Utopian Desire and Critical Dystopia in Kazuo Ishiguro's
Never Let Me Go and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*

Isaraporn Pissa-ard
Department of English, Faculty of Humanities
Chiang Mai University
E-mail: eng102course@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines McCarthy's *The Road* and Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and argues that the two novels exhibit crucial characteristics of critical dystopia and utopian desire as conceptualized by Lyman Tower Sargent and Ildney Cavalcanti. The key characteristics of critical dystopia as discerned in the two works include the attempt to critique conditions of our contemporary world as well as to offer better alternatives, the utilization of genre mixing and the embodiment of open-endedness or the resistance to closure that aims at critically engaging the reader. The investigation reveals that in both novels utopia manifests itself as a desire that triggers a process towards better ways of being and the exploration of alternatives, rather than the blueprint for an ideal society. Significantly, utopianism in both novels is intrinsically a mode of writing that seeks to transform our way of thinking, as the reader is encouraged to become a desiring or a dissatisfied subject who has to formulate her/his utopia. The act of reading is thus crucial to the utopianism of both novels and a great deal of faith is placed on storytelling as a means of triggering the utopian desire and process.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) are highly acclaimed novels that have attracted attention and critical appraisal from both the general public and literary critics. *Never Let Me Go* revolves around the life of the young protagonist-narrator, Kathy H., one of the clones created to sacrifice vital organs to humans who are physically ill. In the fictional world of *Never Let Me Go,* humans enjoy good heath as fatal diseases like cancer and heart disease can be cured because of the ready supply of healthy organs from the clones. Most humans, we are told, do not want to go back to the 'dark days' in which cancer, heart problems and other health

afflictions cut short many people's lives and trap them in a long period of misery. Irrespective of the inhumane exploitation suffered by the clones, the narrative voice, which is that of Kathy, principally focuses on seemingly mundane events, conflicts and the concerns of herself and her friends rather than the fatalistic future awaiting them. Furthermore, in this fictional world, human beings and the clones seem to accept the way the clones are treated as if it is normal. Except for the fact that clones are created to be the sources of organ harvesting, the world in *Never Let Me Go* as portrayed through Kathy's eyes appears to be little different from the reader's everyday world.

Normal life as we know it has no place in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, a novel that revolves around the heartrending struggle of a father to save his young son's life in a bleak and harrowing post-apocalyptic world. The novel also confronts us with the ghastly nightmare of the desecration of Earth and the near extinction of the human race. Toxic grey ash covers the entire Earth and no trees or plants seem to be alive. Most human survivors resort to looting and cannibalism to ensure their own survival. Many of them kill children and babies, including their own, in the desperate struggle to remain alive. 'Good guys' like the father and the young son are rare yet the father tries his best to instill good values in the boy.

Hence, at surface level, *Never Let Me Go* and *The Road* seem to differ significantly both in terms of style and subject matter. A closer reading of both novels, however, reveals more in common between these two novels than a quick reading of them seems to suggest. A review of critics' readings of *Never Let Me Go* and *The Road* also discloses several comparable points. Critics have discussed human exploitative and self-serving use of other living beings as portrayed in these two novels. To give an example, Ben De Bruyn (2010) sees *The Road* as the depiction of the worst that can happen when humans exploit and destroy other beings and the physical environment to the point of no return (pp. 778-780). Likewise, Tiffany Tsao (2012), posits how the humans in *Never Let Me Go* assume the role of God who imposes a tyrannical purpose on the clones and forces them to sacrifice their lives for the sake of humans (pp. 214-226). In addition to this, critics have examined how the utilization of generic conventions in the two novels functions to draw attention to contemporary concerns and crises. Titus Levy (2011), for example, draws attention to the utilization and subversion of traditional Bildungsroman conventions in *Never Let Me Go* and argues that, in doing so, the novel successfully underlines problems related to the modern human rights regime (pp. 1-5). In a similar vein, Liénard-Yeterian (2016) maintains that in *The Road*, McCarthy employs Gothic tropes so as to capture the state of horror of our contemporary world as well as to startle and shock the reader out of complacency (pp. 145-146). Furthermore, in his reading of *The Road*, Christopher T. White (2015) focuses on the profound significance of empathy and connection as being crucial to the

thematic concern of the novel (pp. 532-533). The issue of connection and empathy is also seen as central in *Never Let Me Go*, as convincingly argued by Karl Saddox (2013), who maintains that, in this novel, Ishiguro deploys some generic conventions of sentimental and abolitionist fiction so as to emotionally engage the reader (pp. 450-451).

This research paper aims at explicating the similarities between *The Road* and *Never Let Me Go* and it argues that the two novels resemble each other in a number of striking respects, as they share the characteristics of the critical dystopia, which according to Lyman Tower Sargent, is the utopian sub-genre that offers a critique of our real world through its dystopian mode. Unlike anti-utopian works that are mostly dominated by total bleakness and despair, critical dystopias offer alternatives, or reveal the yearning for them. This yearning corresponds with what Ruth Levitas defines as utopian desire—a desire for better ways of living. Furthermore, through their open-endedness, critical dystopias encourage reflexivity and critical engagement on the part of the readers. The critical dystopia also employs genre mixing as a means of enhancing its indictment and critiques of the contemporary world. In the following section, I provide more details about the theoretical concepts and discussion pertaining to utopia, dystopia and critical dystopia that inform this research.

Theoretical Discussion

In popular perception, utopia is often associated with a perfect place that exists only in the world of the imagination and utopian dream is often seen as escapist and unrealistic. Those perceptions can be attributed to classical utopian writings such as Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), which fictionalizes an idealistic society non-existent in our everyday world. The failures of 'socialist utopias' and their dystopian imaginings in several prominent fictional works of the twentieth century, among them Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), also tend to make people connect utopia with totalitarianism or oppressive communist regimes that seek to control all aspects of the life of their citizens and allow them neither freedom nor privacy.

