

# Posthumanism, Artificial Intelligence and Ishiguro's Klara & the Sun: Can Humanoid Machines attain consciousness?

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## Abstract

This paper examines Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and The Sun* through the lens of posthumanism. It uses the textual analysis method to analyze Ishiguro's text as a posthuman novel that depicts the posthuman society where the boundaries between what is human and the nonhuman is blurred. The basic argument is that the aim of Ishiguro's text is two-fold, while it clearly illustrates the inability of the humanoid robot to attain human consciousness, it attempts also to dismantle the anthropocentric view of man. The findings show that Klara, the narrator-protagonist is used as a tool to raise certain questions such as, can humanoids act humanly? And/or can a 'humanoid machine' attain consciousness? More importantly, what it means to be human, in the first place. In doing so, the story attempts to showcase the ruptured boundaries between human and nonhuman and the changing ideas of humankind and its entanglement with the nonhuman world. Further, the interaction between Klara (AF) and other characters in the story is developed in such a way as to illustrate not only the shortcomings of humans regarding faith and affection but, more importantly, the limits of the nonhuman machine. It dismisses the current debate among technology experts that artificial intelligence would soon be able to develop a human-like robot that enjoys similar human emotional signals and reacts exactly like humans. The story simply puts it, despite the defects of humans, nothing can replace humans as those artificial friends (AI) fundamentally lack the kinds of experience that give rise to human-like affect and emotion.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Ishiguro, Klara and The Sun, Humanoid Machine, Posthumanism, Robot.

## 1. Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro is a British-Japanese novelist who was born in Japan but emigrated with his parents to the United Kingdom at the age of six. Ishiguro grew up to become one of the most

celebrated British novelists in history. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2017 and a knighthood two years later. All his seven previous novels have met with critical acclaim, while two of his oeuvre, *Remains of The Day* (1989) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005) saw major film versions and became a massive popular success (Bethune 2021). As a writer, Maureen Corrigan precisely described him as "the master of slowly deepening our awareness of human failing, fragility and the inevitability of death — all that, even as he deepens our awareness of what temporary magic it is to be alive in the first place" (*Klara and the Sun* a Masterpiece, 2021).

His eighth novel, *Klara and the Sun* (2021) is considered by many a dystopian science fiction novel (Evren İnanoğlu 2021, Askew 2021) in which Klara, the narrator-an AF is sold as a child toy. In this novel, Klara, a humanoid robot indulges in an exploration, seeking answers to some disturbing questions relating to the place of hope, faith, and love in the lives of human beings. More importantly, *Klara and the Sun* is a thrilling book that offers a look at our changing world through the eyes of unconventional narrator and one that investigate the fundamental question: what does it mean to love?

Klara is introduced as a keen observer and learner with extraordinary memory and intelligence. She is always in the window display of the store watching the outside world where she is exposed to extra sunlight. Klara reveals this early; "when we were new, Rosa and I were mid-store, on the magazine's table side, and could see through more than half of the window. So, we were able to watch the outside – the office workers hurrying by, the taxis, the runners, the tourists, Beggar Man and his dog, the lower part of the RPO Building" (p. 3). This shows that Klara is not only very good at observing but also have a keen desire for learning as she frequently raises questions to the manager of the store about the things she sees from the window. Hence, Klara, with outstanding observational qualities, who, from her place in the store, watches carefully the behavior of those who come in to browse, and of those who pass on the street outside, remains hopeful that a customer will soon choose her. And when the day came, she was picked up by Josie and her mother.

## 2. Literature Review

In an interview, dated 2008, Ishiguro admits that "one of the attractions about using clones" in his novel *Never Let Me Go* "is that it makes people ask immediately, [w]hat does it mean to be a human being?" (The Paris Review, 2008). In this sense, Zeynep Arikan, in her MA thesis, 'Kazuo Ishiguro's Problematics of Authenticity and Experience', notes that Kazuo Ishiguro proves once more to be one of the most far-reaching voices of, and about, the postmodern condition. In her comparison between Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *Never Let Me Go*, Arikan further observes that the clones are mostly considered as successors of *Frankenstein*, although they are much more human-like and their creator never shows up throughout the novel (2014, p.7).

Much the same, Brain Bethune (2021) in 'Kazuo Ishiguro's newest book is an 'emotional reply' to 'Never Let Me Go', further notes that "Ishiguro's fiction, graced by remarkably restrained and nuanced prose even in its most emotionally charged moments, always raises the question of what

it means to be human". According to Bethune, "the main characters in *Never Let Me Go* are clones, created to live their shortened lives as organ providers for "real" humans" (p. 1).

