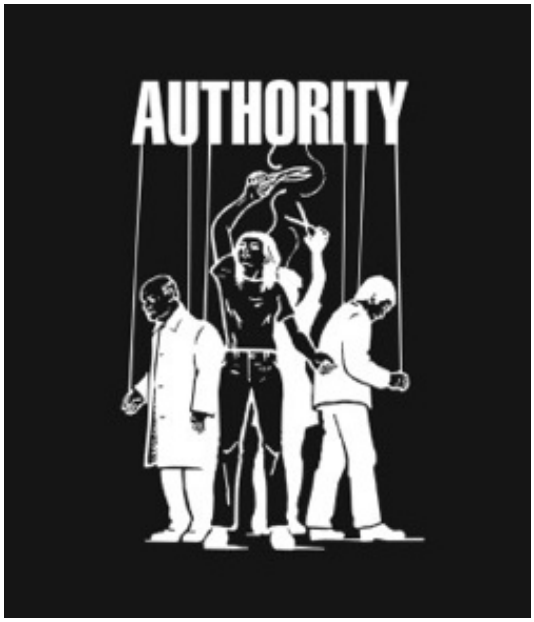
The Individual vs. The System

Repression and Rebellion in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*



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Abstract

This thesis describes how individuality can be found in dystopian literature through the rebellion of the main character against the repression set by the dystopian system in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. Each novel will discuss its dystopian background, the inner workings of its system, if and how its main character rebels against the system, and what result this rebellion reached. A final comparison of the three novels will provide an overview of how individuality is represented in dystopian literature.

Keywords: Dystopian literature, individuality, repression, rebellion, system, dystopian state, George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*.

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The Individual vs. The System: Repression and Rebellion in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

The amount of dystopian and science fiction works in contemporary films and television series show the popularity of these genres. The basis of these media works is often adapted from literature. In 2008 the first book from the young adult dystopian trilogy *The Hunger Games* was released, which was adapted to screen in 2012. The film became a worldwide phenomenon and its three sequels were equally successful. Other contemporary dystopian young adult novels made it to the big screen as well. Veronica Roth's bestseller *Divergent* was published in 2011 and could be seen in cinemas in 2014. These popular examples are both young adult fiction, but adult dystopias are adapted to screen as well. The adaptation of Dave Egger's 2013 novel *The Circle* was released in cinema in April 2017 with Emma Watson playing the lead (*The Circle)*. Even Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which was written in 1985 and was already adapted to film in 1990, made its reappearance on Hulu in the form of a television series in 2017, and just a week after its debut, it was renewed for a second season set for 2018 (Wagmeister). Hulu, an American video-on-demand service comparable to Netflix, announced that "*The Handmaid's Tale* has been watched by more Hulu viewers than any other series premiere on the platform, considering both original and acquired series" (Wagmeister).

Dystopian writing may be popular in the twenty-first century, but it is the twentieth century that is generally known as the dystopian century (Vieira 10). Utopian writing reflects on the society the author lives in, and dystopias express a refusal of this society (Moylan xii). It is thus no surprise that dystopian literature rose in the twentieth century, during a time of "exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of everyday life", which provided authors with more than enough dystopian material to write about (Moylan xi). Fears, inequalities, or injustices from the author's society are often presented and intensified in the dystopian societies of their novels (Duncker 38). These imaginary societies are even worse than the real worlds of authors and readers (Moylan xi). The exaggeratingly flawed worlds of dystopian fiction give the writer the opportunity to represent the "historical spacetime of the author […] in a way that foregrounds the articulation of its economic, political, and cultural dimensions" (Moylan xii). Dystopian fiction therefore teaches the reader about the harsh reality in which the author lives. Twentieth century writers such as Zamyatin, Orwell and Atwood often deal with the popular topics of technology and the authoritarian state in their dystopias.

Crucial to the dystopian genre is the "ability to register the impact of an unseen and unexamined social system on the everyday lives of everyday people" (Moylan xiii). In a dystopian society, the individual is inferior to the system (Sanders 14). Dystopian characters have little to no personality in a dystopian society. In order for the totalitarian state to work, individuality needs to be repressed.

However, rebellion against the state in one form or another is usually a part of the dystopian genre, and to rebel, the character requires individual thoughts and ideas.

The characters from Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) deal with the nightmare of anonymity within a totalitarian society. Free will is no option in a repressive state. "When the individual feels, the community reels" is a popular quote in Huxley's *Brave New World* (63). The only way to get rid of resistance within a society is to remove individuality. Only when people become "husks of human beings, devoid of feeling and free will, mere contraptions for the carrying-out of functions which are programmed from the outside" can they be completely controlled (Sanders 20). In theory, when individuals no longer have the ability to think for themselves, they will not be able to rise up against the community. However, an important theme in dystopian fiction is the battle between the individual protagonist against the controlling regime (Moylan xiii).

The focus of this research will be on the repression of the system implemented by the dystopian state and the individual rebellion of the main character against this controlled system in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005). This thesis will research how repression and rebellion define the state of the individual in dystopian literature, by focusing on the main characters only. The three novels all have a different dystopian background. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was written in 1949 and is based on the political aspects of Orwell's time: the repression of World War II and Stalin's Russia found its way into his novel. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) deals with increasing infertility and Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) is focused on the moralities of cloning. All three novels were written in a different time period and the authors all use different aspects from their societies as backgrounds for their books. By comparing and contrasting the characters' individual rebellion, the three novels will provide a well-researched answer to the question: how do repression and rebellion define the state of the individual in dystopian literature?

This thesis will consist of four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter will discuss the theoretical aspects of dystopian fiction. It will start with providing definitions for different dystopian concepts and the origin of utopianism. Then the chapter will explain the difference between eutopian and dystopian literature, as well as the link between science fiction and dystopian literature. The chapter continues by explaining how a dystopian system generally works and will discuss characterisation of dystopian protagonists. Furthermore, it will research the conventional ending of a dystopian novel. How the state versus the individual generally works in dystopias should become clear in this chapter.

The next three chapters will each be specified to one particular novel. Chapter two will focus on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, chapter three will discuss Margaret Atwood's *The*

Handmaid's Tale, and finally the fourth chapter researches Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. Each chapter will first research the background of the novel, followed by the workings of the system in said novel. Next, the chapters will discuss the protagonist's individuality, as well as their personal rebellion. Finally the chapters will look into the ending of the novels and to what extent hope remains.