Contrary to popular perceptions of utopia, in her thought provoking book, *Utopia as a Method* (2013), Ruth Levitas (2013) emphasizes the centrality of utopia in encouraging us to assess conditions of our existing world and imagine a better mode of being and living. Levitas views today's world as embroiled in serious problems—environmental issues, energy shortage, inequalities, a failed educational system, the debilitating effects of capitalism and a palpable mood of despair and cynicism. To employ utopia as a means of reconstructing our contemporary ill-stricken world, Levitas argues for the broadening of the meaning of utopia, distancing it from the traditional meaning

that associates utopia with the blueprint for a perfect society. In her view, utopia can be more appropriately defined as "the expression of the desire for a better way of being or of living, and as such is braided through human culture" (Levitas, 2013, p. xii) and to her, this definition "generates a method which is primarily hermeneutic but which repeatedly returns us from existential and aesthetic concerns to the social and structural domain" (Levitas, 2013, p. xiii). She stresses that utopia should not be regarded as a goal but as a method that encourages holistic thinking "about possible futures, combined with reflexibility, provisionality, and democratic engagement with the principles and practices of those futures" (Levitas, 2013, p. xi). She also envisions the possibility of utopianism as offering better alternatives to our existing modes of living and being (Levitas, 2013, p. xviii).

With regard to literary utopias, Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (2003) observe that during the late 1960s and the early 1970s there was the emergence of literary works that can be termed critical utopias as they exhibit the capacity to critique both the existing world and the utopian genre. Baccolini and Moylan view critical utopias as constructive as they do not prescribe totalizing blueprints for utopian goals that can never be reached due to the imperfectability of human nature. The 1980s and 1990s, however, saw the proliferation of works that were dominated by a dystopian mood. Nonetheless, dystopia, in Baccolini and Moylan's view, is not the opposite of utopia and it can function to foreground the wrongs and problematic issues of the current world. In other words, a utopian impulse that encourages the imagining of alternatives can be discerned even in a fictional work that appears to be dystopian. It is also not uncommon for utopia and dystopia to co-exist, as a utopia for one section of society may force other members to endure a dystopian existence (Baccolini & Moylan, 2003, p. 109).

In an attempt to define the 'new trend' of dystopian works produced in the 1990s, Lyman Tower Sargent in his 2001 essay entitled "US Eutopias in the 1980s and 1990s: Self-Fashioning in a World of Multiple Identities," refers to them as "critical dystopias" (Sargent, 2001, p. 221) and they depict:

> a nonexistent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as worse than contemporary society but that normally included at least one utopian enclave or holds out hope that the dystopias can be overcome and replaced with a eutopia. (Sargent, 2001, p. 221)

Other important characteristics of critical dystopia, according to Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (2003), include open-endedness and genre blurring (p. 7). Baccolini and Moylan (2003) also observe that, whereas dystopia is traditionally

associated with "a bleak, depressing genre with little space for hope within the story," (p. 7) critical dystopias "allow both readers and protagonists to hope by resisting closure: the ambiguous, open endings of these novels maintain the utopian impulse within the work" (p. 7). They comment further that "critical dystopias resist genre purity in favor of an impure or hybrid text that renovates dystopian sf by making it formally and politically oppositional" (Baccolini & Moylan, 2003, p. 7).

Ildney Cavalcanti (2003) has also made interesting observations about the persistence of hope or utopian desire in critical dystopias in "The Writing of Utopia and the Feminist Critical Dystopia: Suzy McKee Charnas's Holdfast Series". According to Cavalcanti (2003), feminist critical dystopias provide intriguing insights about utopianism exhibited through a dystopian mode and its critical edge. Focusing on Suzy McKee Charnas's three novels in the Holdfast Series, which consists of *Walk to the End of the World*, *The Furies*, and *The Conqueror's Child*, Cavalcanti argues that these novels are critical because they embody:

> three interrelated factors: the negative critique …brought into effect by the dystopian principle; the textual self-awareness in generic terms with regard to a utopian tradition and concerning its own narrative constructions of 'utopian elsewheres' and 'in the nuclear sense of the critical mass required to make the necessary explosive reaction', in the sense that the feminist dystopias may have a crucial effect in the formation and/or consolidation of a critical-feminist public readership. (Cavalcanti, 2003, p. 48)

Moreover, Charnas's novels can be seen to belong to a utopian writing mode because they encourage hope for a better way of being while at the same time refusing to offer fulfilment for this hope. Instead, the texts urge the reader to position her/himself as a desiring and dissatisfied subject yearning for a better elsewhere that is absent from the texts. This absence of a concrete image or form of utopia in the texts makes them different from traditional utopian literature that offers a blueprint or clear image of utopia. Cavalcanti also contends that the three novels are open-ended and create the feeling of something left unfinished. This open-endedness plays a crucial role in triggering the reader to engage with the texts in their full potentialities so that he/she can formulate his/her own image of utopia (Cavalcanti, 2003, pp. 62-65). As with Levitas's definition of utopia, Cavalcanti demonstrates that Charnas's feminist novels imagine utopia as a process with its goal deferred or not readily provided for the reader (Cavalcanti, 2003, p. 64).

With regard to genre blurring, Jane Donawerth (2003) observes in "Genre Blending and the Critical Dystopia" that genre blending in critical dystopias can take several forms and the mixing or blurring of genre boundaries

enables this type of dystopian genre to function as oppositional writing that offers new possibilities and hope rather than pessimistic closure. By absorbing characteristics of other genres while simultaneously transforming or subverting them, critical dystopia is able to put forth critiques of the present world (Donawerth, 2003, pp. 29-30). Donawerth examines three works that exemplify how genre mixing can be utilized to draw the reader's attention to contemporary problematic issues by creating the defamiliarizing effect that allows for critical assessment. These works include A. M. Lightner's *The Day of the Drones (1969),* Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* (1974), and Connie Willis's "All My Darling Daughters"*(1985).* According to Donawerth, Lighter's *The Day of the Drones* is an early critical dystopia that combines sex role-reversal sf romance with the dystopian genre in order to critique both gender and racial bias of the United States in the 1960s. More importantly, unlike the conventional sex role reversal of romances, this genre blurring novel refuses to affirm that normative heterosexual and racial norms are natural and thus acceptable. Donawerth then proceeds to investigate *Samuel R. Delany's Dhalgren*, a novel that mixes the epic with the dystopian genre, and discusses how this critical dystopia novel dismantles epic conventions and ideologies despite the fact that it employs keys characteristics of the epic genre. Finally, she draws attention to genre blurring in Connie Willis's "All My Darling Daughters", a short story that employs satirical conventions in its dystopian mode as a way of critiquing patriarchy and exposing its destructive effects on girls and women (Donawerth, 2003, pp. 30-43). Interestingly, as with the critical dystopias examined by Donaworth, genre blurring can be powerfully employed in other types of critical dystopia that may not especially foreground gender or racial issues.