Evren İnançoğlu, on the other hand, claims that Ishiguro's *Klara and The Sun* is a dystopian science fiction novel that will remind his readers of his masterpiece *Never Let Me Go*. In *Never Let Me Go*, according to İnançoğlu, the narrator-protagonist is a clone whereas *Klara and the Sun* is narrated by a solar-battery robot with artificial intelligence, named Klara (Lack of the Lack, March 2021). Bavetra Swaminathan also notes that *Klara and The Sun*, only "reiterates the point once again that Ishiguro is a genuinely committed writer. His commitment to the cause of understanding human beings through their memories and emotions, has moved on to a newer altitude". In this novel, according to Swaminathan, Klara, an artificial friend, a humanoid robot "indulges in such an exploration seeking answers for some disturbing questions relating to the place of Hope, Faith, and Love in the lives of the human beings" (p. 296). Perhaps, this is why Anupama Hosuri (2021) considered the message conveyed in this novel is fairly simple, "be empathetic and loving towards others (p. 3). Yet, he concludes that "the moral of the story is to be mindful, grateful, and kind in our behavior towards all the human and non-human factors that surround us (p. 9). Judith Shalevitz appears to adopt a similar view as he considers *Klara and The Sun* science fiction as it contributes to the "centuries-old disputation over whether machines have the potential to feel". This debate, according to him, has "picked up speed as the artificially intelligent agents built by actual engineers close in on the ones made up by writers and TV, film, and theater directors, the latest round in the game of tag between science and science fiction that has been going on at least since *Frankenstein*" (The Atlantic, April 2021).

In 'Loving What We Don't Understand in *Klara and the Sun*', Anna Malecki focuses on Klara's observational abilities, describing Klara as having a "keen sense of observation", an important aspect of the novel. Malecki notes that "observation, love, and rationality are the major themes of Ishiguro's novel. According to Malecki, *Klara and the Sun* is a speculative future in which children have companions in the form of artificial friends "What could be a coming of age story about Josie, is written in the first-person perspective of Klara whom we are meant to empathize with as she navigates her place in the world" (July 24, 2021). In this sense, Maureen Corrigan has attributed the need for companions to the feeling of 'loneliness' among children. "Loneliness", she said, "is one of the signature emotions that Ishiguro's novels fathom, and in her new position, Klara has many opportunities to observe the strategies that humans devise to fight off loneliness and conceal vulnerability" (Review, March 2021).

Likewise, "Alex Preston reviewed *Klara and the Sun* in The Guardian as a novel that expands on Ishiguro's theme of "what it means to be not-quite-human, exploring love and loyalty through the eyes of an android." For Preston, "though the time period or the exact setting of *Klara and the Sun* is not mentioned, the setting of the novel resembles our own time period i.e. the early part of the twenty-first century, but one realises that the similarities are only superficial in nature" (The Guardian, March 2021).

Yet, whatever the thematic concern of Ishiguro's text, none of the above reviewers/researchers has discussed this novel from a posthuman perspective or provided an in-depth textual analysis in the manner that this study intends to do. This study aims to investigate *Klara and The Sun* from a posthuman perspective, focusing on the actions and reactions of both humans and the

humanoid robot. It argues that while the novel uses *Klara* to dismantle the anthropocentric view of man, the novel also finally shows the limits of technology when it comes to the possibility of reproducing human qualities and consciousness.

### 3. Methodology

This paper draws on the perspectives of posthumanist thinkers such as Rosi Braidotti, Stefan Herbrechter, and N. Katherine Hayles, among others, to read Ishiguro's novel, *Klara and The Sun*. It uses the textual analysis method to explore this text as a story that provides posthuman views on the current society, a society that is invaded and driven by technology where artificial intelligence has nearly reached the point of developing "thinking machine" that behaves almost like a human (Hayles, 1999, p. 13). Posthumanism, as Hortle simply puts it, "critiques the entrenched anthropocentrism and the legacy of humanism in the Western culture" (2016, p. 2). Francesca Ferrando has recently confirmed Hortle's view as he states that "Posthumanism focuses on decentering the human from the center of the discourse ..." (2019, p. 22). Pramod K. Nayar (2014) further rightly states that Posthumanism, in its critical avatar, is a "new conceptualization of the human that addresses the question of the human in the age of technological modification, hybridized life forms, new discoveries of the sociality (and 'humanity') of animals and a new understanding of 'life' itself" (p. 13).

In the same vein, Daniele Rugo, recently notes that posthuman is simply used to describe "modes of being resulting from potential enhancements to human nature generated through applied science and technological developments" (Posthuman, 2020). In her discussion of the impact of technology on modern society, Rosi Braidotti (2022) describes "Covid-19" pandemic as an "emblematic- of the posthuman convergence". For Braidotti, the pandemic "foregrounds the importance of human/non-human interaction and its destructive, as well as generative, potential.

