

Kang Byoung Yoong

BIOPOLITICAL DIASPORIC HUMAN FIGURES: DYSTOPIAN NARRATIVES IN THE WORKS OF KAZUO ISHIGURO AND CHANG-RAE LEE

ABSTRACT

*The article examines how dystopian narratives shaped by biopolitics produce specific human figures and modes of existence rather than merely depicting passive victims of repression. Focusing on *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro and *On Such a Full Sea* by Chang rae Lee, the way biopolitical power operates through the normalisation and management of life instead of overt violence or exclusion is analysed. Drawing on Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, attention is then shifted from power itself to the forming of sensibilities, relational practices, and everyday life under biopolitical conditions. Following comparative analysis, the concept of the biopolitical diasporic human figure is proposed; namely, a form of life that persists without stable protection while remaining fully embedded in regimes of management and normalised vulnerability.*

KEYWORDS: biopolitics, dystopian literature, diaspora, human figures, contemporary fiction

Biopolitične diasporične človeške figure: distopične naracije v delih Kazua Ishigura in Changa-raeja Leeja

IZVLEČEK

*Članek obravnava, kako distopične naracije, oblikovane z biopolitiko, ne prikazujejo zgolj pasivnih žrtev represije, temveč proizvajajo specifične človeške figure in načine bivanja. S poudarkom na romanih *Ne zapusti me* nikdar Kazua Ishigura in *On Such a Full Sea* Changa-raeja Leeja analizira,*

kako biopolitična oblast deluje prek normalizacije in upravljanja življenja, ne pa prek odkritega nasilja ali izključevanja. Ob opiranju na Michela Foucaulta in Giorgio Agambena študija premakne pozornost z oblasti same na oblikovanje senzibilnosti, relacijskih praks in vsakdanjega življenja v biopolitičnih pogojih. S primerjalno analizo predlaga koncept biopolitične diasporične človeške figure, oblike življenja, ki vztraja brez stabilne zaščite, hkrati pa ostaja povsem vpeta v režime upravljanja in normalizirane ranljivosti.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: biopolitika, distopična književnost, diaspora, človeške figure, sodobna proza

1 Introduction¹

1.1 Research Objectives

The present study examines the ways in which biopolitics in dystopian narratives do not just envision humans as passive objects of oppression, but actively produces specific human figures and modes of life. In dystopian fiction since the 2000s, the management and distribution of human life by the state, institutional systems, and technological power have functioned as central narrative forces. Accordingly, figures such as clones, migrant labourers, and inhabitants of isolated/segregated communities have repeatedly appeared as both objects of biopolitical governance and as its structural outcomes.

Nevertheless, existing scholarship has largely focused on conceptualising biopolitics as an apparatus of repression or a mechanism of dehumanisation. While these studies provide detailed accounts of how biopolitical power disciplines, regulates and excludes human beings, analysis of the human figures formed in such conditions remains relatively limited. Major studies in this field analyse biopolitics primarily in terms of control, exclusion, and state power, yet less sustained attention is evident concerning how humans develop forms of perception, relational practices and lived sensibilities within biopolitically structured environments. In this regard, the studies by Cheon (2022), Park (2018) and Rhie (2018) are key points of reference in the literature.

More specifically, existing discussions tend to only partly address how transformations in mobility and settlement reshape everyday experiences of life, and how biopolitical conditions reorganise the ways in which individuals understand themselves and relate to others. The human figure thus often remains analytically

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subordinate to the examination of power itself instead of being treated as a central object of inquiry.

Against this backdrop, this article is guided by the question of which kinds of human figures are produced by biopolitics in dystopian narratives. The term “human figure” is employed here not as a fixed typology, nor within a binary opposition between victim and resistant subject, but as a comprehensive concept encompassing modes of self-awareness, affective orientations, and relational forms shaped within biopolitical conditions. From this perspective, biopolitics is understood not simply as an external force that controls or marginalises human beings, and is viewed as an ontological condition which delineates the possibilities and limits of human life itself.

By adopting this approach, instead of repositioning dystopian narratives not just as genres that expose the consequences or injustices of biopolitical regimes, in this article they are regarded as literary sites in which new human figures are imagined, negotiated and articulated from within biopolitical life.

1.2 Corpus and Scope of the Study

The primary texts analysed below are *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro and *On Such a Full Sea* by Chang rae Lee. Both novels are dystopian narratives written in English and offer clear representations of how biopolitics organises human life. Simultaneously, they employ distinct narrative strategies and construct different human figures, demonstrating that biopolitics does not operate in a singular or uniform manner.

Ishiguro’s fiction is characterised by restrained first-person narration and retrospective reflection via which institutional orders are internalised as ordinary conditions of life. The described narrative stance is particularly effective in tracing how individuals come to recognise and inhabit governing structures without any overt confrontation. *Never Let Me Go* recounts the lives of human clones raised for organ donation within an educational institution that initially appears protective. As the narrative unfolds, predetermined life trajectories are gradually revealed and accepted as natural phases of existence. The novel hence places in the foreground the forming of individual sensibilities shaped within a system of life management rather than moments of explicit resistance.

