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Linguistic Chameleons: Polysemy, Hyponymy and Eponymy as Stylistic Tropes in Transnational Literature

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The Linguistics of Cloned Words: The trope of ‘copies’ pervades the entire literary landscape of Kazuo Ishiguro’s powerful proleptic novel, *Never Let Me Go*. As an aesthetic product—“a work of art with multiple iterations” (Walkowitz, 2007: 222) both as a novel, and more recently, as a critically acclaimed filmic adaptation, this literary work demands a much more detailed linguistic analysis. None would dispute that on an obvious level *Never Let Me Go* is a novel about cloning, and what literary critic Griffin (2009) describes as “an unusual piece of nightmarish science-fiction blended with an evocative reworking of the traditional boarding-school story” (645). The three protagonists in the novel— Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy—cloned copies in and of themselves—are either in search of copies of people— what readers are euphemistically told to be Ruth’s “possible” in one instance; a copy of things lost— a stolen tape in the case of Kathy; or replications of aesthetic creation— copies of animal drawings on the part of Tommy, the latter of which are painstakingly drawn in a bid to get a “deferral” from death. But it is not just the trope of ‘copying’—as an

action, or of 'copies' as products which forms a recurring, and interruptive literary promontory in the narrative-scape of the novel which confounds readers.

This *Booker Prize* shortlisted novel, could indeed be read on another level as a novel about the tripartite stages of human life—what Britzman (2006) describes as “an allegory of psychic development” (307) including: innocence (childhood), experimentation (youth) and knowledge (adulthood)—in essence the ephemeral, and ‘over-copied’ and over-replicated nature of human life. Literary critic Jennings (2010) has astutely and ironically described *Never Let Me Go* to be “a coming-of age novel with characters for whom coming of age ultimately has little point” (18)—a classic “dystopian” piece of fiction (Griffin, 2009: 647). After all, the book is carefully divided into three such parts—even prompting some critics to argue that the novel has to be read as a literary piece emblematic of the genre of the “speculative memoir” (McDonald, 2007: 75).

The notion of “Tokens” and Types” seen as “useful” in a literary sense (Walkowitz, 2007: 222) prompts critics like Fluet (2007) to view *Never Let Me Go* to be a modern saga about replicating and replicated “interiority” (280), or what Walkowitz (2007) astutely notes to be a dual fascination with, and a disdain “for “copied” things” (225)— a word she argues “is studded” (225) throughout the novel and “is ubiquitous” (225). Whatever, the final ‘reading’ pronounced on the novel however, the theme and thread of copy, copies, copying and copied is never far off. In a semantic sense then, the act of ‘copying’ both as a verb and the indexing of ‘copies’ as a noun pervades every element of the literary-scape of *Never Let Me Go*, and demands closer linguistic rather than mere literary inspection.

The theme of ‘copying’ as an act—as a metonym and ‘copies’ as a product—as synecdoche it is argued, is not just deductively inserted by Kazuo Ishiguro into the text of *Never Let Me Go*, but rather, is simultaneously and inductively inscribed into the novel’s textuality via an innovative process of lexical ‘copying’—a morpho-semantic process whose workings are the subject of scrutiny of the current paper both for what they tell us about the novel, and for what they offer in terms of an

interdisciplinary application of linguistics in the study and understanding of transnational literature. Indeed, “language is at the heart of all things human [...] it’s the vehicle for literature” (O’Grady et al. 2010: 1). This paper demonstrates some overt uses of lexical semantics in literary creation, and stylistic interpretation.

Ishiguro astutely utilizes both a top-down rendering of the theme of copying at the very same time as he utilizes a bottom-up lexical indexing which reiterates the trope of ‘copying’ in his text. This literary and linguistic marriage is on par with the human genome itself which as explained by Anft (2010) works simultaneously both as an *act* and *product* of ‘copying’ and ‘copies’ respectively—a ‘copying’ of parts to create the whole:

Our research confirms that repetitive DNA sequences don’t stay in the same place—they move around in the human genome and insert copies of themselves here and there. They can also mobilize—‘copy and paste’—other sequences. (5)

This dual strategy of thematic and lexical inscription of the trope of ‘copying’ is innovatively replicated by Kazuo Ishiguro via a creative use of lexical semantics—in particular, via an adept exploitation of the tripartite strategies of lexical meaning: Polysemy, Neologism and Hyponymy—all three strategies of which have an intended output of creating oppositional meaning namely: Antonymy, Irony and Dysphemism in the reader. Via a systematic use of these three morpho-semantic strategies, Ishiguro creates cloned copies of words from originals—and cleverly manages to in the astutely worded indictment of Griffin (2009) provoke “an alienation effect” (651) via “an uncommon use of common words” (651). What remains to be reiterated is that like the infertile clones in his novel which bear a superficial resemblance to the ‘models’ from which they have been created, the synthetic synonyms ‘copied’ in Ishiguro’s text while bearing etymological affinity to the semantic roots from which they have been derived, function as cloned lexical copies—polysemes in the strictest of semantic senses, and consequently, like all polysemes encode a *duality* of literary and contextual signification. Eventually, as the analysis below reveals, the

linguistic DNA sequences which Ishiguro offers create a semantic signification wholly diametric in meaning from the original semantic sense from which these multiple clone words are 'copied'.