N. Katherine Hayles (1999), on the other hand, points out that "the posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction (p. 3). Stefan Herbrechter and Ivan Callus also agree on the 'ambiguity' of the term as they suggest in, *What Is a Posthumanist Reading*, that we ought rather to explore the consequences of a posthumanist reading of texts that focus on the ambiguities around the human and what proceeds there (2008, p. 4). They conclude, a "posthumanist reading can strategically exploit the ambiguity of the term posthumanism. It critically evaluates posthuman-ism – the discourse on and representations of the posthuman – at work" (p. 5).

In this sense, Hortle (2016) in *Reading the Posthuman: Contemporary Fiction and Literary Theory*, describes how the novels of the posthuman tell stories of radical human difference, contributing to and dramatically expanding literature's depiction of the possibilities of human life in texts. He observes that the early twenty-first century in particular has witnessed an explosion of posthuman narratives in novels, which deploy the posthuman as a literary device to expose the fault lines running through our human-centric imagination (p. 2). Likewise, as referred to above, this paper attempts to read *Klara and The Sun* through the lens of

posthumanism to showcase to what extent Ishiguro's text succinctly portray the image of the status quo of the posthuman society.

### Human passion Vs. Humanoid Love: Can Humanoid Attain Human Consciousness?

Arguably, like *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* poses almost similar questions, using this time an AI android called AF (Artificial Friend). Klara, the narrator, is very observant and is well-equipped with human emotions. "Though she still has much to learn, she is optimistic about mastering the human heart. She thinks the human heart, however complex it may be, is not limitless and can be mastered" (Askew 2021, p. 1). Interestingly, though the narrator-protagonist is a humanoid robot, human qualities such as love, affection, and faithfulness appear to be the focal point of Ishiguro's novel. This is perhaps, why Judith Shulevitz simply puts it, "Ishiguro's theme of themes, however, is love". According to Shulevitz, "the redemptive power of true love comes under direct discussion" in *Klara and The Sun* and in *Never Let Me Go*, but crops up in Ishiguro's other novels too (*The Atlantic*, April 2021).

In this sense, the story appears to highlight two types of affection and faithfulness among humans, from one side, and between humans and 'a humanoid machine'-Klara, from another one. That is to say, human passion is carefully tested against humanoid love. In doing so, the story seems to pose certain important questions such as, can humanoids be more humane? Or/and can such humanoid machines develop similar human emotional signals? Arguably the author seems to articulate, in Hayles' words, the "posthuman" theme, "the union of the human with the intelligent machine" (p. 2). Hayles points out that "the posthuman view configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. In the posthuman, according to him, "there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals" (p. 3).

Notably, Josie's relationship with her mother is the main focus of *Klara and the Sun* among those intricate relations in the story. Though they appear to be very close to each other as mother and daughter, they are apart. Their love appears to lack deep human passion and intimacy. "Does she think I like being away from her, day after fucking day?", Mother asks Klara (p. 97). The mother, though most of the time worried about Josie, it is only because she doesn't want to lose her like her daughter, "Sal" who "died" because of sickness (p. 88). Yet, when she learns that Josie can be replaced by Klara, her AF, she embraces the idea and encourages her husband to accept it. "I want you to be Josie" ...Walk like Josie", the mother said (p. 103). This shows that she is ready to scarify Josie if she gets a perfect replacement. Later on, the mother confirms, "Don't stop being Josie" (p. 104).

On the other hand, the reader is introduced to the intimate but a strange relationship of Josie and Rick, her neighbor and friend whose frequent "visits raised Josie's spirits" (p. 117), and with whom she plans to share "a future together" (p. 83). They have been together since childhood, hence, "[they]are going to spend [their] lives together ... It got decided a long time ago. It's not going to change" Josie said, (p. 57). Rick's conversation with Klara further confirms their mutual plan. "How before we went, you became very serious and asked if our love was genuine. The love between me and Josie. And I think I told you it was real. Real and everlasting. So, I'm

guessing that's what you're now worrying about" (p. 288). Unfortunately, however, this relationship doesn't last as Josie finds Rick "doesn't want to grow up" (p. 126). Look, I'm doing my best...' 'But you're not doing your best, Ricky, Josie said. She goes on,

You keep talking about our plan, but what really are you doing? Each day goes by we get older, stuff keeps coming up. I'm doing all I can, but not you, Rick.' 'What am I not doing I should be doing? Going to more of your interaction meetings?' 'You could at least try more. You could do like we said. Study harder. Try for Atlas Bookings. (p. 129)

However, despite the mutual love and understanding between the couple, their relationship easily breaks and turns up into ashes.