Lee’s fiction, by contrast, stresses collective perspectives, communal norms and structural inequality. *On Such a Full Sea* depicts a stratified society organised around labour and spatial division, narrated through a collective “we” that frames perception and judgement. Although the central figure, Fan, moves beyond the boundaries of her community, this movement does not amount to liberation. Instead, her life continues to be shaped by overlapping conditions

of insufficient protection and ongoing management, both within and beyond communal borders.

The rationale for comparing these two works arises from the different levels on which they articulate biopolitical governance. While *Never Let Me Go* focuses on the internalisation of biopolitical norms on the level of individual sensibility, *On Such a Full Sea* reveals the differential management of life through collective narration and spatial organisation. Together, they provide a comparative framework for analysing biopolitics not as a power that simply excludes/eliminates, but as a condition which normalises unprotected life as a viable and enduring mode of existence.

1.3 Methodology

Rather than summarising or restating existing discussions, in the article they are reorganised around a problem-oriented framework in order to be able to answer the central question of how biopolitics constructs specific human figures. To that end, concepts and analyses proposed in the literature are examined individually and employed selectively in line with the study's analytical objectives.

The theories of biopolitics developed by Michel Foucault (1978, 2003) and Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2005) are not treated as interpretive frameworks that precede or predetermine the reading of the literary texts. Those authors' theories are instead utilised in a limited and instrumental manner as conceptual tools for clarifying and articulating phenomena that emerge in close textual analysis.

In this sense, theory functions not as an explanatory grid imposed upon the texts; rather, it acts more as a secondary device that refines and systematises insights derived from the narratives themselves. This methodological stance allows the analysis to remain grounded in the literary texture of the works, while avoiding reducing the texts to illustrative examples of pre-established theoretical models.

Further, all the concepts and terms newly introduced in this article are explicitly identified as notions proposed in the present study so as to prevent confusion with the terminology used in earlier research. The article thereby seeks not only push the current lines of argument, but to develop an independent analytical framework based on its own problem-setting and interpretive perspective.

2 Theoretical Background: Biopolitics and Dystopia

2.1 Formation of the Concept of Biopolitics

The concept of biopolitics was formulated to explain a historical transformation in the way power governs human life in modernity. Michel Foucault argues that whereas pre-modern sovereign power was defined by the right to take

life or let live, modern power increasingly operates through the preservation, management and optimisation of life itself (Foucault 1976). Power thus ceases to function primarily via exceptional violence or juridical prohibition and instead intervenes in life as a continuous process.

Biopolitics governs by organising the conditions in which life is sustained. Rather than directly depriving individuals of life, it structures life courses and available choices in advance. Domains like birth, health, labour, education and ageing become objects of statistical management and normative evaluation through which life is treated simultaneously as something to be protected and as a calculable resource.

Within this framework, individuals are not merely coerced from the outside. They are formed as subjects who internalise norms of normality and desirability, aligning their conduct with institutional objectives. The effectiveness of biopolitics therefore lies less in overt coercion than in the production of compliant modes of self-understanding.

The described process is closely linked to disciplinary power, which operates by shaping bodies and behaviours via repetition, surveillance and training (Foucault 1977). Using such mechanisms, biopolitics conditions how individuals perceive and normalise particular forms of life. Biopolitics is accordingly understood here not as an external apparatus of repression and rather as a political condition that produces specific human figures and sensibilities of life. In this perspective, dystopian narratives function as literary spaces in which the formative effects of biopolitics on human life become narratively legible.

2.2 The Expansion and Limits of Biopolitics

Extending Foucault's insights, Giorgio Agamben forcefully places the violent and exclusionary dimensions of biopolitics in the spotlight. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben (1998) identifies the core of modern politics in the distinction between protected life and abandoned life, arguing that biopolitics produces a bare life through inclusion by exclusion within the juridical order, most visibly in the state of exception.

This framework has been widely applied to dystopian narratives in which figures such as clones produced for organ donation or populations confined by infection control and social stratification are often interpreted as lives situated outside legal protection and rendered expendable. Seen in this manner, clones in *Never Let Me Go* and the residents of B Mor in *On Such a Full Sea* have been read as paradigmatic forms of bare life governed by state power (Kim 2004).

However, such interpretations risk fixing human figures in dystopian narratives within a position of passive victimhood. In many dystopian texts, characters are

not excluded through direct force alone and instead come to understand their lives via the language of protection, management and necessity, in turn reproducing the governing order in everyday practice. Biopolitical power thus operates not by rendering life entirely powerless, but by presenting certain forms of life as the only viable/imaginable options.

The above leads the study to employ Agamben's concepts as an auxiliary framework rather than as its primary analytical axis. The focus lies less on the state of exception itself than on how human beings live amid such conditions and normalise their own lives within them. Here, Agamben's theory serves to delineate the outer limits of biopolitical power against which the everyday forming of human figures can be more precisely examined.