One respected literary critic is said to have faulted Ishiguro's discourse in *Never Let Me Go* for its "familiar, chatty style" (Kermode, 2005: 21)—an obvious inability to recognize other linguistic spaces in which modern authors innovate. So, while critics like Walkowitz (2007) seem keen on arguing that "Kathy H.'s unoriginality seems to be Ishiguro's too" (224), the current analysis posits an opposite 'reading' of the novel. Far from 'reading' this text as unoriginal in stylistic rendition, the analysis in this paper, points to Ishiguro's use of lexical banality in the service of literary originality. It is argued that Ishiguro engages in an astute use of the 'parts' of diction to create the 'whole' of literary effect—he engages in an intentional semantic 'decomposition' of language in a bid to render the trope of 'wholeness' which pervades his entire literary text. Words both bear the weight of semiotic depth at the very same time as they create meaning in this potent 21st century text. Like the clones in the novel, these chameleon words exist for a purpose—a 'donation' of new Ishiguro meaning—one which prompts consuming readers to cross the realm from polyseme to antonym in the examination of an important, globally-relevant issue of legalized bio-engineering—an analysis to which we now turn.

Words and Meaning: An Inductive Approach to Creating Literary Effect: The cumulative effect of words in enhancing the literary potency of texts is well known. Hebron (2004) alludes to the "expressive value of single lexical items as they appear in texts" (118)—the role of lexis—such as archaisms for instance, used in a myriad of literary functions including but not limited to "creating a sense of tradition" (131); establishing a "poetic tradition", and coding "political affiliations" in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* for example (131). There is sufficient evidence from author-interviews to point to a deliberate use of lexis as literary device on the part of Ishiguro in his writing of *Never Let me Go*. Adams (2005) for example, cites ample evidence that Ishiguro's reputation as an international novelist has prompted him to use "simpler diction in his novels so that his words would better survive translation" (1). Such ancillary evidence points to a deliberate use of diction for literary effect. Walkowitz

(2007) claims that “In many ways Ishiguro has been writing for translation all along” (219), and discusses the global impact of *Never Let Me Go*’s translation into 9 different languages namely: German, French, Dutch, Swedish, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese, Finnish and Japanese. What is particularly intriguing perhaps for other multilingual scholars is how Ishiguro’s ‘cloned’ words function in his translated texts—a detailed analysis to which we now turn.

Unpacking Ishiguro’s Polysemes: Nominal copies: Probably one of the most potent mining of meaning strategies which Ishiguro utilizes in *Never Let Me Go* is lexical. By carefully juxtapositioning the denotative intent of words in carefully constructed linguistic contexts, Ishiguro successfully manages to create powerful contextual connotations which provide readers with ample evidence of a new polysemic intent related to but very different from the word from which the polyseme is molded. Hebron (2004) acknowledges the utility of polysemes in literary writing, and defines polysemy as “the simultaneous existence of different senses, more than one of which may be operating in a particular instance” (144). In a strict linguistic sense, “Polysemy occurs when a word has two or more related meanings” (O’Grady et al. 2010: 205). As the analysis below demonstrates, Ishiguro’s cloned words are both similar to and uncannily different from the words from which they are cloned—a few examples to which we now turn. We begin our analysis by examining the polysemic meanings of one of the most intriguing of words in the text— the word, “guardian.” While the analysis will focus on a few selected lexical items as used in the text, the strategies used can be extrapolated to other lexical items in the text which assume a similar contextual camouflage of meaning in *Never Let Me Go*.

GUARDIAN: No word in the novel evokes meaning more powerfully than the lexeme, *Guardian*. In her analysis of the novel, Roos (2008) notes that most of the lives of the two protagonists, Kathy and Tommy revolves around interrogating and discovering truths from what she calls their “mysterious guardians” (45). How does Ishiguro manage to create such a sinister semantic sense in readers from a word as seemingly innocuous as “guardian” is the question? Let us unpack the cline of polysemous clone words that Ishiguro creates in the text in a bid to understand how his tokens of the

word, “guardian”, function as literary devices to both inscribe and index his overarching trope of “copies”—of the “copying” of ‘parts’ in the service of ‘wholes’. While this lexical item does share an affiliation with the dictionary denotation of the word, its use in the novel soon acquires an antonymic meaning.

Hebron (2004) notes that “a word has sense and associations” (133). In traditional semantic dichotomies; a distinction is often drawn between a word’s dictionary sense, its denotative meaning, and its connotative sense which is often a product of “cultural and literary tradition” (Hebron 2004: 133). Ishiguro uses polysemes to mine meanings which are the sum total of both their denotative and connotative senses. Additionally, Ishiguro creates meaning from each word’s context of use— a creative utilization of the strategy of contextual connotation to create meanings he *wants* to evoke in readers. After all, as Justice (2004) rightly acknowledges: “The ideas (or meaning) represented by our words are, at least to a certain extent, context specific” (4). While not using the term contextual connotation per se, Hebron (2004) alludes to such a role when he writes that: “the connotations of words allow us to evoke ideas and feelings without naming them” (134).

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines the word “guardian” as: “One who guards, protects or preserves; a keeper, a defender,” with the specialized legal definition being “one who has or is by law entitled to the custody of the person or property (or both) of an infant or other person legally incapable of managing his own affairs.” In his polysemous reiterations of the word “guardian”, two related semantic processes seem to be at work. Firstly, we see a narrowing of the meaning of the word to result in a lexical meaning whereby “a more general sense of the word has been taken over by a particular one” (Hebron, 2004: 138). The following instantiations of the word “guardian” as used by Ishiguro in *Never Let Me Go*, move the word from its usual denotative meaning, to a narrower, sentry or sentinel semantic sense related to the notion of a ‘guard’.