The final chapter will contain a conclusion. By comparing and contrasting the research of chapters two to four, this thesis should be concluded with an answer to the research question of how repression and rebellion define the state of the individual in dystopian literature. Finally, this chapter will give insight into possible further research.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

Dystopian literature stems from and is irrevocably linked with the literary genre of a utopian novel (Moylan xiii). Therefore, a dystopia cannot be discussed without understanding utopianism. In his article "Three Faces of Utopianism", written in 1967, Lyman Tower Sargent wanted to better comprehend utopianism. The first step he took towards a better understanding of the literary genre was to define and classify different concepts, which had not yet been done by scholars that came before him (2). The word *utopia* stems from Greek and means *no place* (Greene 2). Derived from this word are *eutopia*, which means *good place*, and *dystopia* for *bad place* (Sargent 5). Using origin, previous definitions by other scholars, and 'utopian' works throughout the centuries, Sargent came up with the following definitions:

> Utopianism—social dreaming.
>
> Utopia—a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space.
>
> Eutopia or positive utopia—a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which that reader lived.
>
> Dystopia or negative utopia—a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived. (9)

The distinction between *eutopia* and *dystopia* was not made until 1952, when J. Max Patrick implemented it (Gottlieb 3). Before Patrick's recommendation, the word *utopia* was used for both the

good place and the bad place. To this day, *utopia* is often still used instead of *eutopia* (Milner 90), but for this dissertation, Sargent's definitions will apply.

The word *utopia* originates form Thomas More's *Utopia*, written in 1516, but it is unclear when utopianism was recognised as a genre (Fitting 122). In "A Short History of Utopian Studies", Peter Fitting uses Glen Negley and J. Max Patrick's 1952 "The Quest for Utopia: An Anthology of Imaginary Societies" to divide utopian literature into three categories (124). The first group consists of classical utopias, such as Plato's *Republic*, which were written between 900 B.C. and 200 B.C., before the existence of the word *utopia*. The second group consists of utopias from 1500 to 1850, which includes More's *Utopia*, and the third category is modern utopias, from 1850 to 1950, which ends with H.G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905). Fitting then continues by filling in the rest of the twentieth century. Even though Negley and Patrick let the category 'modern utopias' run until the 1950s, the last book in this category was written in 1905. Instead of eutopias, the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by dystopian works, which includes George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Moylan 111). In the 1960s and 1970s, "dystopian expression took a backseat to a revival of [eutopian] writing that was the first outpouring of hopeful counterworlds since the previous century" (Moylan xiv), however some authors remained critical after the horrors of the war and ever increasing technological advances (Fitting 127). Next to eutopias, dystopias were thus also still written. In the 1980s and onwards, after the profitable post-war period, writing turned dystopian again due to economic, political, and social problems (Moylan xiv-xv). Moving into the twenty-first century, the Internet has been cause for eutopian thinking, but we still see many dystopian works that feature unchecked technology, post-apocalyptic worlds, and populations without free will (Greene 6-7).

Though Peter Fitting tries to characterise different periods with regards to utopian writing, eutopias and dystopias cannot be considered completely separate. The definitions of eutopias and dystopias suggest that the two are opposites, and in theory this may be correct, but the reality is that the idea of an eutopia is often entwined with that of a dystopia. Eutopias are frequently experiments gone wrong (Greene 2). Eutopian writers wanted to change society by showing a new and improved world in their stories and they hoped to spur the people on to take action for a better world as described in their novels. Their ideal society is described in the form of a eutopia, but whether a real eutopia can exist is question for debate (Greene 2). Additionally, whether a eutopia is considered a paradise is up to the interpretation of not only the reader, but also the characters (Vieira 11). One reader may find a peaceful society more important than free will, while another might disagree. In a book like *The Hunger Games*, Suzanna Collins provides the reader with a one sided view of the world she has created through the eyes of heroine Katniss Everdeen, a girl from the poorest district. Through her eyes, the book is quickly established to be a dystopia, but if the reader were given the chance to read the events through the eyes of President Snow, the richest man in Panem and Katniss' enemy, a better society might have prevented itself to the reader. Though eutopias and dystopias have a

symbiotic relationship, the difference lays within the description of the society as respectively a good place, or a bad one.

Dystopian fiction is the result of fear in modern society; mainly fear of external control and fear of anonymity (Sanders 22). These fears are portrayed in dystopian literature in the power that the state holds over the lives of individuals due to society's implemented system. A dystopian novel usually opens in a socially different world than the real world, most commonly in the form of temporal or geographical displacement, where the imagined world is far worse than the author's reality (Moylan xiii). Generally in dystopian literature, the novel opens with a presentation of the system: its structure and how it operates. The storyline then zooms in to one individual, who slowly comes to recognise the situation for what it really is. This traces the relationship between "individual experience and the operation of the entire system" (Moylan xiii). The novel also has several typical dystopian ending possibilities.

Dystopia picks out certain features from each time and presents them in the form of an "imaginatively realised society" (Vieira 3). This is usually a fictional construction of totalitarianism with a controlling, oppressive government (Vieira 5). This unjust society is ruled by a small, power-crazed elite, often with a figurehead or a concept that is worshipped by the citizens of the society (Ferns 373). Erika Gottlieb, author of *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial,* even goes as far as to call a dystopia a "dictatorship of a hell on earth, the worst of all possible worlds" (3). Citizens from a dystopian society live in a dehumanised state. Dystopian fiction focuses on one individual as the hero of the story. The protagonist has to confront the head of the totalitarian state and the outcome decides his or her fate (Gottlieb 3). The problem for the protagonist, and the rest of the society, is that individual thought and opinions are condemned. The people are taught to have uniform expectations. A dystopian society has the illusion of free will, but in reality, propaganda is controlling people's minds and citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance (Chung). This makes it more dangerous and troublesome for an individual to rebel against the dictatorship and to find allies. Nevertheless, the protagonist creates suspense by making a nightmare journey in which the secrets of the corrupt political system are revealed—though not always publicly (Gottlieb 6). The society is only an illusion of a eutopian world. As the narrative progresses, the protagonist starts to question the system and helps the reader understand the negative aspects of the dystopian world (Chung). In this way, dystopian fiction offers a warning of controlling utopian aspirations (Vieira 3-4).

Aside from a connection between eutopian and dystopian writing, there is also a link between dystopian literature and science fiction, but the distinction between the two genres is a difficult one, because there are many connections (Williams 203). Though it is clear that the genres have a close relationship, the extent of this relationship remains a topic of debate. Darko Suvin, writer of "Defining the Literary Genre of Utopia", argues that utopia is a "socio-political subgenre of science fiction" (qtd

in Fitting 128). Lyman Tower Sargent, on the other hand, agrees in his "The Three Faces of Utopianism" that "many utopias are published as science fiction", but he believes that "utopias are clearly the primary root" (11). With that statement, Sargent refers back to the history of the two concepts. The word *utopia* refers all the way back to Thomas More's *Utopia* in 1516, while the term *science fiction* was not used until the twentieth century (Fitting 121). However, in the 1960s and onwards many dystopian works were published as science fiction and written by science fiction authors, which resulted in the confusion between the genres, and to this day, the precise distinction and relation remains unclear. Nonetheless, dystopian works and science fiction contain many similar aspects and due to the popularity of the name 'science fiction', which was established in the twentieth century, dystopian works are more often than not promoted under science fiction. Though Sargent argues that it may not be historically correct, it seems that considering dystopias as a subgenre of science fiction is most applied and will be for this dissertation as well.