2.3 Reading Biopolitics in Dystopian Literature

Previous scholars have shown that biopolitics in dystopian narratives often operates not through overt violence but through forms of voluntary consent. As Rhie (2018: 235) states, promises of health, safety and survival function as mediating mechanisms via which individuals come to comply with governing orders.

From this perspective, dystopian narratives do not merely denounce biopolitical power and instead operate as narrative laboratories that render visible how sensibilities of life and modes of self-understanding are created in normalised biopolitical conditions. Characters, notably those situated in stratified communities, frequently recognise predetermined life trajectories without resisting them and accept restrictions on mobility and choice as basic conditions of existence. Such figures therefore appear not only as objects of governance but also as subjects who reproduce biopolitical order in everyday practice.

Building on this line of inquiry, the present study approaches biopolitics as a mechanism of dehumanisation yet also as a condition that shapes modes of relationality and perceptions of mobility and settlement. Application of this perspective provided the theoretical groundwork for the following chapters, which examine how *Never Let Me Go* and *On Such a Full Sea* articulate distinct human figures formed from within biopolitical regimes.

3 Human Figures of Biopolitical Management and Compliance: *Never Let Me Go*

This section analyses *Never Let Me Go* not from the aspect of how biopolitics eliminates/excludes human beings and instead from the standpoint of which kinds

of human figures it produces. Moving beyond interpretations that have generally defined the cloned characters as victims placed in a state of exception, in this section they are approached as beings whose sensibilities of life and modes of self-understanding are organised within a system of biopolitical management.

By so doing, the analysis shifts attention away from approaches that have tended to interpret the clones in *Never Let Me Go* in terms of ethical crisis, dehumanisation, or systemic regulation (Snaza 2015; Johansen 2016), and instead focuses on the everyday conditions through which life is regulated, normalised and made intelligible to those who inhabit it. Even though the clones in *Never Let Me Go* have often been interpreted as silenced subjects deprived of agency, here they are viewed as figures who come to recognise, accept and inhabit the life trajectories assigned to them, forming relationships, memories and expectations within those parameters.

Through this reading, in this section it is claimed that biopolitics in *Never Let Me Go* functions not primarily as a violent power which suppresses human beings, but as a condition that produces human figures premised on compliance. Biopolitical power operates by organising the terms in which life is perceived and lived, thereby shaping forms of subjectivity that do not necessarily resist the given order, but reproduce it via ordinary practices of living.

3.1 Clone Figures and the System of Life Management

In *Never Let Me Go*, Hailsham is an institution that was set up to raise clones for organ donation, yet it is narratively presented as a space of protection and education. Rhie (2018) interprets Hailsham as a hygienic space governed by disciplinary power and voluntary consent, whereas Park (2018) reads it as a panoptic order in which cloned lives are administered by state power. Despite effectively identifying mechanisms of regulation and control, these approaches do not fully account for the sensibilities of life the clones come to form within this environment. This study approaches Hailsham as a space in which life management is naturalised as an ordinary condition. Biopolitics within this framework operates through the prior organisation of life, influencing the conditions under which existence is perceived and lived. The clones are neither clearly informed of their designated purpose, nor required to demonstrate creativity or autonomy in any meaningful sense:

She was saying, but he just couldn't be very creative, then that was quite all right, he wasn't to worry about it. It was wrong for anyone, whether they were students or guardians, to punish him for it, or put pressure on him in any way. (Ishiguro 2005, 27–28)

This suggests the truth is not concealed inasmuch as it is displaced from the horizon of everyday relevance. Even though the future that will define the clones' existence remains present, it is unproblematised in the sense that it is neither explicitly questioned nor experienced as a problem triggering reflection or resistance. Ignorance is thereby produced through the structuring of attention rather than by way of prohibition.

The clones grow up experiencing socially recognisable elements of a normal life, including healthcare, peer relationships, play, and cultural activities. Such protection does not mark them as exceptional beings; rather, it situates them within socially sanctioned frameworks of normality. Protection in this context functions as a modality of management, and life is constituted to be at once an object of ethical concern and a resource to be organised. Art education serves as a key mediating mechanism in this system. Madame explains her collection of the children's artwork as follows: "Your art will reveal your inner selves! ... Because your art will display your souls!" (Ishiguro 2005, 248)

Here, art renders the clones' interiority visible while simultaneously subjecting it to evaluation and classification. Interior life does not become a basis for resistance and is instead an ethical justification for the continuation of life management itself.

It is via these mechanisms that *Never Let Me Go* depicts biopolitics not as an openly violent force, but as a regime that organises how life is lived, perceived and accepted. The clones' compliance emerges less from coercion than from a formative environment in which particular modes of existence are rendered normal and unquestionable.