After all, there is ample lexical proof provided in the text of the ostracized and fortified grounds in which the ‘students’ are ‘safe-guarded’. We are given details of “a

wire mesh boundary with the garden” (47). We are told of “the gate itself which was a fair distance off...” (34). We are given careful details about the ‘students’ restricted rules of movement, access and their carefully monitored mobility. Kathy tells readers of a path she liked but which she confesses “I was never sure if it was out of bounds” (44). We are further apprised of the students’ awareness of permissible and impermissible boundaries. Kathy tells us: “If, say you were somewhere you shouldn’t be in the main house or the grounds, and you heard a guardian coming, you could often hide somewhere” (43). It is such linguistic manipulations of morpho-semantic meaning which Ishiguro successfully utilizes on countless occasions in a bid to generate the prescient sense of irony which pervades his entire text.

An examination of some of the numerous lexical instantiations of this word shows “guardian” being used with a number of polysemous attachments ranging on a cline from: ‘comforter,’ ‘caregiver’ and ‘teacher’, on the one hand— what the OED defines as “protecting tutelary—conceived as watching over or protecting a particular person or place,” to on the other hand, a staff-hierarchy reminiscent of a state-penitentiary—with its own rigid protocol of ‘unnerving’ surveillance. The latter meaning bears an unsettling resemblance to an institutionalized system of guarding—an uncanny affinity to internment—in short, a segregated, hierarchical, formalized system of incarceration. We see this latter meaning reflected in later renditions of Ishiguro’s use of the lexeme guardian— what *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines as “In various official titles in which the form WARDEN is now prevalent”. This cline of polysemous meaning soon reveals itself in the text and is examined in detail below. After all, as Hebron (2004) notes of polysemy in literary use “one sense will shade into another, or more than one sense will be understood at the same time” (144)—a litany of examples to which we now turn. What is particularly salient to note about Ishiguro’s cloned words is his use of “complex instances of polysemy” (Hebron: 2004, 145) whereby “two main meanings seem equally valid” (Hebron: 2004, 145). In the case of the word, *guardian*, we have both a positive sense of the word, as well as a negative sense of the word—some examples of which are provided below in the form of a semantic branching diagram as utilized by etymologists to indicate “shifted denotative senses” (Hebron, 2004: 135).

Figure 1 below demonstrates pictorially the cline of meaning encoded in the word as used by Ishiguro in *Never Let Me Go*—semantic evidence for why readers soon begin to view the “guardians” in the novel with skepticism. By the first third of the novel, readers pick up on the duality of meanings encoded in this linguistic chameleon of a word—a word that begins to take on more shades of meaning than when first encountered in the text. Reflecting this change, critics, like Britzman (2006) describe “the guardians” in the following terms: “Their teacher-guardians seem to give them an education, but no assignment has any purpose. The rules of the school are secretive, leaving the students alone to interpret wildly their guardian’s utterances” (313). This duality of connotational complexity prompts readers to eventually engage in a “slow reading” (Britzman, 2006: 310), which in classic Saussurian terms is “the consequence of the signifier” (Britzman, 2006: 310). The eventual effect of these ‘chameleon words’ is perplexing. Britzman records the psychodynamics of these words on readers saying: “Then, the dilemma of slow readers is that they never let the word go because they will garble it, mistake it for something else, or worry about the direction the next word may take them” (310) — evidence enough that in this novel, it is diction that bears the dictum.

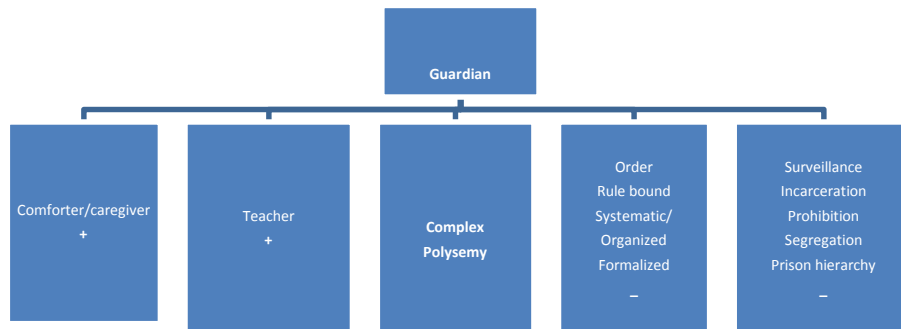


Figure 1: Complex Synonymy**+ (Positive Connotations)**

(COMFORTER/CAREGIVER) “Miss Geraldine was everyone’s favorite guardian when we were that age. She was gentle, soft-spoken, and always comforted you when you needed it, even when you had done something bad, or had been told off by another guardian. If she ever had to tell you off herself, then for days afterwards she’d give you lots of attention, like she owed you something” (19).

(TEACHER) “Tommy explained, he’d expected yet another lecture about how he should try harder—the sort of thing he’d had already from various guardians, including Miss Emily herself” (27).

_ (Negative Connotations)

(ORDER) “or which guardian was in charge” (31); “various guardians, including Miss Emily herself” (27).

(rule-bound) “Didn’t we all dream from time to time about one guardian or other bending the rules...” (60).

(REGIMENTED) “with the guardians sifting through all our work...Once the guardians started laying it out neatly, on tables and easels...” (33).

(FORMAL) “Not a disaster, exactly: it would have been much the same had one of us let slip a rude word, or used a guardian’s nickname to his or her face” (32).

(SURVEILLANCE) “Each of us was secretly wishing a guardian would come from the house and take him away” (10).

(INCARCERATION) “Or if there were no guardians around, you could take a short cut through the rhubarb patch” (25). Kathy tells Ruth: “You know that route was out of bounds” (202).

