

## CONSIDER HOW BOTH TEXTS EXAMINE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN.

In exploring pockets of human courage and humility in otherwise widely oppressive and inhumane dystopias, Anna Funder's Stasiland and Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go examine the primary constituents of what it means to be human. Rejecting material corporeal definition of a human, both Funder and Ishiguro implore readers to recognise the importance of inner conscience and self-government, as well as outward interactions others in defining humanity. Alternatively, both texts demonstrate how the removing another person's individual agency and treatment of others as subhuman is in itself, inhumane.

Both Funder and Ishiguro demonstrate the importance of human connection as a fundamental part of humanity, and subsequently how the eradication these connections remove an essential part of what constitutes a human. The Guardians of Hailsham in Never Let Me Go offer student clones an unsettling simulation of normalcy in encouraging friendships. However, the seemingly idyllic institution is isolated from mainstream society, resulting in a deprivation of any real connection with their human counterparts. This denial of connection with the outside world subsequently prompts the Kathy to view herself as 'different... from the normal people outside'. Despite its philanthropic intentions, Hailsham's isolation of the clones, on behalf of mainstream society, perpetuates the relegation of clones to the status of subhuman. Here, Ishiguro reveals the inhumanity of denying human connection and thereby places weight on the importance of human connection in humanity. Similarly, in Stasiland, after Julia Behrend's dehumanising interrogation and treatment as 'an object of observation', she feels as if she has been 'sundered, suddenly and irrevocably, from life,' as a result of her inhibition to discuss her interrogation with anyone – 'not your parents, not your sisters, not your closest friends' – and bear its weight on her own. Julia's feelings of being 'separate from everybody' coincide with Kathy's self-perception of being 'different' from those outside, in that these sentiments indicate their self-appointed status as less than human and that they stem from the lack of human connection.

The retainment of conscience in the face of overwhelmingly oppressive forces is what Funder and Ishiguro believes makes a human. This quality is exemplified by Frau Paul's refusal to betray Michael Heinze by suppressing her own 'growing hope' in the prospect of reuniting with her son. Frau Paul's 'courageous' decision to 'do the right thing by her conscience' at the hands of torture and brutality lends to her 'great humanity'. Moreover, Funder highlights the disparity between the 'bravery' of Frau Paul's unwavering exercise of conscience, and individuals such as Von Schnitzler, who she illustrates as 'utterly untroubled by conscience'. Von Schnitzler justifies the murder of those attempting to free the GDR by asserting 'humane it is, to make peace for all men on Earth...It is done by fighting.' He utilises socialist catechism, rather than moral consciences, as a device to reject the truth of the inhumanity in the way he enacts this doctrine. Von Schnitzler's questionable conscience is not dissimilar to the heads of Hailsham in Never Let Me Go. Miss Emily's 'revulsion' against the clones, as well as Madame's fear of them that mimics the 'same way someone might be afraid of spiders', denotes their view of the clones as 'creatures' less than human. For Von Schnitzler, Miss Emily and Madame, the philosophy supporting their motivations is underpinned by an investment towards humanity. However, cracks in their conscience expose the disjunctions between the purported principles of their doctrine and their true sense of humanity. The contrasts between the Frau Paul's unwavering conscience against those who display morally ambiguous views, if not an utter disregard for moral consideration, demonstrate the significance of conscience in defining humanity.

Furthermore, both texts suggest that individual agency and self-government are intrinsic human attributes. The Guardian's encouragement to the clones towards creative pursuits in order to 'display [their] souls' endorses the view that self-expression constitutes a human. The correlation between creativity and the soul is acknowledged by the Stasi, however, by contrast they seek to destroy it rather than nurture it. Handmade pamphlets Herr Koch distributes to celebrate his friend's wedding result in his imprisonment for 'Preparation and Reproduction of Pornographic Material.' The Stasi's misconstrued representation of Herr Koch's innocent caricatures indicates their desire to remove anything polysemic in nature reinforcing the significance of individuality in what it means to be human. The Guardians in Never Let Me Go have a dual role as protector and perpetrator. They govern the growth and wellbeing of the student clones. However, in doing so, they effectively remove the clones' sense of autonomy. The Guardians 'decided how many [tokens] your particular masterpiece merited'. Noting aforementioned proposal of art as symbolic of 'your inner selves', the Guardian's dictatorship over the measure of the clones' soul aligns with how the Stasi 'examined the inner worth' of their victims to dismantle their capacity self-government in an attempt to dehumanise them. Ultimately, both Funder and Ishiguro warn of the dangers of what Funder likens to enacting 'God's hand' in removing the autonomy of others and how this power that enables dictatorship over other humans ironically threatens one's own humanity.

Through the construction of Stasiland and Never Let Me Go, Anna Funder and Kazuo Ishiguro explore the interplay of humanity and inhumanity within these dystopian societies to probe what it means to be human.

While Funder, through investigative journalism, delineates a clear distinction between humanity and inhumanity by attributing these qualities to victims and perpetrators respectively, Ishiguro's ambivalence attests to the notion that this binary division is an incomplete representation of the human condition. Although their allocation of human and inhuman qualities to victims and perpetrators differs, Funder and Ishiguro ultimately affirm the central constituents of a human involve individuality, conscience, and human connection.