Yet, worse of all is the materialistic relationship between Rick's mother and Mr. Vance- Where Rick's mother appears to be merely an opportunist seeking "favoritism" (p. 246) as she turns back to him only when she feels that she is in desperate need for his assistance. Mr. Vance himself, however, appears to be an opportunist as he exploits the moment and pays her back. He humiliates her and refuses even to assist her son in getting admission to "Atlas Bookings" (p. 129). He was too rude to her, even though she almost begged him to assist her son. "Vance, I'm apologizing,' she went on. 'I'm pleading. I'm saying I behaved badly towards you and if you like, I'll vow to you that I'll punish myself and keep punishing myself until I've made it up to you" (p. 250). However, instead of offering compromise, their love turns into hatred as Mr. Vance makes use of the situation and starts taking revenge on Miss Helen by first, rejecting her proposal and then miserably humiliating her. These relations, hence, appear to lack passion, true human love and intimacy.

Interestingly, these relations skillfully put vis-a-vis the relationship between Josie and Klara, a human being and a humanoid robot. As Klara arrives and starts to live with Josie's family, we start to see the similarities and differences between the two girls. That is to say, from that moment on, we start to see the interaction of the two girls: an AF and a human. This relationship, however, appears to be the ideal one in Ishiguro's text as Klara remains faithful to Josie until the last minute in her life. More importantly, she wanted nothing in return, what Judith Shulevits calls "selfless love" (The Atlantic, April 2021). In contrast, indeed, to human beings who have a high demand for their love. In doing so, the author seems to ridicule the inadequacy of humans as people appear to lack passion, faith, and true love. This dryness of human affection seems to be an important feature of the posthuman society. Perhaps, this is why most of kids suffer from 'loneliness', a theme that frequently referred to in *Klara and The Sun*. In this sense, *Klara and the Sun* appears to offer a look at our changing world through the eyes of an unconventional narrator to explore the fundamental question, what does it mean to be human?

Indeed, Kazuo Ishiguro skillfully functions these relations to put into action the nature of the 'interaction' between humans and the humanoid robot that not only acts humanly but appears to be more humane. As S. Bavetra Swaminathan observes, when "human interacts with humanoid, the limitations of the humanoid are expected to come to the surface. But every interaction between the human and the humanoid only reveals the insufficiency and inadequacy in the human" (2021, p. 296). While this is true, the story, on the other hand, uses those relations to raise certain questions; how humans are different from other creatures? Can humans develop

human-like robots that can act humanly? That is to say, Ishiguro looks at humanity from a slightly different angle than in *Never Let Me Go*, but seeks the answer to the same question: What makes us human? Are we just sophisticated machines held together by a bundle of data or is there something inside us that can't be replicated at all.

Ishiguro, however, made it clear through Klara that despite the huge success of science, such humanoid machines cannot fully master human hearts. There is something in human hearts, in other words, that can't be replicated. As the story progresses, Klara admits, "I believe now there would have remained something beyond my reach. The Mother, Rick, ...I have never reached what they felt for Josie in their hearts" (p. 301-2). She continues:

Mr. Capaldi believed there was nothing special inside Josie that couldn't be continued. He told the Mother he'd searched and searched and found nothing like that. But I believe now he was searching in the wrong place. There was something very special, but it wasn't inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her. That's why I think now Mr. Capaldi was wrong and I wouldn't have succeeded. So, I'm glad I decided as I did". (p. 302)

Obviously, Klara's comments clearly illustrate that what is unique about humans is not only the internal capacity for feeling but rather about being loved by others as human, as well. The capacity to exchange emotions, to love and to be loved by others, a defect that Klara admits. This is why Klara begged the sun for his "special nourishment" to cure Josie rather than replacing her, what she calls "the other way to save Josie" which shows that Klara will never be Josie (p. 267-70) as Mr. Capaldi hopes. Such limits in the humanoid machine is hinted at early in the story by Klara who admits the complexity of human emotions, while still in the window shop with other AFs. "I became puzzled, then increasingly fascinated by the more mysterious emotions passers-by would display in front of us", Klara said (p. 18).

Indeed, Klara proves to be so perfect, as an observer, as a friend, and as a nurse that one wonders if the imperfect human is capable of creating a living, feeling and thinking machine that matches perfection in everything it does. For instance, she has easily "completed the survey" prepared by Mr. Capaldi as a part of his experiment to replace Josie (p. 207). As Judith Shulevits simply puts it, "The nonhuman Klara is more human than most humans". She has, according to him, a "superhuman humanity". For Shulevits Klara is incandescently good. "She's like the kind, wise beasts endowed with speech at the dawn of creation in C. S. Lewis's *Narnia*. Or, with her capacity for selfless love, like a character in a Hans Christian Andersen story". More importantly, Shulevits sees Klara as a super-enhanced product that "roboticists in a field called affective computing [...] have spent the past two decades trying to invent. Engineers have written software that can detect fine shades of feeling in human voices and faces, but so far they have failed to contrive machines that can simulate emotions convincingly" (*The Atlantic*, 2021).