(PROHIBITION) “Our problem was that it was raining, and it looked unlikely we’d be allowed outside. I noticed though that Miss Geraldine was one of the guardians on duty...” (79)

(PRISON HIERARCHY) “Miss Emily herself—the head guardian—who often took art” (20). We are told “We were all pretty scared of her” (39).

(SEGREGATION) “But as they were walking from the house towards the Orangery—where the guardians had their living quarters. (27)

Ishiguro succeeds in exploiting denotative and connotative senses within lexemes to create copies of words which while bearing semantic similarities to the originals from which they are created, function like lexical clones with their own specific literary meanings. We see here an example of semantic branching at work—how in fact, “words move from one sense to another [...] like a branching effect in which a new sense of the word can emerge while an original one is still active” (Hebron, 2004: 136). Such examples confirm indeed that “texts come to us mediated by existing frameworks of reception and interpretation” (Damrosch, 2003: 295). In what can only be deemed to be a deliberate and innovative literary move, Ishiguro successfully manages to inscribe the notion of clones at both a deductive as well as an inductive level— thematically as well as lexically—as synonymy and antonymy—as examined below.

Constructing Semantic Pejoration via Lexical Tokens: Eventually, the word, *guardian*, in its multiple iterations in the text acquires a sense of pejoration—a semantic process whereby words “take on negative associations, which become so strong that they drag the denotation down with them” (Hebron 2004: 140). We are given ample evidence of the consequences of what awaits those ‘students’ who attempting freedom from the captivity and internment of Hailsham and its guardians, cross its forbidden borders as parenthetically recounted by the young Kathy, in the form of a wildly and widely circulating school-myth:

She'd been a Hailsham student until one day she'd climbed over a fence just to see what it was like outside. This was a long time before us, when the guardians were much stricter, cruel even, and when she tried to get back in, she wasn't allowed. She kept hanging around outside the fences, pleading to be let back in, but no one let her. Eventually, she'd gone off somewhere out there, something had happened and she'd died. (50)

"Writers will summon up strong feelings not by describing them, but by giving us pictures which work on us through their associative force" writes Hebron (2004: 134). The eventual effect of such polysemes of imprisonment occurs when readers are proffered even more macabre details regarding what happens to those 'students' who attempt escape from the bounded grounds of Hailsham:

There were all kinds of horrible stories about the woods. Once, not so long before we all got to Hailsham, a boy had had a big row with his friends and run off beyond the Hailsham boundaries. His body had been found two days later, up in those woods, tied to a tree with the hands and feet chopped off. (50)

Other hints of the macabre surface at various points in the novel. One guardian while telling the students that "It's just as well that the fences at Hailsham aren't electrified" (78), is also quick to euphemistically acknowledge the presence of death in the form of "You get terrible accidents sometimes" (78)—a confession which leaves the young Kathy too terrified to ask any further questions. Is it any wonder then that eventually, the various tokens of the word "guardian" as utilized by Ishiguro take on an ironic, even oxymoron-like twist as when for example, Kathy confesses of the guardians:

Miss Emily, our head guardian, was older than the others. [...] We were all pretty scared of her and didn't think of her the way we did the other guardians. But we considered her to be fair and respected her decisions; and even in the Juniors, we probably recognized that it was her presence, intimidating though it was, that made us all feel so safe at Hailsham. (39)

Perhaps this is what Jennings (2010) means when he refers to the Guardian-fortified, “closed and narrowly bounded space of Hailsham” (18) to be “ubiquitously entrapping” (16).

Alluding to the power of words, Britzman (2006) offers the following linguistic analysis of the eponym Hailsham: “Kathy H. and her peers have spent their childhood in a school called Hailsham. Its name means what it says: the children, with no parents, are greeted by a sham that they can’t quite figure but that manages to hail them” (313)—potent proof that it is in and through lexemes that Ishiguro builds the literary architecture of his intent. The ‘unnerving’ sense of trust that the ‘students’ of Hailsham have for their captor-guardians is soon apparent to readers—a world in which surveillance continues beyond the confines of the bounded and guarded school to ‘required’ signing-ins after outings, prohibitions against visiting ‘carers’ who are not supposed to have flats of their own, and even “wire mesh boundaries” around care centers.

Ruth in the final pages of the novel confesses to both Kathy and Tommy that getting the address of Madame “wasn’t easy” (233), and adds “It took me a long time, and I ran a few risks” (233). One wonders what the consequences of being found out are—what exactly the risks are. Soon, the word *guardian*, and the world inhabited by the protagonists acquires a sense of something “dangerous, secretive, paranoid and persecutory” (Britzman, 2006: 309). In the interests of space, we are unable to analyze the following neologistic use of words whose polysemous tokens acquire similar and multiple antonymic connotations in the text namely, “students”; “collections”; “Exchanges”; “madame” “veterans”; “courses” ; “trainings”; “possibles”; “deferrals”, and of course, “completing” to name a few from a list of neologisms to which we will turn now— what Kemp (2005) has called “innocuous words which take on sinister overtones” (1). Ishiguro’s careful use of lexical semantics has its intended powerful literary effect. Griffin (2009) eloquently describes this linguistically induced literary effect in the following terms: “And just as the clones keep ‘an eye out for “possibles”: [...] so the reader, stung into the alienation effect provoked by the uncommon use of common words, keeps an eye out for the differences and sameness that are at the heart of this novel” (652).