In the following section, I seek to demonstrate that McCarthy's *The Road* and Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* exhibit crucial characteristics of critical dystopia and utopian desire as conceptualized by Lyman Tower Sargent and Ildney Cavalcanti. Firstly, I focus on critical dystopia's attempt to offer criticisms of our contemporary world through the dystopian mode. I then explore alternatives discerned in both novels and how the two works reveal faith in the power of storytelling to establish empathy and connection. Furthermore, I investigate how *The Road* and *Never Let Me Go* utilize genre mixing to facilitate articulation of the critiques of the contemporary world in a way that does not totally deprive the reader of hope, a crucial element in critical dystopia. Through their open-endedness, both works also seek to actively engage the reader so as to trigger a yearning for a better way of being or better alternatives.

Offering Critiques of our contemporary world

The first important characteristic of critical dystopia shared by *The Road* and *Never Let Me Go* is the way they employ the dystopian genre as a means of offering critiques of our contemporary world. The worlds depicted in both

novels are worse than our current world yet they can be seen as an extrapolation of the problems and dilemmas we are facing in the world today. More importantly, both works implicitly posit that the loss of a human ability to care enough for other beings and for the planet, and the overwhelming focus on profit-making or self-interest are the root causes of the ills of humanity in their fictional worlds. *The Road's* fictional world is one that has been severely devastated by an unnamed disaster and even though the cause of the disaster is not specified, it does not seem far-fetched to assume that human actions and behavior have triggered it. This is suggested through the way in which the novel depicts humans and their interactions with one another and other living beings. The father in *The Road* recalls the time before the disaster took place when he was with a group of rough-looking men who were digging up the earth to expose a den of snakes and murder them in cold blood. Associating snakes with evil, they seem to deceive themselves into believing that by mercilessly burning these snakes, they have rid the world of evil. Ironically, in doing so they have become the embodiment of evil themselves:

> Standing at the edge of a winter field among rough men. The boy's age. A little older. Watching while they opened up the rocky hillside ground with pick and mattock and brought to light a great bolus of serpents perhaps a hundred in number. Collected there for a common warmth. The dull tubes of them beginning to move sluggishly in the cold hard light. Like the bowels of some great beast exposed to the day. The men poured gasoline on them and burned them alive, having no remedy for evil but only for the image of it as they conceived it to be. The burning snakes twisted horribly and some crawled burning across the floor of the grotto to illuminate its darker recesses. As they were mute, there were no screams of pain and the men watched them burn and writhe and blacken in just such silence themselves. (McCarthy, 2007, pp. 200-201)

Furthermore, throughout the novel, we see the father trying his best to avoid other human beings as he believes they want to steal whatever he owns and harm his son. He also advises his son to keep the gun with him at all times when he cannot be by his side to protect him (McCarthy, 2007, pp. 171, 62-64, 205-206, 247-248). As captured in the following passage, most survivors have become totally obsessed with how to stay alive and in order to survive they steal, rob, kill and have no moment to spare for weaker ones:

> By then all the stores of food had given out and murder was everywhere upon the land. The world soon to be largely populated

by men who would eat your children in front of your eyes and the cities themselves held by cores of blackened looters who tunneled among the ruins and crawled from the rubble white of tooth and eye carrying charred and anonymous tins of food in nylon nets like shoppers in the commissaries of hell. The soft black talc blew through the streets like squid ink uncoiling along a sea floor and the cold crept down and the dark came early and the scavengers passing down the steep canyons with their torches trod silky holes in the drifted ash that closed behind them silently as eyes. Out on the road the pilgrims sank down and fell over and died and the bleak and shrouded earth went trundling past the sun and returned again as trackless and as unremarked as the path of any nameless sisterworld in the ancient dark beyond. (McCarthy, 2007, pp. 192-193)

The devastated and cold physical world shrouded by ashes, talc and darkness can also be seen as a speculation about the hellish state of the planet ensuing from human self-serving exploitation of it. Critics also see the severely destroyed landscape in *The Road* as a reflection of mankind's loss of humanity and good values such as compassion, empathy and care for others. As observed by Adeline Johns-Putra (2016), "…the setting of the novel is not just a devastation of the natural environment; more importantly, it is a devastation of what makes humans humane" (p. 521).

The Road can also be perceived as a larger than life imagining of the impacts of capitalist economy and consumerist culture on human behavior and relationships with one another. In their readings of *The Road,* a number of critics have come up with a similar line of argument. One of the most interesting ones is that of Marie Liénard-Yeterian (2016) in her article "Gothic Trouble: Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and the Globalized Order". In this article, she contends that the nightmarish world in *The Road* reflects the attempt to capture the horrors of what she terms 'the globalized order' that reduces people into the consumerist and the consumed, resulting in horrendous living conditions (Liénard-Yeterian, 2016, p. 146). As she puts it, "…our globalized order—which promotes greed and unprecedented exploitation, surveillance and personal data gathering—has turned human beings into consuming or consumed entities" (Liénard-Yeterian, 2016, p. 146).

Liénard-Yeterian (2016) also maintains that cannibalism in *The Road* is a metaphor for contemporary consumerist culture that transforms us into either the consumer or the consumed, and the only form of human relationship seems to be that of the predator and prey. Most shockingly, children become the food for adults and this reflects our current reality in which the older generations' greed deprives the next generations of their future. The novel also foregrounds the

exploitative relationship among humans through the image of the age-old slave trade and human trafficking (pp. 149-150).

Furthermore, Liénard-Yeterian (2016) observes that the novel's "landscape of disaster speaks to the neglect of the world's social and physical infrastructure" (p. 146). The badly damaged infrastructure in *The Road* mirrors our contemporary greed that leads to the refusal to invest in infrastructure for ordinary people, hence depriving the masses of basic necessities in life (Liénard-Yeterian, 2016, p. 150).