Thus, while the author seems to criticize the inadequacy of man who is incapable of exchanging mutual love and faithfulness, more importantly, he seems to highlight the complexity of human emotions which is the real challenge of artificial intelligence that has become almost able to produce 'human-like robots', that can act humanly but wisely. It is ridiculous that none of those characters can offer the true kind of intimacy and faithfulness including Josie. Klara, however, does. She made all efforts to save Josie. In contrast, Josie's denial of Klara, at the end of the

story, shows to what extent human beings are mere opportunists. In doing so, Klara appears not only a human-like machine but even better in terms of love, loyalty, and above all, intelligence. As N. Hayles notes, "in the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals" (1999, p. 3). Hayles' view has been recently confirmed by Pramod K. Nayar (2014) who further states, in 'Posthumanism' that posthumanism "rejects the view of the human as exceptional, separate from other life forms and usually dominant/dominating over these other forms. He further observes that critical posthumanism seeks to move beyond the traditional humanist ways of thinking about the autonomous, self-willed individual agent in order to treat the human itself as an assemblage, co-evolving with other forms of life, enmeshed with the environment and technology (p. 13). Hence by confronting us with literary fabrication as such, Ishiguro forces us to probe the essence and the limits of humanity and the humanoid machine, as well.

Sadly, at the end of the story we meet Klara alone leaving her home as Josie left for college. "When she pulled away, she was smiling", Klara said. she "could see also some sadness", when Josie said: "I guess you may not be here when I get back. You've been just great, Klara. You really have". "Thank you", Klara said. She continued, "Thank you for choosing me.' 'No-brainer.' Then she gave me a second hug, this one more brief, and stood back again. 'Bye, Klara. You be good now.' 'Goodbye, Josie" (p. 296-7). Indeed, as Yugin Teo notes, "the endings to Ishiguro's novels have almost always been distinctly characterized by a 'very sad peal' that signifies the closing or ending of the lives of the novels' protagonists" (2014, p. 141). While this is true, in *Klara and the Sun*, however, Ishiguro leaves us suspended and divided in the presumptive order of things. "Whose consciousness is limited, and whose love is more true, humans' or a machine's?

Thus, although Klara is created in such a way that she is super intelligent and almost perfect in her relationship compared to other humans in the story. Yet, in contrast to humans, Klara appears to lack something that only humans have. This defect clearly illustrates the limits of technology which might be the subject of investigation and the real challenge of the posthuman society. This shows that the process of the "ongoing transformations of the human" as Braidotti simply puts it (p. 5), has not yet completely fulfilled its mission, according to Ishiguro's text. In this sense, Ishiguro seems to adopt Stefan Herbrechter and Ivan Callus' view who simply put it, "reading to tease out further assumptions and values about what it means to be human is redundant and tautological, not least because we are surely never going to be anything other than human" (p. 3).

Akin to this study, Luke Hortle mobilizes recent theoretical debates about the posthuman and posthumanism as a conceptual framework to investigate the status of the posthuman in fiction. He offers close readings of how five early twenty-first-century novels imagine the human differently, including Michel Faber's *Under the Skin* (2000), Margaret Atwood's *Oryx ...* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005). In telling stories of "radically decentred human subjectivity", these novels, according to him, "dramatise their own critique of the human and its ensconced position of privilege within the Western cultural imagination". For him, these novels



"place the human under duress to make fascinating and sometimes surprising interventions in the project of posthumanist thought" (p. 1).

### Anti-anthropocentrism, Rationality and Artificial Intelligence

A part from stressing the limits of both, the humans and the humanoid machine, Ishiguro's novel appears to adopt a dicentric discourse where "man is no longer lord of nature, but a mere member of the ecosystem" (Alkodimi, 2024). That is to say, the story indirectly suggests that such 'intelligent robots' mark a high-tech posthuman society that is supposed not only to replace humans but perform far better. Josie's mother, for example, early admits Klara's super abilities when she tells the later, "You're an intelligent AF. Maybe you can see things the rest of us can't" (p. 108). This view has been asserted by Mr. Capaldi who believe that "AFs have so much more to give" than "we currently appreciate" (p. 197). Later on, Mr. Capaldi further "regarded" [AFs as human] friends and a vital source of Education and enlightenment" (p. 293). Notably, the text seems to highlight the extent to which artificial intelligence has made such a big move in this direction. As Graham notes, New digital and biogenetic technologies – in the shape of media such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, genetic modification, and technological prosthetics – signal a 'posthuman' future in which the boundaries between humanity, technology, and nature have become ever more malleable (cited in Lunceford, p. 10). Indeed, it is the 'malleability', in Lunceford's words, of the current situation that Ishiguro is aiming at, the ruptured boundaries between humans and nonhumans.