In "Invisible Men and Women: The Disappearance of Character in Science Fiction" Scott Sanders discusses personality of protagonists in science fiction. Even though Sanders looks at science fiction as a whole, considering utopian literature as a socio-political subgenre of science fiction means that his research can be applied to dystopian fiction as well.

Scott Sanders calls dystopian fiction the "home of invisible men and women" (14). He refers to characters in the genre that lack personality and are therefore not memorable. Sanders mentions that critics use this lack of characterisation to attack the genre, and they consider dystopian fiction to be flawed because of it. Kingsley Amis argues that dystopian fiction is forced to deal in stock figures in order to focus on ideas, situation, or plot rather than the complexities of a certain character (Sanders 14). According to Amis, the author deals with stock figures because the genre is too focused on thematic aspects of the novel. Scott Sanders contradicts the claim that the disappearance of character is accidental. He argues that the use of stereotypical figures has been done deliberately due to the domination of the state over the individual and because individuality has become problematic in modern society. Sanders states that

> [s]cience fiction reproduces the experience of living in a regimented, rationalized society, within which the individual has become anonymous: persons are interchangeable, relating to each other through socially-defined roles; actions are governed by procedure, and thus do not characterize the actor; emotion is repressed in favour of reason; the individual is subordinated to the system. A literary form which ignores personality in its representation of vast impersonal forces mirrors our sense of the anonymity of individuals within mass society. (14)

Sanders thus argues that the disappearance of character is not only deliberate, but that in the twentieth century this lack of personality a central aspect of the dystopian genre is.

Science fiction is not the only genre in which characterisation disappears. The bourgeois novel of the eighteenth and nineteenth century as well as the modernist novel of the twentieth century approach the dissolution of character because the authors no longer believe in the autonomous individual, but dystopian fiction takes it one step further: whereas modernist fiction recorded the disappearance of personality, the dystopian genre examines its causes (Sanders 14-5). Famous dystopian author H.G. Wells argues that a close inspection of character is not possible when the social frame is constantly changing (Sanders 15). Especially in the period since 1945, social pressure towards anonymity had risen high and dystopian literature flourished because of it. The genre portrays "the fragmentation and anonymization of the self in modern society" presented in the form of temporal or geographical displacement (Sanders 15). The central problem in modern society is that the system is more important than the individual, which is portrayed in the novel "in the subordination of character to plot; in the use of stereotypical figures; [and] in the preference for technical and discursive (and therefore anonymous) language" (Sanders 15).

There are three different kinds of dystopias that portray the nightmare of anonymity within modern society (Sanders 15-8). The most famous dystopian fiction in which individuality is repressed is in a totalitarian society. Especially after the Second World War, with Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy and Stalin's Russia as base, the repression of the individual within a totalitarian system is a popular topic in dystopian literature, with famous works such as Zamyatin's *We*, Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Historical experiences appear in post-war fiction and war and over-population are the most common causes for the rise of fictional tyrannies in dystopian fiction. Fear of conformity, homogeneity and loss of individuality can readily be linked to "the experience of totalitarianism, since all of these fictional dystopias reproduce the grisly outlines of historical tyrannies" (Sanders 16-7). An individual rebels against the tyranny of the totalitarian society.

Social experiences are also reasons to fear anonymity, and thus topic for dystopian literature. Technological production, bureaucracy, cities, and mass media overshadow the individual. Dystopias based on social motifs can be divided into two different groups. In the first group, the protagonist deals with impersonal government control. Individual comprehension of the world and influence in this world decrease as the complexity of social organisation develops. Dystopian characters become "citizens of an administered world" (Sanders 17). The dystopian world is ruled by "governments, armies, multi-national corporations, insurance companies, and [other] large institutions" that treat individuals as if they are not human (Sanders 17). Free will has been taken away and human behaviour can be controlled by the system.

The second group that deals with social issues, and the third kind of dystopia in this list, deals with the opposite of an administered society, namely one where the government no longer has control of accelerated change. This kind of dystopia deals with such intense social or technological changes that the material world moves ahead of human comprehension. These images of transformed humanity are the result of fear of nuclear weapons, fear of machinery, or fear of ecological catastrophe (Sanders 18). The Second World War provided writers with models for technological disasters. "Since the war, weapons have become more devastating, automation has cheapened labour, devices such as the automobile have transformed and often degraded our environment, and industrial pollution has begun poisoning all life on the planet" (Sanders 19). Furthermore, during the industrial revolution, many jobs became obsolete due to the implementation of machines. In a dystopia about totalitarian computers, the protagonist fights against the mechanics of the computer in the same way that the protagonist rebels against the autocrats in a totalitarian society (Sanders 20). Both portray the individual's rebellion against the system. Whether in the factory or in war, machines are indifferent to personalities. Because social and technological processes have escaped human control in these dystopias, the individual has to deal with anonymity and impotence, just like in an administered society (Sanders 18).

Dystopian fiction portrays the fear for loss of anonymity and fear of external control in the form of a repressed individual by society's implemented system, in which characteristics of bureaucracy, such as "the stress on conformity, the discrediting of emotion, [and] the subordination of self to collective," are used in an exaggerated way (Sanders 22). Sanders stresses that characterisation is problematic in dystopian fiction, because it has become problematic in modern society, which the novel portrays (24). Modern society copes with anonymity because of bureaucracies, technology, the scale of life in cities, mass media, and techniques of manipulation perfected by government and business, and it consists of fears of control and dread of anonymity. Dystopian fiction not only portrays the fears of society, it dramatizes these fears through form and theme (Sanders 24). The genre describes invisible men and women, because identity in the modern world is threatened. The lack of characterisation in dystopian literature is historical, and according to Sanders, will not change until society finds a solution to its identity problem (24).

In his book *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, Tom Moylan mentions two kinds of dystopias, depending on how the novel ends (xiii). The first dystopia is the anti-eutopian dystopia in which the system eventually crushes the resistant individual. The best that can happen in the anti-eutopian dystopia is "a recognition of the integrity of the individual" (Moylan xiii). Even though the book ends on a note of resignation, the reader is nevertheless left with an ideal example thanks to the defeated individual and the protagonist has attained a sense of awareness and responsibility (Baccolini 521). The other form of dystopia is a eutopian dystopia. In this kind of dystopian novel, the individual finds allies, learns what the system is really about, and joins an

opposition. In a eutopian dystopia, the collective resistance is acknowledged, but the novel can still have two different endings. The uprising can either end in defeat, but one that is remembered, or it can end in a victory for the individual over the system. This victory can be a full-on political movement that could change the entire system, or it could be smaller and lead to "the organization of a resistant enclave, a liberated zone, that sticks in the craw of the hegemonic system" (Moylan xiii). No matter the result of a dystopia, whether the novel is an anti-eutopian dystopia or a eutopian dystopia, the individual's actions always leave the reader with a sense of hope (Moylan xiii). A dystopian novel also always serves as a warning to the reader of what the future might hold (Ferns 373).

