Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*: A Post-Humanist Reading

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Abstract

This paper offers a comparative analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, focusing on their portrayal of posthumanism. Through an examination of these novels within the framework of posthuman theories, the study seeks to illuminate how each author envisions the future and its implications for humanity. Specifically, the analysis delves into how technology and scientific advancements intersect with human existence in these narratives, providing insights into the complexities of a potential posthuman future.

Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* presents a dystopian world where clones are created for organ donation, raising profound questions about the nature of identity, ethics, and the value of life. The novel challenges readers to consider the implications of a society where human beings are treated as commodities, highlighting the dehumanizing effects of such practices. In contrast, Winterson's *The Stone Gods* offers a satirical and thought-provoking commentary on contemporary society's reliance on technology and its potential consequences. The novel imagines a world where technological advancements have led to environmental degradation and a loss of individuality, prompting reflection on the impact of progress on humanity. By analyzing these novels together, this study aims to underscore the relevance of these narratives in our contemporary world.

المستخلص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة تصوير روايتي *لاتتركنـي أبـدًا* لكازو إيشيغورو *والآلهة الحجرية* لجينيت وينترسون باستخدام نهج مقارن والاعتماد على نظريات ما بعد الإنسانية. تهدف الدراسة إلى فهم كيفية تصوير الروايات للمستقبل وتأثير ذلك على البشرية. يظهر التحليل كيف يتقاطع التكنولوجيا والتقدمات مـع تجربـة الإنسان، مما يقدم نظرة على تعقيدات مستقبل مابعد الإنسانية المحتملة. بشكل عام، تساهم هذه الدراسة في فهم أعمق لكيفية تأثير هذه الروايات واستكشافها لمواضيع ما بعد الإنسانية في الأدب المعاصر. كما تقدم الدراسة تحليلًا مفصـلًا للشخصـيات والعوالم التي خلقها الكتاب، مـع التركيـز على كيفيـة تصـويرهم للتكنولوجيا وتأثير ذلك على هويتهم البشرية. كما يوضح التحليل كيف يتعامل الكتاب مع مفاهيم مثل الحب والألم والهوية في سياق ما بعد الإنسانية. تهدف الدراسة إلى إلقاء الضوء على كيفية استخدام الأدب لاستكشاف وفهم التحولات الثقافية والتكنولوجية في عصرنا الحالي، وتحليل الآثار الاجتماعية والأخلاقية لهذه التحولات على المجتمعات والأفراد. كما تسلط الدراسة الضوء على كيفية استخدام الأدب كأداة لاستكشاف تلك التحولات ومناقشة التساؤلات الأخلاقيـة والفلسفية الناشئة عنها.

Introduction

In recent years, the concept of posthumanism has emerged as a prominent area of inquiry within literary studies, challenging traditional notions of human identity. As advances in technology and biotechnology continue to blur the boundaries between human beings and non-human beings, questions regarding the nature of humanity and the implications of these transformations have become increasingly urgent. Posthumanism posits a future where human beings are no longer the central or dominant species, but rather part of a complex network of beings, both organic and artificial. This paradigm shift in thinking has profound implications for how we understand ourselves, our relationship with technology, and our place in the world.

Through a comparative analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, this study aims to explore the portrayal of posthumanism in contemporary literature. These novels offer rich narratives that engage with the themes of technology, biotechnology, and the future of humanity, providing fertile ground for examining the complexities of posthuman thought. By examining how these authors envision a posthuman future, we can gain insight into the ways in which literature grapples with the ethical, philosophical, and existential questions posed by advancing technologies.

A Comparative Analysis of Posthuman Elements in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Winterson's *the Stone Gods*

This paper examines Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Jeanette Winterson's *Stone Gods* through the lens of posthumanist theory. Posthumanism, emerging in the 1990s, contests the notion that humans are the sole agents of world control. Francesca Ferrando[1]'s book *Philosophical Posthumanism* delves into posthumanism from a philosophical standpoint. She views posthumanism as a deconstruction of the human being, originating as a philosophical and political movement in the late 1960s (Ferrando 24-26). Ferrando posits that posthumanism is a facet of philosophical posthumanism, which she divides into three categories. The first is post-humanism, the second is post-anthropocentrism, and the third is post-dualism. Post-humanism views human beings not as a single

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[1] Francesca Ferrando, "Philosophical Posthumanism", Bloomsbury ,2019

notion but as multifaceted (27). Ferrando shares a similar viewpoint with Rosi Braidotti, who argues that the concept of "becoming" is crucial for grasping posthumanism. This concept extends to include non-European, non-white, women, "freaks," animals, and even robots (27).