Arguably, using an AF, (robot) as the narrator protagonist clearly illustrates the author's intention, to emphasize the impact of artificial intelligence on the posthuman society and the possible replacement. Klara, for instance, appears to be a product of postmodern technology with passion for learning and extraordinary abilities. "I realized [she said], how much I'd grown used to making observations and estimates in relation to those of other AFs around me". She further elaborates that in her early days at the store, she "often look out at the highway going over the hill – or at the view across the fields from the bedroom rear window – and search with [her] gaze for the figure of a distant AF, ..." (p. 51). Hence, this showcase that Klara is not only a keen observant but a good learner, as well.

Surprisingly, Klara appears to be able to record and interpret details with astonishing accuracy that most people miss. A passing boy AF lags a few steps behind his child, and his weary gait makes her wonder what it would be like "to know that your child didn't want you" (p. 18). She keeps watching over a beggar and his dog, who lie so still in a doorway that they look like garbage bags (p. 1-17). Through the window, she could learn about the importance of the sun in our life. Thus, in contrast to humans, Klara, the artificial friend appears to know more about the significance of the sun for man and the environment. As Stefan Herbrechter puts it, in another context, Ishiguro seems to be "aware of the current environment of the vast technological change due to biotechnology and digitalization, its focus is on how these changes are philosophically and aesthetically underpinned by the rise of the idea of a renewal of humanity ('the new human')". In his book review, *The New Human: Posthuman Visions of Changes in Body, Mind and Society after 1900*, Herbrechter notes that the book's main aim is to "demonstrate how literature, particularly fiction, contributes to creating a richer and more complex idea of the contexts and issues arising from the idea of a posthuman or new human, and that the idea of the

new human is not just something that relates to technology, but has a long history of fascinating humanity" (Thomsen, *The New Human*, p. 1).

In this novel, Mr. Capaldi's appearance emphasizes the crucial role of science and technology in contemporary society. "In fact, Mr. Capaldi is keen to meet you. He takes a special interest in AFs. You could call it his passion. ... He may have a few questions for you. To do with his research" mother said to Klara (p. 171). Surprisingly, Mr. Capaldi appears fully confident of successfully handling his 'experiment', replacing Josie with Klara, what Hayles referred to as "a symbiotic union between human and intelligent machine" (p. 35). "You want me to believe that? Do you believe that?", the mother asks Mr. Capaldi.

'I do believe it. [replied he] With everything I'm worth, I believe it. I'm glad Klara went in there and looked. We need her on board now, we've needed that for a long time. Because it's Klara who'll make the difference. Make it very, very different this time round. You have to keep faith, Chrissie. You can't weaken now. (p. 205)

He further explains to her:

[w]hat you have to understand is this. The new Josie won't be an imitation. She really will be Josie. A continuation of Josie.'... 'I'd like to say there's a chance you'll never need the new Josie. The present one may become healthy. I believe there's a good chance of this. I'll need, of course, the opportunity, the chance to make it so. (p. 205)

In *Posthuman Feminism*, Rosi Braidotti (2022) discussed Jeffery Deitch's project, 'Post Human' (1992), she states, a Flashback to 1992: at the physical site of the watershed art exhibition *Post Human*, "a giant female figure of an Armani-clad business woman confidently welcomed visitors to the show". For Braidotti, "[t]he curator Jeffery Deitch captured the avant-garde spirit of the age by foregrounding the role of technology in blurring the binary boundaries between subjects and objects, humans and non-humans", adding that "the *Post Human* showed also that art assumed a much more central role as it emerged with science, computerization and biotechnology in further re-shaping the human form and perfecting a flair for the artificial". According to her, "the message was clear: the pleasures of the inorganic have become second nature, producing a deeper intimacy with technological artefacts" (p. 1). Hence, as Ferrando further puts it, "due to genetic engineering and nanotechnology, life itself has become more and more of a 'biotechnological assemblage' (p. 22).