Chapter 2: George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

George Orwell's classic *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published in 1949, in the post-war period. It is thus no surprise that his dystopia is against political tyranny (Sanders 23). In the mid twentieth centuries, Orwell had plenty of examples to model his dystopia on: Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy, Stalin's Russia and the Cold War (Sanders 15). All these societies were exceptional expressions of a totalitarian impulse. During the Second World War, the repression of the individual by the system was a savage part of society (Sanders 15). Concentration camps especially illustrated the denial of individuality and reduction to bodies of hunger and fear. Images of these dehumanised places recur in post-war fiction: "arms tattooed with numbers, heads shaved, bodies bundled in uniforms; spies and guards prowling among listless inmates; barbed-wire, machine guns and dogs maintaining order" (Sanders 15-6). Even the soldiers and other citizens from Nazi-Germany lost their individuality, because all Germans were supposed to think with one mind (Sanders 16). Because dystopias are based on concerns from the society in which the novel is written, it is thus no surprise that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* deals with "conformity, homogeneity, [and] loss of identity" in a totalitarian tyranny (Sanders 16-7). The Cold War image of communism is used in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in which characters have become empty shells: they lack emotion, obey society's orders, and completely devote themselves to the state (Sanders 21). Orwell wanted to write a utopian attack on the anti-eutopian historical tendencies of the first half of the twentieth century (Milner 119).

Nineteen Eighty-Four is set in London, in a totalitarian regime called Oceania, which is ruled by the Party. The leader of the Party goes by the name of Big Brother, a figurehead who is worshipped by all citizens of society. The Party attempts to control every aspect of life. Free will, privacy, sexual feelings, and individuality are not allowed. The government even tries to control the minds of citizens by constantly filling their heads with propaganda. Government programs on television are compulsory to watch. Posters with Big Brother's face along with the famous quote "Big Brother is watching you" hang all around London and indicate that the citizens are under constant surveillance (Orwell 3). Even in their own homes people have no privacy. The Party monitors citizens through their television

screens, which cannot be turned off. The thought police have placed hidden cameras and microphones in public places to supervise to inspect for crime. When the rules are broken, the criminal is usually forced into a labour camp. Civilians are expected to maintain all their emotional energy for the Party. Oceania even has its own language called Newspeak. The regime knows a divide between a small elite and lower members of the Party like Winston. Especially the low-ranking members have to deal with an inconsiderate amount of food, clothes and shoes. Citizens of Oceania also have physically degraded bodies. The inferiority of physicality is a critique on unhealthy diets and living situations, and a lack of physical work in Orwell's England (Jacobs 5). The society lives in a time of war, but most people fail to understand what the war is about. History is prohibited in Oceania. Winston works at the Ministry of Truth where he works to rewrite history books and change all records of the past, which he starts to question.

At the beginning of the novel, Winston shows small signs of rebellion. His personal rebellion is in the physical act of writing in his forbidden diary (Jacobs 7). With that he commits thoughtcrime. When he meets Julia, his sexual and political rebellion eventually turns into a full-blown revolt (Ferns 375). His affair with Julia, though still private, is the first step towards and organised social resistance that is supposed to result into Winston becoming a member of the Brotherhood—the notorious, possibly imagined anti-regime group with the goal to overthrow the Party (Jacobs 7). Julia's strong influence causes Winston to want to become an active rebel against the government. However, his plan to join the Brotherhood fails.

Winston's resistance is linked with sexuality (Jacobs 8). His individual sexual desires become an act against the Party: "And what he wanted, more even than to be loved, was to break down that wall of virtue, even if it were only once in his whole life. The sexual act, successfully performed, was rebellion. Desire was thoughtcrime" (Orwell 78). Winston considers sex an act against the political regime of Oceania. Aside from political resistance, desire is also a form of individuality, a way for self-expression, and connection to others (Jacobs 6). Even in the totalitarian regime of Oceania, Winston manages to maintain his thoughts, feelings and sexual desire, and with that his individuality, which he uses to revolt.

However when Winston attempts to rebel more actively by joining the Brotherhood, he accidentally trusts a spy of the Party. He is captured and brought to the Ministry of Love for questioning. O'Brien utilizes torture as an inquisition device. The Party demands full control of the minds of its citizens, and will therefore continue their torturing techniques until Winston breaks.

> "Do not imagine that you will save yourself, Winston, however completely you surrender to us. No one who has once gone astray is ever spared. And even if we chose to let you live out the natural term of your life, still you would never escape from us. What happens to you here is for ever.

> Understand that in advance. We shall crush you down to the point from which there is no coming back. Things will happen to you from which you could not recover, if you lived a thousand years. Never again will you be capable of ordinary human feeling. Everything will be dead inside you. Never again will you be capable of love, or friendship, or joy of living, or laughter, or curiosity, or courage, or integrity. You will be hollow. We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves." (Orwell 293)

O'Brien wants complete control over Winston's mind. He does not want Winston to simply repeat what the regime wants to believe, O'Brien continues until he wins the exercise in power and Winston truly believes that two and two makes five. The grim treatment takes away Winston's identity by stripping him of independent thought and emotion. He becomes an empty vessel who obediently follows the regime. "He loved Big Brother" are the final words Orwell uses to indicate that Winston is a broken man who lack individuality (342). He is reduced to just another empty body in Big Brother's society and to an illusion of a spirit (Jacobs 13).

In "The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction", Rafaella Baccolini argues that a traditional dystopia lives little room for hope in the story: only outside of the narrative can a positive message be found (520). Winston's loss of individual thought is a hopeless result for the character. He is crushed by the totalitarian regime, and there is no lesson or escape for him (Baccolini 520). Even his desires for Julia have turned into distaste after they betrayed each other (Ferns 375). There is however a lesson for the reader. By considering *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a warning, readers can hope to escape the dark future that Orwell has portrayed. The novel also warns for the repercussions that manipulations of language and history can have. Furthermore, the dystopia may show that an individual can be completely broken down, but it also shows that the government has to go through great lengths to wipe someone's mind. Naomi Jacobs in "Dissent, Assent, and the Body in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*" adds that the world also contains people who will suffer incredible pain under torture and still not betray their loved ones (14).