3.2 The Internalisation of Compliance

Despite the clones in *Never Let Me Go* recognising their destinies are predetermined, they do not engage in organised resistance. Park (2018) explains this condition with the concept of *homo sacer*, interpreting the clones as powerless lives placed in a state of exception, whereas Yang (2020: 195–206) analyses them as figures experiencing identity confusion under conditions in which they are defined as non-human. Cho (2020, 138–140) likewise reads Kathy's narrative as a story of loss and mourning, interpreting the lives of the clones as denoted by a condition of fundamental lack. While these studies add significantly to elucidating the clones' vulnerability, they tend to explain the absence of resistance primarily as a consequence of resignation or oppression.

In contrast, this attitude is interpreted in this study as the result of compliance having already been constituted as a sensibility of life. For the clones, organ donation is not experienced as a sudden demand imposed from the outside, but as a life trajectory gradually accepted in the process of growing up. When

Ruth speaks of becoming a donor, she states: "I was pretty much ready when I became a donor. It felt right. After all, it's what we're supposed to be doing, isn't it?" (Ishiguro 2005: 223)

The above statement is closer to a language of self-understanding than of coercion. No protest or grievance is expressed; instead, it is an internalised account of what her life is meant to be.

The clones are unable to choose their futures at the same time as not being educated to regard this limitation as unjust. Biopolitics does not operate solely by depriving individuals of choices. It instead functions by in advance structuring which kinds of lives are imaginable and which forms of life are seen as normal. In this way, it renders resistance itself unintelligible as a problem. Compliance is therefore not the outcome of direct force, but is a mode of understanding life.

Such internalised compliance is closely linked to the everyday normalisation of biopolitics. In the novel, health management, the carer system, and the sequential stages of donation are all presented as natural phases in a life course. Kathy describes her life as a carer without characterising it as an especially unhappy or abnormal role. The clones tend to understand their lives as individual paths shaped by circumstance rather than political conditions. Biopolitics, in this sense, governs human beings via the normalisation of everyday life instead of through exceptional violence or visible repression. Accordingly, individuals come to live following already determined trajectories without a persistent sense of being controlled.

3.3 Narratives of Memory and Mourning

In *Never Let Me Go*, narratives of memory and mourning function neither as denunciations of biopolitics nor languages of resistance. Kathy's retrospective narration does not seek to expose institutional violence, but organises memories of relationships and emotions within an already determined life course. The novel opens with a restrained self-introduction: "My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty one years old, and I've been a carer now for over eleven years. (...) I'm not making any big claims for myself" (Ishiguro 2005: 3).

This opening establishes a narrative stance which accepts the conditions of life as a given framework rather than a problem to be challenged.

Throughout the novel, loss appears not as an exceptional event rather than a structural condition of existence. The deaths of Ruth and Tommy, the closure of Hailsham, and the anticipation of Kathy's own donations are narrated as foreseen processes more than sudden catastrophes. After Tommy's death, Kathy remarks: "The only indulgent thing I did, just once, (...) and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. (...) then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be" (Ishiguro 2005, 281–282).

Here, mourning does not interrupt everyday life and is instead absorbed into it. Rather than becoming a catalyst for resistance, loss is internalised as a normalised component of biopolitical existence.

Within this framework, memory functions not as proof of humanity or a counter discourse, but as a minimal practice by which meaning is conferred upon lives that are destined to disappear. Remembering and narrating preserve relationships and experiences without destabilising the system governing them. Memory and mourning thus articulate a mode of inhabiting life shaped by biopolitical governance more than opposition.

3.4 A Compliant Life

Building on the above analysis, this study proposes the novel concept of a “compliant life” as a notion. A compliant life refers to a human figure that is at once an object of biopolitical governance and a subject which internalises that order, coming to understand and accept its own life as possible and legitimate within the given conditions.

This concept stands apart from current understandings of the human figure centred on either homo sacer or victimhood. A compliant life is neither a completely powerless existence nor an active subject of resistance. Instead, it designates a form of life shaped in such a way that it does not problematise its own conditions of existence within what biopolitics labels ‘normal’. The clones in *Never Let Me Go* exemplify this condition: they are an extreme outcome of biopolitical governance, yet also constitute the most stable human figure required by that system.

This human figure also bears a structural affinity with diasporic life. Diasporic conditions are often accompanied by loss and liminality, albeit not all diasporic subjects understand themselves primarily as victims. In many cases, they adapt to new conditions of life and develop modes of living grounded in compliance rather than resistance. The concept of a compliant life proposed here does not seek to generalise diasporic experience. The proposed concept instead functions as an analytical tool for conceptualising forms of life that cannot be adequately captured by a binary opposition between victimhood and resistance.

In the following chapter, the concept acts as a point of reference in comparative analysis of *On Such a Full Sea*. By examining how biopolitics operates via collective narration and communal perspectives to produce a different human figure, the study elaborates on the variability of biopolitical life in distinct dystopian contexts.