Well, this is exactly the bottom line of Ishiguro's novel. It tackles, in Herbrechter's words, "the rise of posthumanism – or the intensifying debate about human evolution, transformation and succession, which is led from a variety of angles (p. 1). As Ferrando concludes in 'Philosophical Posthumanism', the strict border placed in the Western hegemonic tradition between organic/inorganic, biological/artificial, and physical/virtual has been radically challenged not only by different cultures and age perspectives but, more in general, by current developments in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and virtual reality, among others (p. 113). In *Klara and The Sun*, Klara is a special robot that is very good at observing and imitating people. However, as the story develops, we discover that Klara's mission is not only to accompany and entertain Josie but to replace her if she dies (p. 204-208). This is perhaps why Stefan Herbrechter and Ivan Callus see "fast technological change" as a threat to the "integrity of the human as a

(biological and moral) species" (p. 4). They arguably claim that the "materialist and deconstructive reading of the cultural politics that underlie the actual representations of the posthuman and the 'process of ongoing posthumanisation' helps to envisage alternative conceptualisations of both the human and the posthuman" (p. 6).

Similarly, in his study 'Posthuman Experiences of Men and Masculinity in McEwan's *Machines Like Me*', Mustafa Büyükgebiz rightly notes, "the cyborg challenges all traditional notions regarding the human body". According to Büyükgebiz Ian McEwan's novel *Machines Like Me* (2020) offers such discussions and reconsiderations of the confrontation between humans and cyborgs, where cyborg image is seen as a threat to "hegemonic masculinity" (p. 62). As Cohen Shabot (2006) states, "the figure of the cyborg, thus, turned out to be a challenging, transgressive figure aiming at a subversion of the traditional divisions between human and machine, between the self and the other, between inside and outside and between nature and culture" (cited in Büyükgebiz, p. 62). McEwan's concern is expressed through Mr. Capaldi, in *Klara and The Sun*. "You will remember, Klara, how much I've always been fascinated by AFs, [said Mr. Capaldi] ... Here it is. Klara, there's growing and widespread concern about AFs right now. People saying how you become too clever. They're afraid because they can't follow what's going on inside any more" (p. 293). Mr. Capaldi, has earlier confirmed this when he said, "we shouldn't fear [AFs] intellectual powers. We should learn from them. AFs have so much to teach us" (p. 197). In this novel the "human-machine interface", in Nayar's words, is supposed to be the new Josie (p. 18). This, indeed, corresponds with Nayar's view that the "body as an assemblage with non-human and machine, and embodied but distributed subjectivity, is at the core of posthumanist thought" (p. 90). Hayles also rightly observes, "the posthuman implies not only a coupling with intelligent machines but a coupling so intense and multifaceted that it is no longer possible to distinguish meaningfully between the biological organism and the informational circuits in which the organism is enmeshed" (p. 35).

Indeed, Mr. Capaldi seems to represent and speak from an artificial intelligence vantage point. In that sense, one can arguably claim that Ishiguro's main concern is to illustrate the status quo of artificial intelligence and its challenge, to develop an AFs with the desired 'artificial emotions'. "Yes, she can," Mr Capaldi said. And now Klara's completed the survey up there, I'll be able to give you scientific proof of it. Proof she's already well on her way to accessing quite comprehensively all of Josie's impulses and desires" (p. 207). Mr. Capaldi goes further and seeks help from Klara to emphasize the significance of science and AFs. "You AFs, you're magnificent. We're discovering things we'd never have believed possible. That's why I'm here today. I've never forgotten you, Klara. I know you'll be uniquely useful to us. Please, will you help" (p. 94). Thus, Mr. Capaldi's intended experiment and thoughts de facto are metaphors of the status quo of technology that actively works to produce human-like robots. As McLuhan argues, "in this electric age, we see ourselves being translated more and more into the form of information, moving toward the technological extension of consciousness" (cited in Lunceford, p. 17). Hence, in contrast to all, Mr. Capaldi appears to be self-assured of the success of the experiment:

[n]othing inside Josie [he said] that's beyond the Klaras of this world to continue. The second Josie won't be a copy. She'll be the exact same and you'll have every right to love her just as you love Josie now. It's not faith you need. Only rationality. I had to do it, it was tough but now it works for me just fine. And it will for you. (p. 207-8)

Such experiments, however, according to Mr. Capaldi needs rationality and trust in science to succeed. Speaking from the point of view of artificial intelligence, Mr. Capaldi explains, "Our generation still carry the old feelings. A part of us refuses to let go". He goes on, "the part that wants to keep believing there's something unreachable inside each of us. Something that's unique and won't transfer. But there's nothing like that, we know that now". Hence, in this situation, he begged Josie's mother "to let go". We have to let it go, Chrissie. There's nothing there", he said, (p. 207). Indeed, this novel seems to reflect the blurred boundaries between human and humanoid Klara of the posthuman society. As Braidotti claims the "posthuman turn is marked by fundamental disruptions of received understandings of what it means to be human" (p. 4). This view, indeed, appears to be the driving force of Ishiguro's novel, *Klara and The Sun*. Klara is introduced as a human-like robot, an 'intelligent machine' that enjoys human qualities and behaves, almost like anyone else. However, as the replacement/experiment is not performed, this shows that technology has so far failed to fulfill its mission. Hence, Klara's situation is deliberately functioned to showcase the limits of technology/artificial intelligence. Ishiguro intentionally lets Klara admit her defect as she realizes at the end of the story that people have something that she cannot understand.

