantasy literature alone can offer.

United States Public Health Service (USPHS) doctors withheld treatment for syphilis from African-American men in the well-known study at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Lesser known is the study conducted in the 1940s, funded by the National Institute of Health and run by the USPHS, in which doctors intentionally infected Guatemalan prisoners, soldiers, prostitutes, and mental-health patients with active STD bacteria and viruses (Reverby). Cultivating in vivo, harmful infections in humans without their permission was deemed necessary to the research and development of medications for use by US soldiers who contracted sexually transmitted diseases while stationed abroad.