4 Managed Communities and Diasporic Life: *On Such a Full Sea*

In this section, *On Such a Full Sea* is examined not as a dystopian narrative in which biopolitics eliminates human beings through extreme states of exception. Instead, it is viewed as a text which exposes how human life is managed, distributed and stabilised via stratified communities and collective perception. Rather than bringing spectacular violence or juridical exclusion to the fore, the novel depicts a social order in which biopolitics operates as an everyday system of organisation, allocation and differentiation.

In particular, this section focuses on the novel's distinctive narrative strategy, which privileges a collective narrator articulated with the pronoun "we" over individual interiority or confessional self-narration. (Lee 2017: 4-6). Using this collective voice, *On Such a Full Sea* presents a society where biopolitical governance is not experienced as an external imposition, but is reproduced by way of shared norms, communal memory, and spatial arrangements. Life is managed not only through institutional structures, but also through the ways in which the community observes, interprets and narrates itself.

By analysing this collective narrative framework, the section seeks to articulate a human figure that varies from the compliant life identified in *Never Let Me Go*. Whereas the latter is characterised by the internalisation of biopolitical norms on the level of individual sensibility, *On Such a Full Sea* gives rise to a form of managed diasporic life in which human existence is organised via communal regulation, spatial displacement, and differential access to protection and mobility. The described figure is not primarily defined by individual acceptance of a predetermined life course, but by collective adaptation to the conditions of management, precarity and uneven survival.

This move in analytical focus from individual subjectivity to collective narration and community based governance advances the comparative argument of the study. Biopolitics seen in this manner thus produces not a single, uniform human figure, but multiple configurations of life shaped by distinct narrative forms and social arrangements. The analysis below looks at how *On Such a Full Sea* constructs this collective biopolitical condition and the way it reconfigures diaspora, mobility and belonging within a managed dystopian order.

4.1 Stratified Community and the Management of Life

The society depicted in *On Such a Full Sea* manages human life not principally through explicit state violence, but with structural divisions of labour, residence and mobility. B-Mor is a community sustained by the fish-processing industry

where inhabitants are configured as bodies presumed to be suited to a specific rhythm of labour. As the collective narrator observes: "All around B-Mor it's much the same, which is happy enough. But maybe it's the laboring that gives you shape" (Lee 2014: 5).

Labour here functions not only as a means of survival, but as a normative criterion of belonging. To work is to qualify as a legitimate member of the community, while the capacity to labour becomes inseparable from the right to remain within the protected space of B-Mor: "B-Mor works because we work" (Lee 2014: 14–15).

The novel repeatedly infers that residents do not chiefly understand their lives in terms of exploitation. Labour discipline is instead accepted as the condition of stability and order, acting as a structuring condition of life that, like in *Never Let Me Go*, organises the terms according to which existence is understood and sustained. Such as perception is reinforced by the narrator's depiction of life beyond B-Mor: "For us B-Mors it's difficult to accept such a transformation, being as willingly cloistered as we are. (...) the native fuel of their society is risk" (Lee 2014: 140).

Life within B-Mor, even though strictly regulated, is thus perceived to be comparatively safer than existence outside its boundaries. In a world where survival is unevenly distributed, managed life is not seen as oppression, but as a rational and even desirable choice.

Within this structure, life is not protected as an equal value. Bodies that can no longer contribute to labour, or lives that deviate from communal discipline, are displaced beyond the community's limits. Biopolitics therefore operates less through spectacular exclusion than via the differentiation of life chances. Survival is conditionally extended as a reward for sustaining a form of life compatible with the management system.

In this sense, *On Such a Full Sea* portrays a biopolitical order governed by gradation rather than absolute exclusion. Life is continuously sorted and redistributed with respect to labour capacity and spatial belonging, providing a crucial contrast to the individualised compliance analysed in the previous section and shifting the focus toward collectively organised survival.

4.2 Mobility and Diasporic Conditions

In *On Such a Full Sea*, Fan's movement is not presented as an act of free escape or resistance. Although she leaves B-Mor, this movement signifies less the opening of new possibilities than a transition from a managed space to an unmanaged one. It is not the result of a clearly articulated choice, but a gradual departure produced within structural constraints. Mobility here functions as displacement generated from within the logic of the system itself rather than as an assertion of agency.

Critically, this movement does not destabilise communal norms. Fan's absence is reconstituted within B-Mor through stories and rumours that reinforce collective cohesion. Although she no longer belongs to "us", she is absorbed into "our story". The diaspora in this manner does not appear as a space of liberated identity beyond communal control and instead as an externality which stabilises the community from within.

From this perspective, the diasporic condition in *On Such a Full Sea* does not simply reside in physical mobility. The novel does not present any location – B-Mor, the Charter, or the Open Countries – as being a viable alternative to biopolitical order (Park 2023: 140). Even after her departure, Fan remains subject to the collective narration, while life beyond B-Mor is shaped by the absence of protection rather than the presence of freedom. Diaspora therefore emerges not as an alternative mode of belonging, but as a condition in which non-belonging is continuously reproduced. In this way, the novel complicates conventional associations between mobility and emancipation. Movement does not dissolve biopolitical governance and instead reconfigures its terms. Fan's trajectory reveals a form of life which does not fully belong fully to any space, yet remains persistently positioned within overlapping regimes of observation and differential care. The described condition contrasts with the individualised compliance analysed in *Never Let Me Go* and further demonstrates the plurality of human figures produced under biopolitical conditions.