In sum, *The Road* envisions a horrific scenario precipitated by the consumerist culture and a capitalist economy that promotes greed and deprives humans of care, compassion and the ability to empathize with others. It is also worth noting that while the father's love and devotion to his little boy marks him as different from the human savages around him who do not hesitate to eat human flesh and kill children and babies to satisfy their hunger, the novel implies that the man's version of care—parental care and affection for one's own child —has its own shortcomings and limitations as it prevents him from extending his compassion and care to others. Despite the fact that he keeps telling his son that they are 'good guys' and 'good guys' do not eat human flesh and always help others, in reality the man does not want to help others for fear that doing so will reduce the chance of keeping his son alive and well. He actually wants to avoid all encounters with other survivors as he does not trust them and is afraid that they will harm his son. Also, he does not hesitate to hurt or even kill others whom he deems threatening to the safety of his son (McCarthy, 2007, pp. 65-69, 274-275). As observed by Adeline Johns-Putra (2016), as long as the boy is under his father's exclusionary care and protection, he cannot form any meaningful relationship with other humans who might be 'good guys' like himself and his father. It is only after the death of the father that the son is able to take a risk in reaching out to others and in doing so is able to form a meaningful relationship with them (Johns-Putra, 2016, pp. 532-534).

This concern with an encompassing and democratic ethic of care also figures predominantly in *Never Let Me Go*. Like *The Road, Never Let Me Go* underlines the crisis with regard to the human inability to extend compassion and exercise an encompassing ethic of care to others beyond their loved ones, although it does so without *The Road*'s post-apocalyptic setting. Set in Britain in the 1990s, our first impression of the fictional world depicted in this novel is that it is a world we are all quite familiar with, until the dystopian existence of the clones and their relationship with 'normal human beings' is revealed to us. While the humans in *Never Let Me Go* prefer to see the clones as sub-human and justify their horrific treatment of them on the basis of their 'difference', the reader is unlikely to buy into this justification and is very likely to view the human-clone relationship as a brutally exploitative one. This view is encouraged by the text through the characterization of Kathy, the clone protagonist, as a sensitive, loving and caring young woman and the employment of a first person

narrating voice that belongs to her. Through Kathy's first person narrative, the reader gets to know about Kathy's life and her relationships with other clones since her childhood years, as well as the concerns, worries and happiness she has experienced. This literary technique encourages the reader's identification with her more than with the humans in her world. This identification makes us see Kathy and the other clones as fully human in spite of the fact that she came into existence via cloning. When we are supplied with the explanation of why the clones are brought into existence and forced to give up their organs, we confront the dark side of the exclusionary care ethic that makes people willing to sacrifice the lives of the clones for the sake of their loved ones:

> How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask such a world to put away that cure, to go back to the dark days? There was no going back. However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor-neuron disease, heart disease. So for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. (Ishiguro, 2010, pp. 257-258)

The atrocity suffered by the clones reminds us of the cruel reality of our contemporary world where the health and well-being of members of socially and economically disadvantaged groups are often sacrificed for the sake of those more fortunate than they. Organ harvesting as portrayed in the novel is reminiscent of the way impoverished people in developing countries are deceived into selling their organs for a meagre sum of money. The dystopian existence of the clones can therefore be seen as the extrapolation of what is really happening in today's world and, in reading about the clones, the readers are implicitly urged to pay more attention to the injustices and inequalities happening around them. In utilizing the dystopia genre to critique contemporary realities, *Never Let Me Go*, like *The Road*, thus exhibits an important characteristic of critical dystopia.

Furthermore, as with *The Road*, some critics see *Never Let Go* as a work that criticizes the mercilessness of capitalism that aims to make the maximum profit with little concern about negative impacts on those with few resources to fight back. To give an example, Whitehead (2011) observes that the circumstance of carers like Kathy mirrors the dire circumstances of the care profession in Great Britain where workers, most of whom are immigrants or those without citizenship, are paid a low income and are expected to work extremely hard. She notes that due to the privatization of care services started in the conservative era of Margaret Thatcher during which neoliberal policies aiming at maximum profit dominate, things have become worse for both care

workers and those living in care homes. Not only are care workers insufficiently rewarded for their hard work, the quality of care given to senior citizens, the mentally ill and children in care homes is lower (Whitehead, 2011, p. 62). This situation parallels what happens to carers and donors in *Never Let me Go*. The former live an exhausting kind of lifestyle travelling from one centre to the next, and they live in a humble kind of accommodation. Even though their work situation is less than satisfying, they are encouraged to be happy with whatever promotions or small rewards given them. At the beginning of *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy shows her pride and satisfaction with what she considers as 'privileges' provided for carers like herself. This kind of mentality subjugates Kathy and prevents her from rebelling against the unjust system, and, as argued by Whitehead (2011), it corresponds with the situation of disenfranchised care workers in real life Britain (p. 61). Additionally, the accommodation and facilities available to donors in *Never Let Me Go* are often run down or in a half-finished state, and this suggests the novel's attempt to engage the reader in the act of drawing parallels between real life problematic issues related to the care system and what the clones and donors in its fictional world have experienced (Whitehead, 2011, pp. 61-63).

Another interesting reading of *Never Let Me Go* that foregrounds its critical stance of Western traditions is that of Tiffany Tsao (2012) in "The Tyranny of Purpose: Religion and Biotechnology in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*". Tsao posits that the exploitative relationship between humans and the clones in this novel functions as a powerful critique of a creator-creation relationship modelled on the Christian creation myth. According to her, the relationship between ordinary humans and the clones in the novel is analogous to that of God and his created beings. In Christianity, it is believed that God designed a specific function or role for all of his created beings and if they fail to perform the duties God assigns for them, they will be punished. There is thus a specific purpose for each created being's existence and the one that fails to live in accordance with the given purpose is deemed punishable, just as happened to Adam and Eve who did not behave in the way that God has set for them. In *Never Let Me Go* the creators are humans but their roles are more or less similar to God in that they exercise absolute power in determining the purpose of existence for their created beings—the clones are created to be a resource where organs can be harvested for human beings. They are expected to 'complete' or to give up their lives after all their useful organs have been taken from them. Without performing the role of being an organ donor, the clones' existence is seen as meaningless. This relationship between the creator and created beings is tyrannical and purpose-obsessed because it does not permit created beings to exist for their own sake. Tsao further argues that modern Western culture is still obsessed with purpose and this obsession is reflected in the bio-technology ethic that exclusively focuses on how science can benefit humans without taking into

consideration how it affects other living beings. In making use of science to create or make changes to other beings, humans tend to act like God in establishing a tyrannical relationship with created beings, forcing them to serve the purpose that benefits humans (Tsao, 2012, pp. 214-226). To expand on Tsao's argument, the priority in biotechnology is to benefit humans, while the well-being of other creatures is not seen as that important. Indeed, animals are forced to suffer numerous kinds of painful experiences for the sake of humans. This critique of the relationship between humans and other living beings is also seen in *The Road* through the father's recollection of the snakes being brutally massacred with no good justification.