Neologisms: Altering the DNA of Words: Critics have argued that Ishiguro's novel is different from other science fiction novels in its absence of overt neologism. Griffin (2009) even goes so far as to argue:

Finally, *Never Let Me Go* does not, as is common in science fiction, make use of an invented, specialist vocabulary that references its own scientificity through words that connote expert knowledge and technicality, that establish significant changes in environment, scientific and or technological practice through neologisms designed to signify these changes. Ishiguro does *not* [emphasis added] take that particular verbal path. (649-650)

This paper contends that contrary to Griffin's (2009) claim, Ishiguro does indeed take the path of linguistic neologism in arriving at his destiny of intended meaning. Rather than invent new words however, Ishiguro utilizes known words neologically so that rather than bear their traditional denotative signification, his 'known' lexemes function as linguistic chameleons—signifying a multiplicity of semantic hues in the contextual contexts in which they are sighted by readers.

Stylistics expert Hebron (2004), acknowledges the role of neologisms in literary construction claiming that: "Writers have made artistic use of both newborn and 'dead' words to achieve effects which the current standard vocabulary would not be able to produce" (126). We now examine a particular use of such coinage on the part of Ishiguro—in particular his adept cloning of what Hebron (2004) has classified as "Type 2 Neologisms" (128). We first examine Ishiguro's use of a key neologism: "carer"—a noun derived from the verb "care" whose dictionary meaning is stretched to include a novel neologistic sense.

CARERS AND CARING: The novel opens with the use of this neologism. "My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been a carer now for eleven years" (3) we are told by the main protagonist. We are apprised that the protagonist Kathy will be a carer for 12 years, and then move on in her trajectory as a clone to becoming an organ donor. We are reminded of this fact when Kathy tells of a recollection—a long-gone conversation with a guardian who tells them: "that she'd explained how before donations we'd all spend some time first as carers..." (82). We are then told by Kathy

what the minimum and maximum terms for such an occupation are: “There are some really good carers who’ve been told to stop after just two or three years. And I can think of one carer at least who went on for all of fourteen years despite being a complete waste of space” (3).

What exactly do carers do is a question readers immediately wonder about. There are several hints at a job description, one of which appears a little too early in the novel. This description is soon forgotten by readers, and alludes to the intense and excruciating psychological work involved in the job. Kathy tells readers: “I’ve developed a kind of instinct around donors. I know when to hang around and comfort them, when to leave them to themselves; when to listen to everything they have to say, and when just to shrug and tell them to snap out of it” (3). Perhaps this is why carers are expected to always be beside donors. Kathy is quick to fault another carer for not doing this when she comments “I felt grateful to him and wished I was his carer. I looked about, but whoever *was* his carer wasn’t even around. The orderlies were impatient to get to him to his room, so I didn’t talk with him long” (102).

One gets the impression that the job of a carer is relentless—a drain both on a physical and emotional level. Kathy even confesses to this when she says: “I won’t be a carer any more come the end of the year, and though I’ve got a lot out of it, I have to admit I’ll welcome the chance to rest—to stop and think and remember” (37). She chronicles in details the “worry” (207) that the job brings; the uneasy “solitude” (207) that it requires; and ultimately, the exhaustion it breeds. Kathy details the emotional toll involved in the job. In a chilling analogy, she likens the work to the pain experienced by dying donors: “...she was willing her eyes to see right inside herself so she could patrol and marshal all the better the separate areas of pain in her body—the way, maybe, an anxious carer might rush between three or four ailing donors in different parts of the country” (236) she tells readers. Like its morphological cousin, “guardian” already examined earlier, the word “carer” in all its contextual occurrences acquires the same chameleon-like hues of intended irony. Readers soon begin to wonder how one can really “care” if they are so overstretched (pun intended). Kathy explains the psychological stress involved on a daily basis, and the toll it takes on carers:

He was brought in after a donation. I wasn’t in the best of moods because my own donor had just completed the night before. No one was blaming me for that—it had been a particularly untidy operation— but I wasn’t feeling great

all the same. I'd been up most of the night, sorting all the arrangements, and I was in the front reception getting ready to leave when I saw Harry coming in. (101)

Kathy's use of the term 'carer' soon reveals its neologistic sense to readers. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines carer as: "A person whose occupation is the care of the sick, aged, disabled, etc.; One who looks after a disabled or elderly relative at home, especially one who is unable to work." After all, unlike the dictionary definition of the word, the carers in *Never Let Me Go*, are not caring for sick people, but rather for young, healthy, people forced to give up their organs—strong people intentionally disabled in their service as spare parts for others—a meaning not covered in the OED dictionary definition of the word. Here is an example of a neologism in the strictest linguistic sense. After all, a neologism is: "A word which is a new formation made from other words already in existence" (Hebron, 2004: 126), and used "deliberately" (Hebron, 2004: 128).

One gets the impression that it is the carer's job as well as responsibility to keep donors alive for as long as possible. Not because it is ethical, or because carers really care, but rather, because this is how the state gets a higher yield—a better return on its investments—more organ harvests. Consequently, there seems to be no "caring" in the strict denotative sense of Ishiguro's use of the word. Why else is one culpable for blame; one wonders? This same allusion to blame and guilt is repeated later in the narrative when Kathy confesses that on occasions when some of her donors "complete" unexpectedly, assurances like the official letter don't help. Kathy is quick to tell readers this: "neither does that letter saying how they're sure you did all you could and to keep up the good work" (207), which in Kathy's opinion only makes you even more "demoralized" (207). Kathy rationalizes these feelings as an inability to be bold. According to her, "they [carers] can't make themselves speak up on behalf of their donor. No wonder they end up feeling frustrated and blaming themselves when things go wrong" (208)—an ironic use of the term 'carer' to index care for the self rather than another. Is it any wonder then that we begin to understand the following: "A lot of them, you can tell, are just going through the motions, waiting for the day they're told they can stop and become donors" (208). Even Tommy confesses to Ruth and Kathy: "I wasn't much good as a carer [...]. I'm a pretty good donor, but I

was a lousy carer” (227). What makes a lousy ‘carer’ one wonders? If we use Tommy’s characterization as evidence, could a ‘lousy’ carer actually be one who cares?