4.3 Disease, the Body, and Biopolitical Classification

In *On Such a Full Sea*, disease does not appear as an exceptional disaster or sudden crisis. It functions more as a criterion of social classification by which lives are differentially evaluated and distributed. In spaces beyond B-Mor, infection and illness are pervasive, signalling that the lives of those who inhabit these zones have already fallen outside the sphere of protection. Describing people exposed to disease, the collective narrator remarks:

Fan did her part at first by helping Sewey, manage the waiting line of the sick and miserable. She watched how he gave out the numbered tickets and then took them back once they went in to be examined by Quig. (...) people jumping places in the line and then jumping again, and Fan made it simpler by doing away with the tickets altogether and instituting a separate bidders 'line alongside those taking places as they arrived. (Lee 2014, 80–81)

Here, the body articulates neither individual suffering nor subjective pain. It instead becomes a visible marker of social position, rendering life legible according

to biopolitical categories. Disease in turn operates less as a medical condition than as a signifier that locates individuals within a hierarchy of value and care. What is crucial in this representation is that illness is treated not as an object of cure, but as an index of management. The normality–abnormality distinction is not framed in moral terms rather than in terms of biopolitical efficiency. Healthy bodies are recognised as lives worth protecting, while bodies exposed to disease are perceived as already expendable. The boundary between protection and abandonment is therefore drawn not through explicit judgement, but bodily visibility. In this framework, human beings are no longer understood as singular subjects, but as aggregations of manageable bodies. Life is not upheld as an absolute value; it persists only insofar as it remains within the limits the system can sustain. Biopolitics hence governs not by openly denying the value of life, but by recalibrating the conditions in which life is deemed viable, protectable or disposable.

Through this emphasis on bodily classification, *On Such a Full Sea* reveals a mode of biopolitical governance in which the body itself becomes the primary site of political differentiation. Disease does not interrupt the social order; it stabilises it by providing a visible rationale for the unequal distribution of care, protection and survival. Such a configuration completes the novel's depiction of a managed community where life is continuously sorted and sustained only within administratively tolerable bounds.

4.4 Managed Diasporic Life

Following the above analysis, the concept of “managed diasporic life” is proposed to characterise the human figure articulated in *On Such a Full Sea*. Managed diasporic life refers to a form of existence situated outside the sphere of protection provided by a certain community or nation state, yet does not collapse into complete exclusion or an exceptional state. Such lives are mobile without being free, positioned beyond the boundary while remaining encompassed by regimes of management, surveillance, and narrative control.

In this study, the diasporic dimension of *On Such a Full Sea* does not derive from ethnic displacement in a conventional sense and instead from the condition of unstable belonging under biopolitical management. In this respect, Fan may be understood as a diasporic figure not because she moves between fixed homelands, but since her movement continually repositions her across shifting regimes of protection and control without granting stable settlement. This condition is further reinforced by the novel's collective narration via which her life is mediated by communal perception rather than articulated as an autonomous individual trajectory.

Such a form of life cannot be reduced to that of a victim or an agent of resistance. Instead, it approximates one of the most generalised human figures produced in a world structured by biopolitics. Managed diasporic life persists within conditions where protection and abandonment, belonging and displacement, operate simultaneously. More than overt oppression, what defines this figure is the continuous modulation of life through allocation, observation, and differential care.

The concept of a managed diasporic life is clearly distinguishable from conventional accounts of diaspora. Traditional diaspora frameworks tend to explain human experience through narratives of loss, return, and fragmented identity. By contrast, a managed diasporic life designates a mode of living formed under conditions in which settlement and movement, protection and neglect, coexist as structural features. Neither a narrative of return nor a horizon of liberation is essential to this configuration. What matters instead is the persistence of management across spaces and boundaries (Jang 2011: 45–64).

In this regard, *On Such a Full Sea* presents a biopolitical human figure that stands in contrast to a compliant life identified in *Never Let Me Go*. Whereas the latter is characterised by the internalisation of compliance on the level of individual sensibility, the former describes a life dispersed and stabilised via collective perception and spatial arrangement. Together, these two figures show that biopolitics does not operate in a singular or uniform manner. Rather, it produces differentiated modes of life influenced by distinct narrative forms, social structures, and regimes of management.

5 Comparative Analysis: The Biopolitical Diasporic Human Figure

This section synthesises the analyses in sections 3 and 4 in order to comparatively examine the human figures articulated in *Never Let Me Go* and *On Such a Full Sea*. With the comparison, the aim of the section is to conceptually formalise what this study proposes as the “biopolitical diasporic human figure”.