Importantly, neither novel simply offers criticisms of the contemporary world through the dystopian mode but both seek to suggest a better way of being, particularly through the attempt to transform our way of thinking. As Lucy Sargisson (2003) contends, utopia can be viewed as a process that seeks to change the way we think and enhances the exploration of alternatives (pp. 16-17). Specifically, the gist of the alternatives suggested by the two novels is that it is crucial for humans to embrace inclusive care ethics, the type of ethics lacking in the fictional worlds portrayed in both works but implicitly advocated by the main characters in the two novels. In *Never Let Me Go*, the ability to let go of the attachment to ones' loved ones is also implicitly advocated.

Hope: Offering Alternatives

In *The Road*, the little boy embodies the ability to selflessly extend compassion and care to other humans and living beings. He is portrayed as a stark contrast to the lack of humanity in his world. While most of the survivors in this world will do anything and commit the most brutal and degrading acts so as to ensure their own survival, the boy never thinks about himself or his own survival and his main concern is to help his father and share the love and protection given to him by his father with others. He shows deep and genuine concern for the little boy he thought he had once seen and begs his father to help the boy. He also asks his father not to kill a dog they run into for food and shares their food with an elderly stranger (McCarthy, 2007, pp. 171-176). His compassion even extends to someone who tries to steal all their necessary belongings. While his father orders the thief to take off all his clothes and wants to leave him naked as a punishment, the boy begs his father to have pity on the thief (McCarthy, 2007, pp. 274-277).

As observed by Adeline Johns-Putra (2016), the boy is unlike the father who entirely devotes his care and compassion to his son and does not hesitate to hurt or kill those who want to hurt his son; the boy rejects his father's exclusionary care ethics and advocates more democratic and encompassing ones (pp. 532-534). The death of the father and the adoption of the son by a new family of 'good guys' suggests that there is still the hope that humanity is not

totally lost and to keep it alive, an inclusive type of care like the one held on to by the boy and his new adoptive family is necessary.

Similar to the father in *The Road*, most of the ordinary humans in *Never Let me Go* are only capable of exclusionary care ethics, as they only want to focus on the well-being, health and longevity of their loved ones. Indeed, the dystopian existence of the clones originates from this type of ethics that permits the taking of other lives to prolong or ensure the lives of ordinary humans. According to Whitehead (2011), the 'Never Let Me Go' of the title can be seen as echoing the human inability to let go of their loved ones and their attempt to do whatever they can to hold on to them, even to the extent of killing others, in this case, the clones (pp. 78-79). The novel, however, suggests that letting go is a better alternative, and this is dramatized through the relationship between Kathy and Tommy towards the end of the latter's life. As he is about to make his fourth organ donation, Tommy decides to tell Kathy that he does not want her to be his carer anymore even though he still has deep affection for her. He tells her that he does not want her to see him in a dying state. This decision of Tommy's and Kathy's acceptance of it can be seen as an act of courage, as neither of them wants to hold on to the person they love the most, but prefers to 'let her/him go'. Even though they are members of the exploited and vulnerable group, they are shown as possessing important qualities of true humanity and representing a better alternative to the 'normals' who hold on to their loved ones at all cost.

According to Tiffany Tsao (2012), *Never Let Me Go* also implicitly suggests a better alternative to the current biotechnological ethics that treat the benefits and usefulness humans acquire from the technology as most important with little interest paid to the impacts suffered by other living beings, especially those brought into existence by this technology. Tsao maintains that in *Never Let Me Go* scientists play the role of God in creating the clones purely to serve the purpose or utility they set for them, and this 'tyranny of purpose' should be replaced by more compassionate and responsible ethics that are subtly conveyed through Tommy's treatment of the drawings of animals he has created. Initially, Tommy draws eccentric-looking animals because he believes in a rumour that showing creative potential through art is a way to reveal one's soul and heart, and such a revelation might make it possible for clones from Hailsham to have their organ donation deferred. When Ruth mocks his art and makes him feel that his animal drawings are childish and unsophisticated as well as claiming that Kathy agrees with her, Tommy is embarrassed and seems to lose interest in producing his artwork. Nonetheless, years later, he resumes his drawing of animals and, even after learning that the deferral option is never a real possibility, he does not abandon his drawings. He has no clear purpose for his animals but still tries his best to create them by carefully considering how they can better protect themselves. His affection towards the animals he has created is clear and this is totally different from the way the clones are treated by the

humans who bring them into existence merely as a source of healthy organs and do not treat them with compassion. Tommy's loving treatment of his created animals represents a care ethic that does not revolve around utility or the creator's needs but is the one that prioritizes the well-being of created beings (Tsao, 2012, pp. 227-230). In its selflessness and genuine concern for others, such a care ethic resembles the inclusive care ethics advocated by the boy in *The Road*.