Though hope for Winston personally might be far away, Orwell's novel does not end at the words "The End" (342). These words may stand for Winston's personal and defeated ending to the story, but the appendix that follows provides the reader with hope. Winston's journey and individual rebellion suggest that the strong regime of a totalitarian society such as Oceania is hard to break—especially a desultory insurgence such as Winston's—but the appendix shows that even the strongest tyrannies can be defeated. The appendix dates forward to the year 2050, discusses the principles of Newspeak—the language applied in Oceania—and it suggests a fallen Oceania. The appendix does not provide much information about the decline of the Party, but its from explains more (Milner 122). Margaret Atwood argues that

> [the appendix] is written in standard English, in the third person, and in the past tense, which can only mean that the regime has fallen, and that language and individuality have survived. For whoever has written the essay on Newspeak, the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is over. (qtd. in Milner 122)

Though it is a minor detail, the footnote in chapter one that states, "Newspeak was the official language of Oceania" could already have suggested that the Oceanian regime has dwindled. This simple addition leaves the reader with hope that individuality will prevail and that totalitarianism will not win.

Chapter 3: Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

Margaret Atwood is an acclaimed author of feminist utopian literature (Stillman 70). Her most popular work, *The Handmaid's Tale*, was published in Canada in 1985 and in the United States in 1986, and became an immediate bestseller. Thanks to Hulu's adaption of the 2017 television series *The Handmaid's Tale*, the novel is back on the top of the bestseller lists (Dockterman). In an interview with Indigo—Canada's biggest bookstore—about the new television series, Margaret Atwood reveals what inspired her to write the novel back in the 1980s ("A Moment with Margaret Atwood"). First of all, she wanted to use her research into the American puritan theocracy of the seventeenth century. Secondly, Atwood had read several dystopias and she wanted to write one herself as well, but instead of using a male narrator like in the novels before hers, she wanted to use a female narrator in an American theocracy. Atwood's third inspiration came from what was happening in the early 80s. According to Atwood, newspapers and magazines were posting pieces in which people explained what they would like to do if they ever had the chance to take power. Furthermore, the 80s followed the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s when all citizens gained sexual freedom, including birth control for everyone and the legalisation of abortion (Fitting, "The Decline" 17). The birth rates almost halved between the late 1950s and the 1970s, and remained around only 60-70 births per thousand women in the ages 15-44 in the US since the 1970s and well into the twenty-first century (Klein). *The Handmaid's Tale* shows a near futuristic world in which the declining birth-rate has become so concerning that that a Christian coup takes over and establishes the theocratic Republic of Gilead in which conception is the society's biggest concern (Fitting, "The Decline" 18). Nevertheless, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is not so much about the fear of infertility as it is about the fear of losing human rights (Dockterman). Atwood wrote her novel in the time that Ronald Reagan became president of the United States and Margaret Thatcher prime minister of the United Kingdom. During this period of conservative revival, women especially were afraid that the human rights progress made in the 60s and 70s would be reversed (Fitting, "The Decline" 17). The dangers of nuclear powers and degradation of the environment also gained a role in Atwood's novel.

In *The Handmaid's Tale* the Republic of Gilead has replaced the United States of America and the story is set in the late twentieth century. Gilead is a theocracy and a totalitarian state. Atwood's Gilead is a typical dystopian society: "in the face of a powerful regime, the narrator follows the dystopia's norms; then, some possibilities for resistance arise because of cracks in the power structure, a love affair, and the purported existence of an anti-government movement; and escape or change seems possible" (Stillman 70-1). After the sexual revolution, conservative religious extremists organised a coup to gain power and they reversed the liberties that were given in the 60s and 70s. Because pollution and plagues caused widespread infertility, birth rates have dropped dangerously low. The state of Gilead is set up to gain control over reproduction rates. Therefore, women have become subservient to men.

> This is the kind of touch they like: folk art, archaic, made by women, in their spare time, from things that have no further use. A return to traditional values. Waste not want not. I am not being wasted. Why do I want? (Atwood 17)

Not only have the liberties from the sexual revolution been reversed, women are no longer allowed to vote or even to read or write, and they cannot hold property or have jobs. A return to traditional values keeps women dependent and obedient. Gilead is white, Christian and misogynist (Stillman 71). In the quote above, Atwood compares the women of Gilead to art: they serve a decorative function only.

In order to make the reproduction process as productive as possible, the Republic of Gilead has divided women into groups defined by their gender roles. Handmaids are fertile women, who are assigned to a wealthy couple—the Commander and his Wife—to conceive for them. Once a month a Handmaid has to perform a ceremony where she is to have impersonal intercourse with the Commander while lying in the Wife's lap. They are "trained in deference, self-abnegation and service, prepared only for pregnancy" (Stillman 71). Handmaids have constricted freedom. They can only leave the house for shopping trips, and only in the presence of another Handmaid, and they are under constant surveillance of the Eyes. To strip Handmaids off their individuality, they are not allowed to keep their own names, but instead receive a name constructed by the word *of* followed by the first name of the handmaid's Commander. They also wear red uniforms to confirm their status and purpose (Stillman 71).

The Wives are the most powerful women in the hierarchy of Gilead, but they have no purpose in society unless a Handmaid provides them with a child to mother. In the mean time they keep themselves busy with gardening and knitting. "Maybe it's just something to keep the Wives busy, to give them a sense of purpose" (Atwood 23). The only power Wives hold is in their own household. Nevertheless, Wives have more freedom than other women in Gilead. Another group of women are the Aunts, who help get the Handmaids indoctrinated into the society of Gilead. The Aunts represent a

form of propaganda. By repeating society's ideologies like a mantra and not accepting any disobedience, Handmaids learn to believe in the Republic. The lowest class of women are the Marthas; infertile women who take care of the Commanders households because they are too low in rank to be Wives.

Even though both men and women appear to deal with infertility in the Republic of Gilead, only women are blamed for it. There is no distinction between fertile and infertile men in society. Therefore, men in Gilead are not defined by gender roles, but by military rank. Aside from Commanders of the Faithful and the Eyes of God—Gilead's secret police—the state has soldiers known as Angels and the local police known as Guardians of the Faith. The Eyes are spies of the regime who capture lawbreakers and leave them to die or to the "power, interest, and machinations of others" (Stillman 74). The use of religious terminology and the slogan "God is a national resource" shows that politics and religion are entwined in Gilead (Atwood 225). To legitimately keep Commanders in power and provide them access to Handmaids, Gilead "requires a highly developed, complex structure of power, system of indoctrination, and division of labour" (Stillman 71). To supress individuality, Gilead "rewrites history, asserts governmental control of television newscasts, forbids books, magazines, and newspapers, and leaves only gossip (with its combination of accuracy, slippage, and disinformation) as an independent source of knowledge" (Stillman 72). However, gossip is dangerous with the surveillance of the Eyes.