Hebron (2004) argues that “neologistic language is closely connected with taste” (131). Notice the polysemic shift in meaning that Ishiguro intimates when the word moves morphologically from a noun, “carer” to the verb—an act of: *caring*. It is no coincidence that Kathy uses the word in its strict denotative sense in the following sentence: “...When I was caring for Tommy, and brought up our Norfolk trip, he told me He’d felt exactly the same” (171)—a meaning which incorporates the denotative sense of “one who cares” (OED). It is also no coincidence that when the pain of impending death looms large on the mind of Tommy he is careful to use the nominal form “carer” to urge Kathy to discontinue ‘caring’ for him. He breaks the news gently saying: “Kath, I don’t want you to take this the wrong way. But I’ve been thinking it over a lot. Kath, I think I ought to get a different carer” (280). The decision is swift. He is assigned to someone else. Kathy tells dumbfounded readers: “I remember the few weeks that came after that—the last few weeks before the new carer took over—as being surprisingly tranquil” (283). In the words of Robbins (2007) “If the word “carer” seems a bit mysterious, it’s because the congenial everyday verb has been absorbed into an official-sounding occupational category. The mild chill it exudes—milder still in the UK, where the term is routine—is what the novel is most obviously about” (291).

It is encounters such as this with the word ‘carer’ which like the word ‘guardian’ examined earlier, move these synthetically derived polysemes on the part of Ishiguro from the semantic realm of synonymy to antonymy—bearing semblance to what Justice (2004) labels “*scalar or gradable antonyms*”—words representing the opposite ends of a scale with the existence of many possibilities in between” (279). The eventual output of such an astute use of lexemes is an intended irony where “we interpret a word as meaning the opposite of its usual meaning” (Hebron 2004: 151). Eventually in *Never Let Me Go*, guardians are no longer safe-keepers, but guards, carers are no longer tenderers, but accomplices to death, and as we shall soon see, donations are no longer voluntary, but coerced. So, for skeptics wondering if linguistics still has anything to offer literary analysis, the following should serve as final proof.

DONATIONS: Perhaps the most obvious use of lexical copies altered from their original semantic sense comes in Ishiguro's use of the nominal: 'donation' used in the novel in its monetary sense rather than in its organic sense. The *OED* defines donation as: "The action or faculty of giving or presenting; presentation, bestowal or grant" with a sub-meaning of "the action or right of bestowing or conferring a benefice; the gift". Missing from this definition is any allusion to organ donation—the primary sense in which this cloned word is used by Ishiguro in its multiple iterations in the novel. Consider for instance Kathy's quizzical response to Tommy early in the novel: "Why did she bring up donations? What's that got to do with you being creative?" (30), and then later adds: "That can't be it. It's got something to do with what Miss Lucy said to you. About us, about how one day we'll start giving donations" (31). The idea of donating your organs with the same generous abundance as one uses for monetary gift-giving adds an intended grisliness, an ironic twist to the novelty of the lexical item as first encountered in the text. Like benefactor endowments, we get a similar monetary meaning attached to this word as carefully contextualized by Ishiguro at several points in the novel. For example, we are told of a rumor in which some "have their donations deferred if they're in love" (174). There is an 'internalization' of the 'business' sense of organ donations on the part of the clone protagonists who debate about the protocols used by 'the authorities' to ensure that "they're not just saying they're in love, just to defer their donations" (175). This same semantic sense is alluded to again when Kathy tells readers of the knowledge that the protagonists at the tender age of nine and ten have of their purpose in life: "We perhaps even knew that a long way down the line there were donations waiting for us. But we didn't really know what that meant" (69). A bold Miss Lucy tells a shocked group of children: "You'll be leaving Hailsham before long, and it's not so far off, the day you'll be preparing for your first donations" (81). Pretty soon we are told "If anything, the donations went back to being a subject to be avoided..." (88).

Thus, the idea of volition in the act of organ donating on the part of Ishiguro's protagonists continues even when they become adults when they are told of a program where "They sorted it out so you could have a few years together before

you began your donations” (153). Like the word “guardian,” however, the word “donations” soon begins to acquire dangerous hues—an antonymy of meaning. Readers discover the incessant nature of first, second, third and finally, fourth donations. Readers soon find out that the “notices” are not invitational, but mandated, that the donations are not volitional but required, indeed, that the “system of obligatory organ removal masquerading as voluntary “donation” (Robbins, 2007: 292) is indeed a world none of us wants to inhabit. Even more chilling is the contextual metonymy that Ishiguro creates in and through his lexical descriptors of this gruesome act. In the following description, we as readers ‘know’ what “centre” , “notice” “first” “second” and “third” *really* mean as casually recounted by Tommy:

“There was this guy, at my centre. Always worried he wouldn’t make it past his second. Used to say he could feel it in his bones. But it all turned out fine. He just came through his third now, and he’s completely all right.” He put up a hand to shield his eyes. “I wasn’t much good as a carer. Never learnt to drive even. I think that’s why the notice for my first came so early.” (227)

Eventually, for readers, the lexical phrasing of the stative use of the term ‘donation’—a semantic trick conjuring up the monetary sense of the word—of volitionally giving up something desirable—takes on a opposite poisonous semantic hue. It becomes antonymic. We begin to see the ‘organic’ sense in which the word is *really* being used—a meaning in which created beings are coerced via state-mandated ‘notices’ to give up organ after organ until they can give no more. The intended ironic, and antonymic meaning of the word in the novel is soon made apparent. Soon, the ‘volitional’ altruistic act of ‘donating’ organs is seen for the act that it really is—not a donation, not a gift, but rather, as pilfered robbery, indeed, as obscene embezzlement. This is how Ishiguro exploits linguistic potency in the service of literary power.