Hope: Storytelling, Genre-mixing and Open-endedness

In addition to suggesting that the embracing of inclusive care ethics and the ability to let go of the exclusionary kind of attachment is the way forward for the human race, both *The Road* and *Never Let Me Go* also affirm the belief that storytelling can function to maintain or reveal humanity's core qualities, establish connections and cultivate empathy for others. Such an affirmation instils some hope within the two novels and firmly locates them in a utopian mode of writing that resists total pessimism and despair. To illustrate, despite the extremely harsh conditions of the post-apocalyptic world, the father in *The Road* tries his best to instil good values and hope for a better future in his son through the art of storytelling. Stories told by the father seem to influence the little boy to want to be one of the 'good guys' who, as recalled by the boy, always help others and do not harm or eat other humans (McCarthy, 2007, pp. 88-90, 171-175, 277). The following conversation between the boy and the father shows that the boy wants to behave in a way that corresponds with the moral codes advocated in the stories recounted by his father:

> We wouldn't ever eat anybody, would we?
> No. Of course not.
> Even if we were starving?
> We're starving now.
> You said we weren't.
> I said we weren't dying. I didn't say we weren't starving.
> But we wouldn't.
> No, we wouldn't.
> No matter what.
> No. No matter what.
> Because we're the good guys.
> Yes.
> And we are carrying the fire.
> And we are carrying the fire. Yes.
> Okay. (McCarthy, 2007, p. 136)

In cherishing those moral codes, the boy is markedly different from other survivors who have abandoned their humanity to focus on survival only. Despite the fact that he was born after the old world has been utterly destroyed, the father's stories maintain his connection with the good values of the lost old world—values like compassion, generosity and empathy for others, which are essential to humanity. The link between storytelling, the instilling of good values and altruistic action is spelt out in a rather explicit way in *The Road* when, after his father's death, the boy is rescued by a family who shares similar values.

This faith in the power of storytelling in establishing empathy and connection can also be discerned in *Never Let Me Go*, although in this novel the connection and empathy sought is that between the clone protagonists and the readers. As observed by Keith McDonald (2007) in "Days of Past Futures: Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as a Speculative Memoir", it is possible to see autobiographical tropes in *Never Let Me Go* as a means of creating the rapport between Kathy, the clone narrator/storyteller and the reader (p. 75). As a form of art, autobiographical storytelling has the power to move the heart and evoke empathy for the oppressed and at the same time offers the means for the oppressed to cope with their traumatic experiences. Kathy's prominent role is that of a storyteller who introduces the readers to the imagined reality of her world, draws their attention to the human qualities that clones share with them and, in effect, negates the assumption of the 'normals' that the clones are sub-human. Because Kathy addresses the readers directly, referring to them as 'you', this heightens the impression that she wants to share a personal story with them and encourages the reader's connection, identification and empathy with her and other clones. The utilization of the fictional autobiography mode in *Never Let Me Go* thus mirrors a belief that storytelling can serve as an effective tool to demonstrate human qualities and to move human hearts and souls.

The belief in the power of storytelling is also reflected through the generic aspects of *The Road* and *Never Let Me Go*, as both novels employ genre mixing, another key characteristic of critical dystopia, in a way that utilizes the full potential of several generic conventions so as to enhance their key messages—to draw attention to contemporary concerns and crises while at the same time attempt to maintain a utopian desire. *The Road*, for example, can be seen as embodying conventions of several genres such as the Gothic, the grail narrative and the melodrama. In her examination of the use of Gothic tropes in *The* Road, Liénard-Yeterian (2016) contends that the deployment of Gothic tropes in *The Road* serves to terrify the readers and bring home to them a realization about the state of terror our world is now trapped in (pp. 146-147).To express the terror of the state our contemporary world has plunged into, the Gothic mode is an apt choice, since Gothic imagery powerfully evokes a nightmarish and frightful atmosphere. Associated with social upheavals and change, the Gothic genre often functions to articulate human fears, deep

concerns and anxieties (Liénard-Yeterian, 2016, p. 145). In *The Road,* several Gothic tropes can be detected, for instance, the use of cannibalism that mirrors the way human relationships are dominated by a predatory logic and the concern about where and how to find food. Cannibalism in *The Road*, Liénard-Yeterian (2016) notes, essentially functions to articulate the insidious impact of consumer culture dominated and driven by greed and the way this culture negatively affects humans' treatment of one another and other beings (pp. 149-150). Furthermore, as in Gothic settings, the world in *The Road* is forever in the twilight zone where light has yielded to a darkness that seems to give birth to nightmarish beings (Liénard-Yeterian, 2016, p. 148). There is, however, the absence of wilderness, another common Gothic trope; indeed wilderness is replaced by a bleak wasteland that represents both ecological and moral demise (Liénard-Yeterian, 2016, p. 153).

The frightful atmosphere evoked by the Gothic tropes notwithstanding, *The Road*'s utilization of other important generic conventions associated with the grail narrative and melodramatic literature maintains a glimpse of hope within the text. Deployed in contemporary works as a way of articulating concerns and anxieties about topical problems and crises, the world depicted in a modern grail narrative is a wasteland ill-stricken as a consequence of human corruption and depravation. Nonetheless, the narrative still embodies the hope of regeneration in the form of the grail, traditionally perceived as highly elusive and almost impossible to achieve. According to Lydia Cooper (2011), *The Road* can be seen as a modern grail narrative within which a glimpse of hope persists despite its overwhelming wasteland imagery and bleak prophesy of humans' capacity for evil. Central to its grail motif is the boy who, because of his virtue and purity of the heart, represents both the grail bearer and the grail itself. Juxtaposed with the darkness and degradation of the world around him, the boy's crucial role is to 'carry the fire' or uphold the good values his father cultivates in him. The boy's selflessness, his desire to help others and his yearning to have connection with others are presented as a glimpse of hope that can redeem mankind from the corruption that had brought about the near destruction of Earth and the human race (Cooper, 2011, pp. 222-226, 234).

Also dominant in the novel are elements of melodramatic fiction that make the existence of 'good guys' possible and allow for the fulfilment of the boy's hope to have connection and communication with 'other good guys'. As James Dorson (2017) argues, *The Road* affirms the view that there are good values that need to be upheld, and those who adhere to those values will be rewarded in the end (para. 20). Hence, despite its gruesome post-apocalyptic world, the novel insists on the notion that goodness will be rewarded and that there is still goodness left in this horrific world, or as the father puts it, "goodness will find the little boy" (McCarthy, 2007, p. 300). Just as the father has predicted, after his death, the boy is adopted by another family that is willing

to look after him and care for him. What is also suggested here is that the human race might have a chance for redemption if we have not lost our connection and empathy for others. As Erik J. Wielenberg (2010) maintains, it is worth noting that goodness in the world of *The Road* can exist even without a belief in God**.** For the father, his desire to be 'a good guy' originates from paternal love, not from his devotion to God (pp. 11-14). The father's storytelling, as argued earlier, reflects his attempt to instil good values in the little boy despite the fact that the father cannot always adhere to those good values himself. His total devotion to his son prevents him from reaching out to others and he cannot rise beyond his exclusionary care ethic. Still, the father's intention to do the right thing marks him as different from the human savages who populate the world of the novel.