Offred lives in a dehumanised state in which the Republic of Gilead has control over her body and has diminished her individuality by taking away her name and her fashion options. All Handmaids have to wear the same red garment to make them all the same. It makes it clear what their purpose is in society. That Offred has to wear similar clothes to other Handmaids takes away the part of individuality that is choice options can give. More importantly, the denial of Offred's real name reduces individuality immensely. Handmaids are not considered individual persons, but instead are defined by the Commander they are assigned to by combining *Of* with the first name of said Commander. As a result, Handmaids' names change. In the novel, Offred's name is Offred, because she is the Handmaid that belongs to the Commander with the first name Fred. If Offred fails to conceive, a new Handmaid would replace her, who would also take the name Offred. The same happened with Ofglen:

> "I am Ofglen," the woman says. Word perfect. And of course she is, the new one, and Ofglen, wherever she is, is no longer Ofglen. I never did know her real name. That is how you can get lost, in a sea of names. It wouldn't be easy to find her, now. (Atwood 295)

A new Ofglen has replaced the initial Ofglen and Offred never learned what happened to the first Ofglen. Because the name does not belong to the person, the old Ofglen has become nameless to

Offred. It takes away from Handmaids' individual identity. In the same way, as narrator, Offred never gives the reader her real name. She does provide the reader with a list of names of some of the Handmaids she shares a room with in the Red Centre. "Alma. Janine. Dolores. Moira. June" (Atwood 14). One of these names should be Offred's, but it is unclear which one.

> My name isn't Offred, I have another name, which nobody uses now because it's forbidden. I tell myself it doesn't matter, your name is like your telephone number, useful only to others; but what I tell myself is wrong, it does matter. (Atwood 94).

Offred argues that her real name is important. She tries to detach herself from the name Offred and remain connected to her real name. Her name matters to her, because it is part of her identity and thus their individuality. Offred cannot introduce herself as an individual and loses herself within a group of other Handmaids.

While propaganda is applied in the form of the Aunts, Offred maintains her own thoughts and ideas. However it is dangerous to speak those out loud. She has to play the part of the Handmaid, but inside her mind she can still be her own self.

> I wait. I compose myself. My self is a thing I must now compose, as one composes a speech. What I must present is a made thing, not something born. (Atwood 76)

Offred has to actively compose herself into the role of the Handmaid, which does not come naturally to her. Her natural self is still present. A big part of that is that she still contains her pre-Gilead memories (Stillman 72). While the Aunts indoctrinate the Handmaids in the Republic of Gilead, the women's memories remain untouched, unlike in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Offred remembers love, friendship, and independence. She remembers a time when she had rights. Her memories help her maintain a sense of individuality, but eventually they start to fade (Stillman 73). She starts to think about Luke and her daughter in the past tense, she thinks she is betraying Luke during her affair with Nick, and when she is shown a recent picture of her daughter, she feels erased by time in her daughter's existence.

> Time has not stood still. It has washed over me, washed me away, as if I'm nothing more than a woman of sand, left by a careless child too near the water. I have been obliterated for her. I am only a shadow now, far back behind the glib shiny surface of this photograph. A shadow of a shadow, as dead mothers become. You can see it in her eyes: I am not there." (Atwood 240)

Offred no longer feels part of her daughter's life. Her daughter no longer remembers her. Gilead has taken away her identity as a mother.

Aside from Offred's compartmentalised clothes and name(s), and the fading of her memories, she also loses her individuality slowly in detail (Stillman 73). She tries to keep her sense of a distinct individual at first but she fails. She is not allowed to close the door to the room that is assigned to her in the Commander's house. Because of the lack of privacy, she refuses to call the room her own. Her privacy is invaded when the Commander violates custom by looking into the room that is assigned to her. She catches herself thinking of it as *her* room. "I called it *mine*" (Atwood 59). Even her body eventually becomes no longer just her own (Stillman 73). She defines herself by her body, but eventually stops considering it just her own (Stillman 76). At one of her visits with the Commander, she asks him for hand lotion because "[o]ur skin gets very dry" (Atwood 167). She could have two possible reasons to use *our* in this context. Either she considers her body to be hers and the Commander's while he watches her put lotion on her skin, because her body is used as a vessel to conceive the Commander and his Wife's baby. She called herself a two-legged wombs, nothing more (Atwood 146). That is how she starts to consider her body. Another reason for Offred to use *our skin* is because she starts to consider herself as nothing but a Handmaid. When the Commander asks her what she usually uses when against dry skin, she answers that "we [Handmaids] use butter" (Atwood 167). Not only in society has Offred lost her individuality; her mind slowly starts to believe that her sole existence means being a Handmaid: nothing more than a body for reproduction. Towards the end of the novel, she gives up and accepts Gilead (Stillman 73). She believes living in any way is better than death. For that purpose she gives up her body, her individuality, which is exactly what Gilead wanted all along.

> I know this can't be right but I think it anyway. Everything they taught at the Red Centre, everything I've resisted, comes flooding in. I don't want pain. I don't want to be a dance, my feet in the air, my head a faceless oblong of white cloth. I don't want to be a doll hung up on the Wall, I don't want to be a wingless angel. I want to keep on living, in any form. I resign my body freely, to the uses of others. They can do what they like with me. I am abject.
>
> I feel, for the first time, their true power. (Atwood 298)

Offred is relatively passive in her rebellion against the system of the Republic of Gilead. Others mostly spur her on. Essentially Offred is powerless herself and she is vulnerable to the Eyes who spy for the regime and to the power, interests, and schemes of others (Stillman 74). The first time Offred is offered to break the rules, when the doctor offers to get her pregnant, she refuses. However, when the Commander invites her to secret meetings in his office and when Serena Joy wants Offred to sleep with their chauffeur Nick to try to conceive, she accepts and goes against the rules set for a Handmaid

in the totalitarian state of Gilead. The Commander and Serena Joy originally help her a small step towards rebellion against the strict rules of the Republic of Gilead. Not only does she frequently give in to the will of powerful people, she also gives in to her own emotions for Nick (Stillman 74). She continues her affair with him behind Serena Joy's back, not because she tries to get pregnant, but because she enjoys him in bed. Though this can be seen as her rebellion against the powerful couple she resides with as well as the regime, but Nick too has a certain power over Offred. Led by either her desire, sexual passion, or love for Nick, she tells him too much and becomes vulnerable to him and the regime (Stillman 76). Offred reduces herself to body for Nick and her feelings for him do not help her lead towards either resistance or her individuality (Stillman 76). In the end she hands her self, her body, and her fate over to Nick.

Offred may have broken Gilead's rules, but she never had an individual rebellion. Ofglen is her best option to really act against the regime, but Offred rejects the anti-Gilead illegalities (Stillman 74). Ofglen is a member of the secret rebellious organisation called Mayday. She frequently asks Offred for information about her Commander, but Offred is fearful and caution to risk her own life. Offred is too passive to assist her fellow Handmaid, and therefore she cannot benefit from "the strengths that could flow from (dangerous) friendship and commitment" (Stillman 74). Because Offred is too fearful and vulnerable to influences of others, she fails to become an individual in a totalitarian regime. Her only individual insurgence is her playfulness with language, her critical humour, which leads to no action (Stillman 75).