Notwithstanding that the two novels adopt markedly different narrative strategies and spatial configurations, they share a fundamental critical concern. In each text, biopolitics does not operate solely through a binary logic of protection and exclusion. It instead functions by organising unprotected life as a normalised and sustainable form of existence. Human life is not simply divided into those who are safeguarded and those who are eliminated; rather it is differentially managed, stabilised and rendered viable within specific social and narrative conditions.

The discussion in this section proceeds by juxtaposing these shared biopolitical conditions with the distinct human figures they generate. While *Never Let Me Go*

stresses the forming of a compliant life via the internalising of biopolitical norms on the level of individual sensibility, *On Such a Full Sea* presents a managed diasporic life as a form of existence dispersed and regulated through collective narration, spatial displacement and communal governance. By placing these figures in dialogue, the section demonstrates that biopolitics produces not a singular human type, but multiple configurations of life shaped by different regimes of management and narrative articulation.

Using this comparative framework, the section establishes the analytical basis for understanding the biopolitical diasporic human figure not as an exceptional or marginal subject rather than a paradigmatic form of life emerging within contemporary dystopian narratives. In turn, it clarifies how biopolitics redefines normality, belonging and survival across divergent literary contexts, thereby consolidating the central argument made in the study.

5.1 Unprotected Life as a Shared Condition

Although the clones in *Never Let Me Go* and the residents of B-Mor in *On Such a Full Sea* occupy quite different ontological positions, both groups share a fundamental condition: they are lives which are not fully protected. The clones appear to be institutionally cared for, yet this protection strictly depends on the ultimate goal of organ donation.

In contrast, the residents of B-Mor are situated outside the sphere of explicit state or institutional protection, yet are not rendered immediate targets of elimination. Their lives are managed differentially according to their labour, residence, and bodily condition. The absence of protection does not translate into abandonment in an absolute sense; rather, it is transformed into a mode of governance that permits minimal survival.

At this juncture, the figures in both novels emerge as lives that must persist irrespective of the absence of full protection. As Park (2018: 27) observes, these figures are not best understood as lives immediately cast into a state of exception in the manner of homo sacer. Instead, they more closely resemble lives whose continued existence is conditionally permitted within a range deemed manageable by state or quasi state power. This study identifies this condition of being compelled to live without full protection as a central point of contact between the two works.

5.2 Compliance and Mobility in Contrast

The difference between the two novels is most apparent in the ways unprotected life is sustained over time. In *Never Let Me Go*, the clones remain within the institutional system and understand their lives as unfolding according to an

already given trajectory. Kathy's reflections on her future articulate this orientation not in the language of protest or despair, but as a normalised mode of self-understanding. Compliance is not experienced as an externally imposed demand, and instead as a sensibility of life gradually formed by education, care, and everyday routine. What appears as resignation from the outside functions internally as a coherent account of what life is supposed to be.

By contrast, *On Such a Full Sea* uses mobility as a central narrative element. Fan's movement away from B-Mor is not framed as a direct act of resistance or escape from the system. Rather, it resembles a transition from a managed space to an unmanaged one in which the conditions of governance are altered more than dissolved. Vitally, this movement does not guarantee freedom. Even after leaving B-Mor, Fan continues to be reconstructed through the community's gaze, stories and interpretations, and never fully exits the orbit of the system that once organised her life.

In this sense, mobility functions not as a narrative of liberation, but as a device that reveals the persistence of biopolitical conditions in altered forms. The movement from inside to outside does not suspend management; it reconfigures it. Whereas the clones in *Never Let Me Go* internalise compliance by remaining within the system, the figures in *On Such a Full Sea* inhabit its margins where life is still governed, albeit via less formalised and less protective mechanisms.

Viewed through this contrast, the human figure in *Never Let Me Go* may be characterised as a life that internalises compliance within the system, while the human figure in *On Such a Full Sea* emerges as a life that is managed through movement along the system's edges. In each case, biopolitics does not operate by eliminating life, but by modulating the range of possibilities by which life may be lived. The difference is not in the presence/absence of power, and instead lies in the distinct spatial and narrative forms through which biopolitical governance is enacted.

5.3 Formalising the Concept of the Biopolitical Diasporic Human Figure

Following the comparative analysis presented above, the concept of the biopolitical diasporic human figure is proposed as a new analytical category. The concept is to be distinguished from conventional understandings of diaspora, which are typically grounded in experiences of ethnic displacement, exile, or national migration. As formulated here, the biopolitical diasporic human figure refers to a form of human existence that remains outside the sphere of full protection provided by the state or institutional systems, yet is neither completely

excluded nor eliminated, persisting instead within regimes of management that condition the continuation of life.

This human figure may appear either fixed within the system, like with the clones in *Never Let Me Go*, or mobile along the system's margins, like with the figures depicted in *On Such a Full Sea*. Regardless of their degree of mobility, however, they share two defining features. First, they are unable to secure complete protection in any space they inhabit. Second, they are formed to accept this condition not as an exceptional rupture, but as a normal and enduring framework of life. This means the biopolitical diasporic human figure cannot be adequately captured in the conventional binary opposition between victimhood and resistance.