In sum, the creative genre mixing grounded in the dystopian mode allows for *The Road*'s haunting depiction of a futuristic world extrapolated from our contemporary world. Like many dystopian works that issue warnings about the worst that can happen if we continue living the way we do, the novel's employment of Gothic tropes aims at bringing home the terror, yet this terror is not merely articulated for the sake of terror. Rather, its hybridization with the grail narrative and melodrama conventions helps maintain some hope within the narrative.

Furthermore, while *The Road* ends with a final passage that can be read as a lamentation of the losses suffered by the natural world as a result of human destructive power, this passage also seeks to position the reader as a dissatisfied or desiring subject who longs for a better way of living and values respectful and peaceful co-existence with the natural world, a way of being that allows amazingly beautiful creatures like trout to thrive:

> Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which not be put back. Not be made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery. (McCarthy, 2007, pp. 306-307)

As Ildney Cavalcanti (2003) argues, a utopian mode of writing functions to transform the reader into a dissatisfied or desiring subject who is encouraged to formulate his/her own vision of a better way of being that may not be present in the text. In other words, this mode of writing seeks to resist closure by placing faith in the readers' ability to fully engage with the text and formulate in their minds the possibility of a better elsewhere (pp. 64-65). In the fictional world of

The Road, it is no longer possible to see brook trout as their natural habitat is polluted. Still, in the readers' world of reality, it is still possible to prevent the extinction of many species. The question about how to protect them, however, is implicitly posed to the readers.

As with *The Road, Never Let Me Go* also ends in a way that resists closure and encourages readerly engagement and critical reflection. But before discussing that aspect of the novel, however, let us focus on the critics' examination of the way the *Never Let Me Go* utilizes, subverts and mix generic conventions so as to utilize generic qualities to their full creative potential. As mentioned earlier, the use of fictional autobiography tropes helps create the impression that Kathy's first person narrative is a memoir and it encourages the readers' empathy for and connection with her. Apart from autobiographical memoir techniques, other generic conventions are also deployed in this novel so as to foreground contemporary concerns and problems. In an article entitled "Human Rights Storytelling and Trauma Narrative in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*", Titus Levy (2011)contends that the novel is essentially a "dissensual Bildungsroman, a genre that promotes the benefits of free and full personality development while calling attention to the oppressive structural institutions that constrain individual autonomy" (p. 5). Through the deployment of this genre that simultaneously uses and subverts traditional Bildungsroman conventions, the novel draws attention to the way human rights ideals are severely abridged once they function to serve a regime that benefits from or condones the exploitation of disadvantaged groups. In *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy and her friends grew up and were educated at Hailsham, an institution that initially appears very much like a privileged boarding school that purportedly aims to provide a good childhood for the clones. While Hailsham staff appear to be loving, caring and devoted to the nurturing of their students' physical and intellectual growth, the institution also functions as a socializing force that works to make the students accept the cruel destiny imposed on them—that they have to give up their organs for donation and die in their early adulthood. The idealism advocated by Hailsham—to provide a good childhood for the clones, to nurture their creativity and imagination and to protect them from deplorable living conditions—is thus severely limited as the clones growing up at Haisham ends with having their organs harvested like clones at other worse institutions. In this way, the novel reminds the readers of real life situations in which ideals are often stunted or even distorted to serve more sinister goals, and how human rights ideals cannot offer real benefits to individuals living in a tyrannical state or a state that promotes the exploitation of some groups for the sake of others (Levy, 2011, pp. 5-6).

Never Let Me Go can also be classified as science fiction as it depicts the imaginative consequences of biotechnology in an alternative world—a world in which cloning of humans has become a normal practice. Through the reading

process, the engaged reader gradually learns that virtually everyone in this alternative world, the clones included, accepts that the act of harvesting organs from clones is not an act of atrocity but is merely a 'donation' and part of the mission the clones are destined to accomplish. As observed by Moyland (2000), in reading serious science fiction, the reader becomes like a foreigner or a detective looking for clues to help them make sense of the logic governing the fictionalized alternative world. Serious science fiction is also capable of transporting the reader into the alternative world and enabling him/her to view the everyday world from a fresh and more critical perspective. In other words, reading science fiction can lead to a sense of estrangement that allows for the possibility of constructive critiques of our world of reality and even the attempt to change it to somehow make it better (Moyland, 2000, pp. 25-26).Yet unlike many works of science fiction which are set in futuristic or fantastical worlds, *Never Let Me Go* is set in the recent past of Britain and its created alternative world appears so similar to our everyday world. It is only the existence of cloning humans for medical purpose that marks this alternative world as different from our own. As remarked by Titus Levy (2011), "Ishiguro's brand of science fiction undermines generic expectations by muting all things fantastical and downplaying anything out of the ordinary" (p. 6). Still, after entering the alternative world of *Never Let Me Go*, the experience may enable engaged and discerning readers to look at their world of reality from a different perspective and become more keenly aware of the flaws and problems of their everyday world. As Keith McDonald (2007) puts it, Ishiguro succeeds in constructing "an alternate but familiar reality, an allegorical world with subtle and disturbing connections to our own" (p. 82). Ishiguro's utilization of sci-fi conventions within the context of the mundane and ordinary thus reflects the reality of our contemporary world in which atrocities increasingly become part of our everyday life that can be easily ignored (Levy, 2011, p. 7). Like the atrocious exploitation of the clones that is treated as normal in this fictional world, people in the real world often pretend to turn a blind eye on the exploitation or the suffering of others, either because they indirectly benefit from it or they feel powerless in doing anything about it.