When the Eyes pick her up in a black van, Nick explains that they are Mayday in disguise and that they are going to save her, but we never learn whether Nick was a trustworthy character. We never learn who forced Offred to create the tapes that form the novel. Whether Offred created the tapes to expose the system to a rebellious group or to tell the story to the Eyes to destroy the Commander and his wife, Offred's fate remains uncertain. Despite the passiveness of Offred's resistance, the open ending of *The Handmaid's Tale* allows both readers and protagonists to have hope, because an ambiguous open ending gives the novel a eutopian impulse (Baccolini 520). Instead of providing the novel with a set ending, Atwood leaves Offred to deal with her choices and responsibilities (Baccolini 521). The novel ends in 2195, when Gilead has fallen, and Professor Pieixoto teaches a class on Offred's tapes.

Though Offred's outcome can only be guessed, the dystopia has clearly fallen. However, that does not mean that the society from 2195 is perfect. Professor Pieixoto questions nothing of his reading about Offred's tapes. He has no concerns and he gives no own interpretation of the events (Stillman 82). The students do not raise questions or objections either. At the end of the novel, Professor Pieixoto asks whether there are any questions, but there is no response; the novel ends there. The reader should be appalled by the blind approval of Professor Pieixoto's paper (Stillman 82). The

lack of response in the academic world proves that though Gilead has changed, the United States of 2195—whatever it is called—is still too restrictive. Aside from warning the reader for the dangers of their present, Atwood seems to want to teach the reader that gained liberties are not permanent. The world requires and keeps requiring questions, feelings, judgments, and actions (Stillman 83). We cannot remain passive in the way that Offred was. Offred is an example of what not to do. The maintenance of individuality is important in the battle against a dystopian society such as the Republic of Gilead.

Chapter 4: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Japan and moved to England at five years old (Walkowitz 220). *Never Let Me Go* was published in 2005 and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Arthur C. Clarke Award. In 2010 the novel was also turned into a movie starring Carey Mulligan as Kathy and Keira Knightly as Ruth. The novel was translated in many different languages.

Never Let Me Go is not a typical dystopia. Ishiguro did not typically choose for a futuristic setting or geographical displacement. Instead the book is set in the past. It was written in 2005 and is set in the late 1990s when Kathy looks back on her time at Hailsham. Furthermore, the novel is not a dystopia in the way that people live in a totalitarian society with a controlling and oppressive government. It is a dystopia based on the technology of cloning. Clones in *Never Let Me Go* are called students and are raised with the purpose of donating their organs when they become young adults. Most people in Ishiguro's novel believe that the use of clones is their best option, because students are a way to cure diseases such as cancer and autoimmune diseases. A lack of donor organs is no longer a problem. Therefore, people decide to look away from the fact that clones have to give their lives to donate their organs by considering students to be inhuman. However, the novel is narrated by a student named Kathy H., whom, like her friends Ruth and Tommy, is raised to be an organ donor for original humans (Walkowitz 224) Through the eyes of Kathy, the novel is definitely considered a dystopia. After giving several donations, the students 'complete', meaning they die.

According to Rebecca L. Walkowitz in "Unimaginable Largeness: Kazuo Ishiguro, Translation, and the New World Literature" Ishiguro wrote *Never Let Me Go* as a critique of anthropocentrism, which is "the idea that it is ethical or acceptable to sacrifice non-human animals to the needs and desires of human life" (224). In this critique, the humans consider the clones to be non-individuated organisms, but they do recognise themselves as individual humans (Walkowitz 225). This dehumanised view of clones is the reason the donation system functions. Humans consider

individuality to by the highest value, and they believe that clones are not individuals because they are copied from a real individual.

Kathy H. grew up in a 1990s version of England where human cloning was accepted. She was raised in Hailsham, a special school for clones before they understand their role in society (Walkowitz 224). During their stay at Hailsham, Kathy and her friends are raised by what they call guardians. Guardians teach the students a minimum amount about the donation program, but they protect the students from fully understanding their future. More schools like Hailsham exist, but Hailsham is a famous one. Other students believe that students from Hailsham have a secret way of asking for deferrals: a postponement of the donating process. Though it is true that Hailsham is special, it is not because of deferrals. Ironically enough, students of Hailsham were considered to be lucky, because Hailsham was part of a project to raise clones more humanly.

> "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." (Ishiguro 258-9)

Clones have no control over their lives. They were being pushed around, like pawns, serving real humans. They are raised to live healthy to keep their organs in good condition and they cannot have children. In order for Hailsham to make sure their students would not run away, the guardians would tell scary stories about the woods behind Hailsham. Though their fates were already sealed, Kathy and her friends were lucky to have grown up at that time in Hailsham, because by exhibiting artwork created by Hailsham students, a movement against the dehumanisation of clones wanted to show through art that clones had souls.

> Why did we take your artwork? Why did we do that? You said an interesting thing earlier, Tommy. When you were discussing this with Marie-Claude. You said it was because your art would reveal what you were like. What you were like inside. That's what you said, wasn't it? Well, you weren't far wrong about that. We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to *prove you had souls at all*. (Ishiguro 253)

Unfortunately, after Kathy and her friends moved away from Hailsham, it was closed down. The movement that wanted to raise clones more humanely lost many supporters and eventually failed. Kathy and her friends still had to donate their organs.

After their stay in Hailsham, Kathy and her friends moved on to the Cottages, a transitional facility where students spend their lives during the transitional period of turning from child to adult. The Cottages contain veteran students—students who already lived there—who believe that Hailsham students can help get couples in love a deferral. Miss Emily, one of the guardians, explains at the end of the novel that there was never something like a deferral. Even if students could apply for a deferral, it would only be a postponement of the inevitable. Another concept that comes up during their time at the Cottages are possibles, people who resemble a certain clone and could possibly be the people whose DNA was cloned. According to Ruth "[they] are modelled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos" (Ishiguro 164).

After the Cottages, Kathy and her friends await the day that they have to donate their organs. Kathy becomes a carer, a clone who has not started the donation process yet and instead takes care of other donors. Students are usually in their late twenties-early thirties when they donate. After donating several times, depending on what the body of the clone can handle, the process completes, which is a euphemism for death.

When Kathy is thirty-one years old she is due for her own donations after being a carer for twelve years. Therefore, she wants to revisit her past with memories of Tommy and Ruth. Kathy has accepted that she cannot change her fate. She has no future, so instead she decides to live her final few months in her memories.