DONORS: Yet another ‘cloned’ word Ishiguro employs bearing only a slight semantic resemblance to its original is the noun: “Donor” used for the specific purposes of classification. Like other Ishiguro linguistic chameleons, the word is used not with its

traditional denotative meaning, but rather, takes on the connotation of taxonomy—as synecdoche for “class of”. The *OED* defines donor as: “A person, alive or dead, from whom an organ or tissue is removed for surgical transplantation.” While the *OED* lists the related meaning of “donor-card” as “a card authorizing the use of specified organs in the event of the card holder’s death” this semantic sense of “limited” or ‘rarity’ in the number of available donors is missing in Ishiguro’s use of the word. We are told for example that there is something such as a “good donor” Consider for example, the following explanation of the role of procreation in the lives of the clones: “Hannah had this theory that it was their duty to make us have sex because otherwise we wouldn’t be good donors later on. According to her, things like your kidneys and pancreas didn’t work properly unless you kept having sex” (96), while Tommy is most keen on assuring a “Guardian” that he will indeed be a healthy donor when he says “But I’ll be all right, Miss. I’m really fit, I know how to look after myself. When it’s time for donations, I’ll be able to do it really well” (108).

When the word, “donor’ is used in plural form (which is often), it acquires a strict generic meaning. One gets the impression that there are plenty of donors in the caseload of a carer—that in fact, donors are not a rarity but occur in plenitude—that indeed, there are masses of them. Kathy alludes to this when she says: “And she was always asking us questions...much like my donors do now...” (141). The use of this plural nominal mainly for the purposes of clinical classification occurs at several points in the novel. We are told of bathrooms that “are generally too far from the donors’ rooms” (218); a congregation spot on “what the donors now call “the Square”; where “donors come out of their rooms for a bit of air and a chat” (219). When it is raining, Kathy tells of how the “donors prefer to gather under the overhanging flat roof of the recreation hall” (219). Like a class of nameless, faceless beings, Kathy is careful in her detailing of their group anonymity—how for example when she goes to visit Tommy after not seeing him for several years: “The donors under the roof were also watching” (220). We soon remember that all the ‘centers’ spread across the country house thousands of such donors.

Kathy, like all the clones in the narrative, uses “spatial deictics” strategically (O’Grady et al. 2010: 233) and views donors in distal rather than in proximal terms. For example, she says: “And sooner or later a donor doesn’t make it, even though, say it’s

only the second donation and no one anticipated complications. When a donor completes like that, out of blue, it doesn't make much difference what the nurses say to you afterwards" (207). Later she is publicly snubbed by Tommy, and describes the incident with distaste:

It was an overcast afternoon, and there was no one about except for a group of donors clustered under the overhanging roof of the recreation building. I saw Tommy was with them—he was standing with a shoulder against a post—and was listening to a donor [...] I'd felt an unexpected little tug; because there was something about the way these donors had arranged themselves in a rough semi-circle, something about their poses... (277)

In Ishiguro's use of the term, once again, the semantic complexion of "donor" quickly changes from the color of synonymy to the discoloration of antonymy. Unlike our current world where donors are few and far between, in the world of *Never Let Me Go*, there appear to be plentiful, in excess—spread in 'centers' across the nation—another word we briefly examine below.

CENTERS AND RECOVERY ROOMS: Ishiguro successfully invents the neologism, 'center' for the novel phenomena of industrialized cloning. Again, unlike a real recovery room in a hospital ward from illness over which one has no control, we are given several detailed descriptions in *Never Let Me Go*, of the industry of cloning at work—one which admits donor clones on a massive scale into 'centers'—constructed and converted— of both high and dilapidated quality—geographically spread across the country. Kathy gives meticulous details about Ruth's quarters:

The recovery rooms are small, but they're well designed and comfortable. Everything—the walls, the floor—has been done in gleaming white tiles, which the center keeps so clean when you first go in it's almost like entering a hall of mirrors. (17)

Contrast for example the state of dilapidation of Tommy's 'converted' center, ironically, yet intentionally labeled by Ishiguro via another clever eponym—Kingsfield— in which we find the following *real* field:

The Kingsfield doesn't have much in the way of grounds. The Square's the obvious congregating point and the few bits behind the buildings look more like wasteland. The largest chunk which the donors call "the field", is a rectangle of overgrown weeds and thistles held in by wire-mesh fences. There's always been talk of turning it into a proper lawn for the donors, they haven't done it yet, even now. It might not be so peaceful even if they did get round to it, because of the big road nearby. (280).

For readers, this word like countless others in the novel is used ironically and, soon takes on the semantic overtones of a Human Transplant Depot.