Significantly, while nothing seems to change for the clones at the end of *Never Let Me G*o, the novel does not quite end on a note of bleakness. Towards the end of the novel, Kathy becomes a desiring protagonist, reminiscing about her long-lost beloved objects and lover. While Kathy is able to pull herself together and force herself to move on, the text seems to imprint in the reader the feeling that something is left unresolved:

> I found I was standing before acres of ploughed earth. There was a fence keeping me from stepping into the field, with two lines of barbed wire, and I could see this fence and the cluster of three or

four trees above me were the only things breaking the wind for miles. All along the fence, especially along the lower line of wire, all sorts of rubbish had caught and tangled….I half closed my eyes and imagined 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 gradually 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—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, 2010, p. 282)

It can be argued that *Never Let Me Go* resists closure and embodies an open-endedness that has the effect of unsettling or disturbing the reader, positioning him or her as the dissatisfied reader who cannot simply accept atrocities against the clones as part of the normality of the world they inhabit. Cloning of people does not exist in the reader's world of reality, yet being positioned as one who bears witness to the brutal exploitation of the clones may create a defamiliarizing effect that leads to the reader's recognition that the plight of the clones is more or less similar to less fortunate groups of people who have been exploited and unjustly taken advantage of in our real world. Furthermore, in this novel the 'normals' prefer to think of the clones as 'not human' so that they can find some justification for the horrific exploitation of the clones. Such a line of thinking does not seem very different from the justification often used in the reader's real world to subject other living beings to suffering so that human needs can be met. Both *The Road* and *Never Let Me Go* thus end in a way that encourages reflexivity and critical engagement on the part of the readers. Furthermore, the practice of genre impurity visible in both works also helps to facilitate new alternatives, possibilities and to maintain a glimpse of hope or offer a channel for the voice of the oppressed to be heard.

Conclusion

In this paper, I discuss key characteristics of the critical dystopia discerned in *The Road* and *Never Let Me Go*. Significantly, in both novels utopia becomes a desire that motivates a process towards better ways of being and the exploration of alternatives, rather than the blueprint for an ideal society. Utopianism in both novels also reveals itself as a mode of writing that seeks to transform our way of thinking, as the reader is encouraged to become a desiring or a dissatisfied subject who has to formulate his/her utopia. The act of reading is thus crucial to the utopianism of both novels and a great deal of faith is placed on storytelling as a means of triggering the utopian desire and process. *The Road*

and *Never Let Me Go* also exemplify the creativity of the critical dystopia in terms of the employment of generic conventions so as to produce a hybrid and impure genre highly capable of enhancing the authors' thematic concerns and engaging the readers. It is also worth noting that in utilizing the capacities of more than one genre, the two novels can be seen as taking an oppositional position against genre purity noticeable in traditional dystopias.

Considering these two seemingly very different novels together and reading them as critical dystopian texts thus sheds new light on the studies of critical dystopia, particularly in foregrounding the encompassing and highly flexible aspect of this genre. While the two novels have been interpreted in various interesting ways, those approaches often underline the sense of bleakness, irretrievable loss and melancholy evoked by both texts. Reading these two novels through the lens of critical dystopia, on the other hand, enables us to see in these two texts elements of hope or utopian desire, something we sorely need to help us imagine better ways of living and to prevent us from being entrapped in despair.

Acknowledgements

References

Baccolini, R., & Moylan, T. (2003). *Dark horizons: Science fiction and the dystopian imagination*. Routledge.

De Bruyn, B. (2010). Borrowed time, borrowed world and borrowed eyes: Care, ruin, and vision in Mccarthy's The Road and Harrison's ecocriticism. *English Studies, 91*(7), 776-789. https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838X.2010.518045

Cavalcanti, I. (2003). The writing of utopia and the feminist critical dystopias. In R. Baccolini, & T. Moylan (Eds.), *Dark horizons: Science fiction and the dystopian imagination* (pp. 47-67). Routledge.

Cooper, L. (2011). Cormac McCarthy's The Road as apocalyptic grail narrative. *Studies in the Novel, 43*(2), 218-236. http://doi.org/10.1353/sdn.2011.0032

Donawerth, J. (2003). Genre blurring and the critical dystopia. In R. Baccolini, & T. Moylan (Eds.), *Dark horizons: Science fiction and the dystopian imagination* (pp. 29-46). Routledge.

Dorson, J. (2017). Cormac McCarthy and the genre turn in contemporary literary fiction. *European Journal of American Studies, 12*(3). https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.12291

Johns-Putra. A. (2016). "My job is to take care of you": Climate change, humanity, and Cormac McCarthy's The Road. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies, 62*(3), 519-540. http://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2016.0041

Ishiguro, K. (2010). *Never Let Me Go* (Movie Tie-In edition). Faber and Faber.

Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as a method: The imaginary reconstitution of society*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Levy, T. (2011). Human rights storytelling and trauma narrative in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go. *Journal of Human Rights, 10*(1), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2011.546242

Liénard-Yeterian, M. (2016). Gothic trouble: Cormac McCarthy's The Road and the globalized order. *Text Matters, 6*(6), 144-158. https://doi.org/10.1515/texmat-2016-0009

Moylan, T. (2000). *Scraps of the untainted sky: Science fiction, utopia, dystopia*. Westview Press.

McCarthy, C. (2007). *The Road.* Picador.

McDonald, K. (2007). Days of past futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go as "speculative memoir". *Biography 30*(1):74-83. https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2007.0025

Sargent, L. T. (2001). US eutopias in the 1980s and 1990s: Self-fashioning in a world of multiple identities. In P. Spinozzi (Ed.), *Utopianism/literary*

utopias and national cultural identities: *A comparative perspective* (pp. 221-232). University of Bologna.

Sargisson, L. (2003). Utopia in dark times: Optimism/Pessimism and Utopia/Dystopia. In R. Baccolini, & T. Moylan (Eds.), *Dark horizons: Science fiction and the dystopian imagination* (pp.13-27). Routledge.

Shaddox, K. (2013). Generic Considerations in Cormac McCarthy's Never Let Me Go. *Human Rights Quarterly, 35*(2), 448-469. http://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2013.0026

Tsao, T. (2012). The tyranny of purpose: Religion and biotechnology in Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go". *Literature & Theology, 26*(2), 214-232. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23927483

Wielenberg, E. J. (2010). God, morality, and meaning in Cormac McCarthy's The Road. *Cormac McCarthy Journal, 8*(1), 1-19.https://www.bishopmanogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/11-H-God-Morality-and-Meaning-.pdf

White, C. T. (2015). Embodied reading and narrative empathy in Cormac McCarthy's The Road. *Studies in the Novel, 47*(4), 532-549. http://doi.org/10.1353/sdn.2015.0046

Whitehead, A. (2011). Writing with care: Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go". *Contemporary Literature, 52*(1), 54-83. www.jstor.org/stable/41261825