> "There have been times over the years when I've tried to leave Hailsham behind, when I've told myself I shouldn't look back so much. But then there came a point when I just stopped resisting." (Ishiguro 11)

Kathy's thoughts, memories and capability to love show that she is a full-on individual with a soul. Only her way of coming into the world is a little unorthodox. She is a sensitive young girl with a quiet demeanour who grows up to spend the short life she has taking care of others. She is a sympathetic narrator. Nevertheless, 'real humans' consider her to be less human, and Kathy herself has learned a similar lesson when growing up with the guardians at Hailsham. Both other people and the students themselves consider themselves as copies from a normal person (Ishiguro 137); both fail to recognise clones as individual organisms. However, interiority is measured through "the capacity for genuine love, authentic expressivity, and artistic originality" (Walkowitz 225). So when Kathy thinks she and Tommy have real love, she believes that she is worthy of deferment. Even though her narrative alone is an original testament of her personal experiences, she still fails to consider herself as a completely individual human being.

Kathy cannot really be considered a rebel. She is an emotional woman, but mostly keeps her feelings inside. Whereas Ruth wants to be special, and Tommy desires to learn more about aspects of life at Hailsham, Kathy is more passive and accepting. She is an introvert and an observer rather than

someone who takes action. She has already accepted her destiny from an early age on. Instead of trying to find a way to keep living, she only enquires about deferrals. She and Tommy desperately want more time, but instead of fighting for their rights to live a long and happy life, they ask only for a few extra years. When even that is not granted, Kathy and Tommy simply give up. Even a smaller task, such as wanting to work in an office, she does not pursue.

In his novels, Ishiguro has implied that uniqueness cannot be defined as the "quality of art, culture, and human life. In *Never Let Me Go*, valuing uniqueness leads to killing clones and preserving people" (Walkowitz 235). Because Kathy lacks uniqueness due to being a clone, she does not consider herself worthy of normal human life, which makes her an easy collaborator in society, while Kathy has never mentioned the consequences of a possible resistance against the reason of existing.

> 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. (Ishiguro 279)

This ending of the novel suggests that Kathy is on her way to her first donation. Even though she does not want to, she accepts her fate easily.

Conclusion

Dystopian literature usually portrays a single protagonist who tries to maintain his or her individuality within a repressed society. This thesis shows how a repressed society and a personal rebellion—or in *Never Let Me Go* the lack thereof—defines the state of the individual in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. By comparing and contrasting these results, individuality in general dystopian literature becomes clearer.

Even though all three novels are based on different backgrounds, many similarities between the dystopias can still be found. George Orwell based his *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) on the totalitarian society of Hitler's Germany during the Second World War. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) depicted the fear of losing human rights, especially women rights that were gained during the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. With his *Never Let Me Go* (2005), Kazuo Ishiguro considered the moralities of cloning, including a critique on anthropocentrism.

First of all, the different repressive systems of the novels share many similarities, in particular Orwell and Atwood's works. All three novels describe a dehumanised state in which one narrator provides us with their story. Even though dystopian states usually attempt to repress individual

thought, all three narrators are able to think for themselves and have their own feelings. However, in all cases, a form of propaganda is also used to keep them in their respective societies. *The Handmaid's Tale* uses propaganda in the form of the Aunts, whereas in *Never Let Me Go*, the guardians can be considered a form of propaganda. Both *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale* also contain a totalitarian society with a controlling and oppressive government. A small power-crazed elite runs their societies, and Winston is supposed to worship Big Brother as a figurehead, while Offred is alleged to adore the Republic of Gilead. Both characters are also under constant surveillance: Winston in the form of camera's, microphones and his own television, and Offred is watched by human spies called the Eyes. The reader learns less about the system in *Never Let Me Go* than in the other novels. Because Kathy calls up memories about love and friendship, she focuses on the positive aspects of her life and not the world she lives in. Besides, Kathy is an unreliable narrator. Not only do we read her story through her eyes, she also relies on memories, which are subjective and incomplete.

Secondly, this research focused on the individual characters. All characters still own their own thoughts and have memories of the past, which provides them with more individuality than the totalitarian regimes of Oceania and Gilead. Nevertheless, Winston, Offred, and Kathy are all passive characters, who let themselves be influenced by others, and though they all rebel one way or another, none of them resist the system in an active, public way. Winston achieves a small act of private rebellion by writing in his diary, which is prohibited and considered thoughtcrime. His affair with Julia is the next step in his resistance against the Party, but this rebellion is influenced by Julia. He considers this sexual rebellion a political rebellion, because desires are rejected by the totalitarian regime. Winston attempts to take his insurgency more publicly by becoming a member of the Brotherhood, which counteracts. Instead of breaking free from the repressive regime, torture breaks him, and he loses his individuality completely. Offred is defined as a Handmaid by her clothes, her name, and her body, but she still contains her own thoughts and her memories of a pre-Gilead society. Her initial rebellion occurs inside her mind. She rejects the regime, but only silently. She is passive in the rest of her rebellion, which is spurred on by her Commander, Serena Joy and Nick. Throughout the novel, she loses more and more of her individuality. Her body becomes a plural possession, and her memories start to fade. Kathy is the least passive of the three characters, and yet she appears to have the most freedom. She is allowed to be an individual through thoughts and feelings. However, she considers herself as only a copy of a human being. Though she and Tommy try to get a deferment from donation by proving their love for each other, she never rebels against her fate. Even her request for postponement, which is not granted, would only give her a few extra years to live. She never fights for the right to live as an individual. Kathy also never mentions the consequences of a possible rebellion. She simply accepts her fate, and by doing so, loses a part of her individuality, because she does not consider herself human.

Finally, the results of the three novels were researched in this thesis. Tom Moylan argued that individual's actions always leave the reader with a sense of hope (xiii). *Never Let Me Go* may not leave the reader with a hopeful ending for the clones, but that could be to Kathy's lack of individual action. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale* are both left with a sense of hope. Though Winston's personal fate is not hopeful, the appendix shows a future where the regime of Oceania has fallen, which leaves the reader with hope that individuality will prevail. Offred's fate is unknown due to the open ending of the novel. Nevertheless, the "Histotorical Notes on *The Handmaid's Tale*" also provides the reader with a futuristic setting of society and it shows that Gilead has fallen (Atwood 311).

Even though all characters live in a dehumanised, dystopian society, they all still have their own individuality. However, the longer they stay inside the regime, the more they lose their own selves. Dystopian systems are never quite similar, but active individual rebellion is important to overthrow the regimes, not only in the insurgence against the state, but also to maintain individuality. A passive attitude delivers no results. Even though rebellion might not help a character personally, their resistance is a good example for others and will eventually lead to the downfall of the dystopian state.

Dystopian fiction is popular in both adult and young adult literature. A vivid reader of dystopian fiction may have noticed that the rebellion of a character in a young adult novel is often much more successful than that of an adult book. A character in a young adult novel usually starts a unified revolt, and the protagonist gets to see the dystopian state overthrown. By researching the difference between adult and young adult utopias—in particular the different endings—we could learn more about the distinction between the two genres and what that implies for the different age categories.

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