Carole Guesse's thesis, "Fictions and Theories of the Post-Human from Creature to Concept," delves into the realm of posthumanism, providing a thorough investigation into its nuances. She carefully distinguishes between posthumanism and transhumanism and traces the historical development of these terms, highlighting their evolving meanings. Guesse argues that 'the posthuman' is not a singular concept but rather a multifaceted figure that embodies various characteristics simultaneously, and she explores this idea not only in theoretical works but also in fictional texts. By categorizing key developments in the field and examining its diverse interpretations across disciplines and cultures, Guesse sheds light on the complexity and ambiguity inherent in the concept of the posthuman. She proposes a framework for organizing theoretical production to clarify and streamline future discussions. Guesse's work is inspired by her observation that theories and fictions of the posthuman display signs of hybridity, which she connects to the posthuman's inherent hybridity through a causal link. She also suggests that the impact of science fiction on imagining ways to become posthuman and on shaping societal and legal responses to these changes is not yet fully understood.

In her paper "Temporality in the Anthropocene: Revisiting Jeanette Winterson's *Stone Gods*," Najmeh Nouri examines how Jeanette Winterson challenges conventional concepts of time in her novel. Nouri argues that the vastness of the Anthropocene era, characterized by significant human impact on Earth's ecosystems, makes it challenging to represent within a linear timeframe. To address this, Winterson uses nonlinear temporal structures in *Stone Gods*, depicting a planetary catastrophe as an ongoing phenomenon that influences various temporal dimensions—from the past to the present and into the future.

Nouri suggests that Winterson's narrative reimagines time to construct alternative worlds, enabling her to envision ecological collapse across different temporal and spatial contexts. The novel presents the story of the Anthropocene as a consistent narrative of degradation, occurring alongside humanity's destructive activities throughout history. The choice of multiple narrators in *Stone Gods*

allows Winterson to present different perspectives and explore the complex interactions between human beings and non-human beings in the Anthropocene, highlighting the interconnectedness of all beings.

Nouri also notes Winterson's use of signals and traces in the novel, which serve to underscore the environmental degradation caused by human activities. Through these narrative techniques, Winterson creates a powerful portrayal of the impact of human actions on the planet, emphasizing the urgent need for environmental awareness and action.

In her paper titled "Brutal Dehumanization in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*," Amel M. Jasim explores the theme of dehumanization within the novel. Jasim describes the narrative as unfolding in an imaginary world where clones lead dehumanized lives, facing conflicts within themselves, among each other, and with the powers that control them. The struggle between the supervisors and the clones is a central theme, highlighting the clones' victimization and the violence they endure.

Jasim suggests that *Never Let Me Go* portrays two distinct worlds: one controlled by the "controllers," who have absolute power over the clones, and the other inhabited by the clones, filled with grief. She argues that the novel can be seen as an allegory for colonial mimicry, where the clones mimic the colonial subjects who originated themselves when Britain conquered parts of the globe. While the clones receive infrastructure and instruction, they also experience control, submission, and despair.

Furthermore, Jasim highlights the internal struggle among the clones themselves, particularly in their relationships. Despite the apparent contradiction of two women caring for the same man, the clones in *Never Let Me Go* demonstrate a greater degree of understanding and compassion toward each other than the non-clones do.

In conclusion, Jasim's analysis delves deep into themes of acceptance, memory, and the impact of society's treatment on the clones in *Never Let Me Go*. The idea that the clones have no free will and are resigned to their fate is poignant, especially considering how they find solace in their memories despite their predetermined lives. Ishiguro's exploration of these themes prompts reflection on the implications of science and technology on humanity and civil rights.

Conclusion

To conclude, this research has explored how both authors use their narratives to comment on the impact of technology and science on humanity, raising questions about identity, ethics, and the nature of being human in a rapidly changing world. Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* presents a dystopian society where clones are created for organ donation, raising profound ethical and existential questions about the value of life and the nature of humanity. Jeanette Winterson's *Stone Gods*, on the other hand, offers a satirical and thought-provoking commentary on contemporary society's reliance on technology and its potential consequences. Both novels serve as cautionary tales, urging readers to consider the ethical implications of technological advancement and the ways in which it may alter the very essence of what it means to be human. Through this exploration, the thesis has contributed to a deeper understanding of posthumanist themes in literature and their relevance to contemporary society.

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