Hypernymy and Hyponymy in the Service of Literary Meaning: A final argument to assert the power of words in constructing literary effect in *Never Let Me Go* comes in the manner in which all of Ishiguro's neologisms—his linguistic chameleons—acquire shades of meaning in the chronoscope of the novel. Readers soon comprehend the intricate links between the following terms—a taxonomy of semantic meaning which is most vividly rendered in the form of a lexical tree diagram in which we are able to situate all the relationships of entailment. Most telling is Ishiguro's careful delineation of the various hyponyms encompassed in his use of the *hypernymy* of clone-types in his text (O'Grady, et al. 2010: 205). Eventually, in the novel, the linguistic and literary relationships between Ishiguro's concocted terminologies unlike typical hyponymy are rendered in *both* hierarchical and bi-directional terms (Justice, 2004: 279). In *Never Let Me Go*, readers soon figure out all of Ishiguro's word relationships: that being a clone entails being a student; and being a student entails being a carer; and being a carer entails being a donor—on the one hand; just as being

a donor implies having been a carer, and having been a carer, implies having been a student, and eventually a clone—on the other hand. Thus, all clones are donors, and all donors are clones; just as all students are clones, and all clones are students etc. Stated differently, being a donor implies having been both a carer and a student. What is additionally innovative is Ishiguro’s use of the strategy of lexical hyponymy used as a hierarchy of implied chronology—i.e., one cannot become a donor without first being a student and then becoming a carer. In other words, your status as a student precedes your status as either a carer or a donor. This use of hyponymy is similar to the class of “dog” relative to “puppy”—where all dogs have to be puppies before they turn into spaniels, poodles, Chihuahuas and so on. So, contrary to critics who claim that there is no neologism at work in *Never Let Me Go*, at the heart of Ishiguro’s literary meaning is primarily and primordially a careful linguistic exploitation of lexical meaning in the service of literary creation.

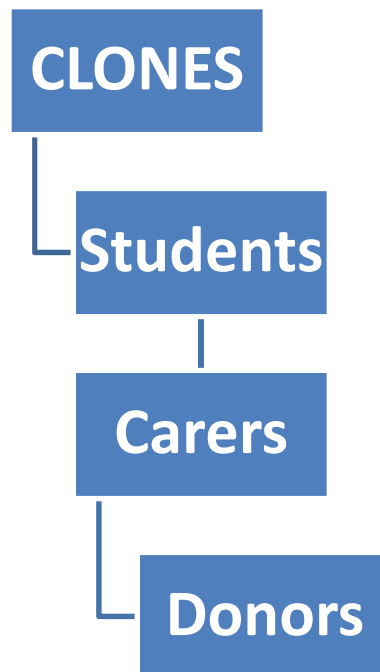


Figure 2: Ishiguro’s Hierarchy of Hypernymy and Hyponymy

Conclusion: The Role of Lexical Semantics in Literary Analysis

The stylistic discord between polysemy and neologism like Ishiguro's other lexical strategies of cloned eponymy and hyponymy is linguistically and aesthetically significant. One can make the case that Ishiguro's measured use of synthetic synonymy in the service of acquired antonymy functions for a larger semiotic purpose: both to buttress *and to* cantilever his final indictment regarding the State and Bio-power's potency for 'human' destruction. *Never Let Me Go's* careful pastiche of lexical cloning to render the gestalt of 'wholeness' re-affirms Ishiguro's dialectic—his transparently opaque thesis— regarding the inseparability of parts from the whole. Like the clones whose organ parts have to be viewed as wholes, the lexical parts of *Never Let Me Go* make sense only as a whole. Soon, we see the connection between Ishiguro's meticulous use of lexical discoloration to render literary discord. We begin to see the genius of exploiting synthetic synonymy in the service of antonymy—literary irony. Indeed, we see Ishiguro's brilliant use of linguistics in the service of literature. The analysis above points to the central role of lexical analysis in literary construction and comprehension.

To really appreciate the true depth or 'dearth' of stylistic and literary complexity embedded in the seemingly simple and 'superficial' discourse of Ishiguro's novel, *Never Let Me Go*, one has to engage in a systematic, sequenced linguistic, rather than literary 'harvesting' of his cloned words, which like the vital organs ensconced in his protagonists' bodies need a careful, methodical excision if one is to truly appreciate their value, their mysterious wonder—indeed their exquisitely crafted aesthetically unique wholeness. Even literary critics such as Jennings (2010), hint at the need to search in Ishiguro's diction for the truth of his intended meaning:

Like Orwell he knows that when meanings disappear from our languages of self-understanding and social construction, then our capacity to think, to act, and even to feel in ways linked to those meanings disappears as well. Ishiguro gives us a world that his moral gaze doesn't not so much condemn as reveal to be deeply wounded and impaired. (19)

It is only then that we can understand why for example Ishiguro's criticism of biotechnology while subtle and "understated" (Jennings, 2001: 18) is also an "Orwellian-like indictment of "the terrible cost of dehumanization and oppression" (Jennings, 2010: 19)—a careful conflation of multifarious linguistic chameleons to render literary effects which are intentionally "pointed and disturbing" (Jennings, 2010: 18).

For globally-expansive, 21st century transnational authors like Kazuo Ishiguro, existing lexemes—words— can indeed, and *should* indeed be semantically stretched to bear the burden of new meaning if they are to make us think of the manner in which "language can normalize atrocities" (McDonald, 2007: 78). Here is where we see the exciting intersection of interdisciplinary applications of Linguistics. Ishiguro prods us to examine more specifically, how existing lexemes of reproductive and genetic engineering such as "Designer Babies"(Griffin, 2009: 646); "Saviour Siblings" (Griffin, 2009: 646); "In-Vitro" and "Surrogate Mothers" for instance, have already created a dissonance from the dysphemia of "fertility tourism" and "transplant tourism" (Walsh, 2005; Revill 2005)—fast emerging, dubiously ethical, lucrative bio-industries in an economically asymmetrical, but globally connected world.

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