Indeed, Ishiguro's vision corresponds to Fukuyama's discussion that the "future of the human had been motivated by rather conservative and moralistic motives based on the apparent opposition between technological development and human nature", that there "has been sheer delight in 'transhumanist' circles at the prospect that these new technoscientific developments might transform us in a not too distant future into a new digital species with fantastic new potential" (Herbretcheter, "Preface"). As Martin Puchner rightly points out, in *When We Were Clones*, Ishiguro has "profoundly unsettled what it means to imitate and be imitated, and therefore what it means to be human. For Puchner, Ishiguro's attempt to unsettle the human as origin and originator, to trouble the category of the human itself", concerns not only the relations between humans and clones inhabiting the world constructed by his novel. It also aims at the seam between that world and ours: the relation between the reader and the cloned narrator" (p. 45-6). Puchner concludes that "by including us in this world of clones, Ishiguro forces the reader to question the essence and the limits of the human. Perhaps that is what we are supposed to do" (p. 49).

What makes Ishiguro's novel so unique is its relevance to the status quo of the current age. He appears to articulate the spirit of the age, an age that is driven by technology and inventions, where artificial intelligence has become a blessing and/or a threat. In his book review of 'The New Human: Posthuman Visions of Changes in Body, Mind and Society after 1900' by Thomson, Stefan Herbrecther notes that "technology plays a much larger role, and foregrounds the question of what humanity can become, between past and future, mind, body and society, and individual and collective (p. 2). He further confirms this view in his book, 'Posthumanism – A Critical Analysis', when he states that "there is no point in denying the ongoing

technologization of the human species, and, on the other hand, that a purely technology-centered idea of posthumanization is not enough to escape the humanist paradigm" (2013, p. 14). This idea simply what *Klara and The Sun* is all about. And this is why this novel has been read from a posthumanism perspective. As Andy Miah, in "A Critical History of Posthumanism" (2008) states: "A crucial premise of posthumanism is its critical stance towards the idea that humans are a superior species in the natural order" (cited in Ferrando 2019, p. 23). Thus, as Hortle succinctly puts it, "Novels of the posthuman consolidate ideas of anthropocentrism's rupturing, and imaginatively narrate the cultural and political upheavals of the nonhuman turn (p. 5), adding that the twenty-first-century "novels invite us to rethink the cultural and political construction of human subjectivity" (p. 6).

#### 4. Conclusion

This essay was a reading of Ishiguro's novel, *Klara and The Sun*, through posthuman perspective as a conceptual framework to investigate to what extent Ishiguro's novel succinctly reflects the posthuman society. The analysis shows that *Klara and the Sun* offers a posthuman vision of our changing world through the eyes of a human-like robot, exploring the fundamental question: what does it mean to be human? In this sense, the story appears to dismantle the anthropocentric view of man in the information society where the humanoid robot appears to be superior to humans. Such superiority is maintained through Klara's observational abilities, super intelligence, faithfulness and the true love, as well. More importantly, the story highlights the status quo of artificial intelligence and the challenge of producing a super-intelligent neo-human machine that can attain human consciousness. Yet, the way the story ends shows the limits of technology. Despite the advancements in the field, such robot with the same human consciousness is still merely a dream as those artificial friends (AI) fundamentally lack the kinds of experience that give rise to human-like affect and emotion.

Like *Never Let Me Go*, *Klara and The Sun* is very much engaged with the same question. Yet, in *Klara and The Sun*, Ishiguro looks at humanity from a slightly different angle than in *Never Let Me Go*, but seeks the answer to the same question: What makes us human? And What are the qualities which make humans humane? However, while humans are dehumanized in *Never Let Me Go*, robots are humanized in *Klara and the Sun* as such intelligent machine appears to be superior to anyone else. In this sense, the story appears to stress certain human virtues such as kindness, self-sacrificing love, faith and hope among humans and nonhumans where the analogy mainly functioned to deliver a specific message; the significance of remembrance, gratitude and kindness in our life, as well as, the defects of humans and the limits of the humanoid robots. Through this analogy, human affection versus machine faithfulness, the story attempts to investigate if there is something inside humans that can't be replicated. Or is it perhaps our affection that makes us special or different from others? Indeed, the story appears like an experiment reflecting the current challenge of artificial intelligence and at the same time pointing out the significance and/or the threat of it.

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