The biopolitical diasporic human figure thus emerges at the intersection of dystopia and diaspora. Dystopia makes the structural operations of biopolitics visible, while diaspora illuminates the condition of living without stable settlement or assured belonging within those structures. At this intersection, the human figure which takes shape does not mainly serve to denounce the violence of biopolitical power. It instead functions as an analytical object via which the forms of life produced by biopolitics itself can be critically examined.

The significance of the present study lies precisely in this conceptual intervention. Both *Never Let Me Go* and *On Such a Full Sea* operate as dystopian narratives that critique biopolitical regimes, yet they also offer meticulous representations of the lived modalities of human life formed under biopolitical conditions. The new concept of the biopolitical diasporic human figure proposed here provides a conceptual tool for capturing these representations. As such, it offers a productive analytical framework for future studies that seek to examine dystopian narratives and diaspora literature in an integrated and comparative manner.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Summary of the Findings

In this study, the limitations of existing approaches which have tended to understand biopolitics in dystopian narratives largely as a mechanism of repression, exclusion, or exceptional violence were critically examined. The point of departure taken was the proposition that biopolitics operates as a condition that impacts human sensibilities of life, modes of self-understanding, and forms of relationality. To that end, the study conducted comparative analysis of *Never Let Me Go* and *On Such a Full Sea*, with focus given to the human figures represented in each work within biopolitical conditions.

Section 3 analysed *Never Let Me Go* with close attention to the forming of cloned characters not just as victims placed in a state of exception, but as beings

who internalise compliance within a system of life management. The educational and protective framework of Hailsham, including its emphasis on care, artistic practice and health management, functions not as overtly violent repression, and instead as a set of normalised life conditions. The clones therefore come to understand their lives not as political problems to be contested, but as given trajectories to be lived through. By conceptualising this human figure as a “compliant life”, the study sought to articulate a biopolitical mode of existence which cannot be adequately captured by the binary victimhood–resistance opposition.

Section 4 examined *On Such a Full Sea* in order to analyse how biopolitics manages human life through collective perception and spatial organisation. Within the B-Mor community, life is differentially allocated according to one’s labour, residence, and bodily condition, while mobility appears not as the acquisition of freedom, but as a transformation in modes of management. In this context, diaspora is reconfigured not as a condition of liberation or return, and instead as a form of life in which protection and abandonment operate simultaneously. In the section, the concept of a “managed diasporic life” was proposed to account for a biopolitical human figure that is dispersed, stabilised and sustained via collective narration and communal regulation.

Through the comparative analysis in section 5, the study demonstrated that despite their distinct narrative strategies and spatial configurations, both novels share a fundamental condition: they organise unprotected life as a normal and sustainable form of existence. Whereas *Never Let Me Go* presents a human figure denoted by internalised compliance within the system, *On Such a Full Sea* depicts a human figure that moves along the system’s margins while remaining subject to ongoing management. Notwithstanding these differences, in each work biopolitics does not primarily operate through elimination, but via the modulation and adjustment of the conditions under which life remains possible. On that basis, the study formalised the concept of the “biopolitical diasporic human figure” as a contemporary human form emerging at the intersection of dystopia and diaspora.

In this sense, the biopolitical diasporic human figure functions as an overarching analytical category which encompasses both a compliant life and a managed diasporic life. It provides a conceptual framework for understanding the diverse configurations of human existence produced under biopolitical conditions.

6.2 Expanding the Study of Dystopian Literature in the Age of Biopolitics

The arguments developed in this article suggest extending dystopian literary studies beyond approaches centred on ethical denunciation or political warning.

Rather than treating dystopia solely as a genre that exposes the violence of biopolitical power, the article proposes reading dystopian narratives as sites where everyday forms of life shaped by biopolitics become visible. Biopolitics operates less by way of exceptional violence than through the language of protection, management and safety, organising conditions in which individuals come to perceive their lives as normal and acceptable.

Seen in this way, dystopian narratives do not mainly predict future catastrophe but estrange and intensify conditions that already structure contemporary life. They render legible how human existence is organised and stabilised within biopolitical orders.

The concept of the biopolitical diasporic human figure further enables a re-thinking of diaspora beyond its conventional association with ethnic displacement or national migration. It conceptualises diaspora as a condition of life marked by the absence of stable protection alongside the persistence of management, and may be applied to contemporary narratives concerned with mobility, labour, and differential care.

Accordingly, dystopian literature in the age of biopolitics functions as a narrative laboratory for analysing the everyday configurations of life produced by contemporary regimes of power. The present study offers an analytical framework for such an approach and provides a conceptual reference point for future comparative research on dystopia and diaspora.

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Author's info

Dr. **Byoung Yoong Kang**, Associate Professor
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Asian Studies
Aškerčeva cesta 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
Email: kby@ff.uni-lj.si