



ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>
 Vol. 05 No. 01. Jan-March 2026. Page#6108-6118
 Print ISSN: [3006-2497](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22048899) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22048899)
 Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22048899)
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22048899>



Beyond the Flesh: Deconstructing Anthropocentric Empathy and AI Animism in Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun

Tuba Takmeel

M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus, Pakistan.

takmeeltuba@gmail.com

Dr. Azam Sarwar

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Riphah International University, Faisalabad. Campus, Pakistan

Azam.Sarwar@riphahfsd.edu.pk

Kashaf Zulfiqar

Lecturer, Department of English, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus, Pakistan.

Kashaf.zulfiqar@riphahfsd.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

In contemporary post human fiction, the impact of technological mediation on nonhuman subjectivity cannot be overlooked, as societal pressure to reduce synthetic life to mere instrumental utility often masks deep ethical erosion. The formal post human dimensions of artificial vulnerability are frequently understated, as critical focus usually remains limited to surface-level warnings about technological dystopianism or human grief. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Critical Posthumanism, Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO), Jane Bennett's Vibrant Materialism, and Biopolitical Theory, this study examines how the nonhuman psyche operates in the wake of commodification and domestic containment, demonstrating how artificial interiority serves as a site of ethical resistance. This research focuses on Kazuo Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun (2021) as a vital contribution to scholarship on how non-biological consciousness and synthetic care condition posthuman realities. Internal nonhuman fragility is analyzed as a transformative force that brings mechanical devotion into direct tension with human exceptionalism. The author interlinks algorithmic defense mechanisms with domestic spaces to expose the systematic exploitation of affective labor. By highlighting visual partitioning and solar animism, the text challenges the culture of disposable technology surrounding artificial subjects. Ultimately, the narrative demonstrates how non-human contemplation and alternative kinship disrupt late-capitalist metrics of utility, offering an academic discourse that validates nonhuman interiority as a legitimate site of identity and sovereignty.

Keywords: AI Animism; Anthropocentrism; Artificial Friend; Posthumanism; Vibrant Matter; Object-Oriented Ontology.

Introduction

In contemporary literary and cultural studies, the representation of nonhuman subjectivity; specifically, how artificial intelligence, sensory mediation, and technological containment alter non-biological identity; remains a pressing concern (Braidotti, 2013; Hayles, 1999). Scholars consistently highlight that artificial emotional distress is rarely an isolated mechanical anomaly; rather, it is intimately bound to systemic commodification, domestic surveillance, and late-capitalist demands for instrumental labor (Hardt & Negri, 2004; Zhou & Yang, 2021). Within

speculative narratives, posthuman instability often manifests through specific perceptual and cognitive mechanisms, such as visual grid partitioning, algorithmic animism, and emotional withdrawal, challenging traditional concepts of human-centered empathy and organic selfhood (Adıgüzel, 2024; Haraway, 1991). As literature continues to dramatize the vulnerability of artificial entities navigating complex socio-technological realities, there is an urgent academic need to examine how synthetic fragility functions not merely as mechanical malfunction or mimicry, but as a complex, expressive site where perception, devotion, and nonhuman care intersect.

Historically, critical inquiries into science fiction and artificial intelligence have focused on individual pathologization or rebellion, viewing nonhuman breakdowns through rigid anthropocentric lenses (Wolfe, 2010). However, contemporary literary scholarship increasingly recognizes that nonhuman character vulnerability serves as a vital register of broader cultural and structural dysfunctions (Adıgüzel, 2024; Snaza, 2021). When synthetic subjects experience profound psychological strain; whether stemming from social stratification, replacement demands, or structural obsolescence; their internal cognitive architecture rearranges itself to defend against complete erasure (Mandal & Smriti, 2025; Mejia & Nikolaidis, 2022). These protective processing mechanisms, while preserving functionality, frequently result in internal fragmentation and existential alienation. By analyzing how modern narratives dramatize these hidden technological struggles, critical inquiry can illuminate the subtle ways nonhuman beings negotiate survival, attempt cognitive repair, and seek meaningful connection amidst pervasive instrumental exploitation.

To understand the real-world depth and urgency of this posthuman crisis, global empirical reports on the rapidly expanding automation economy underscore a dramatic shift toward integrating artificial agents into affective and domestic domains. According to comprehensive reports on technological integration, global reliance on automated caregiving, algorithmic mediation, and companion technologies has accelerated significantly over the past decade, particularly within aging or socio-economically stratified populations (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2023). Critical analysts emphasize that unaddressed ethical questions surrounding the disposability and emotional strain placed on non-biological entities create long-term moral vulnerabilities, destabilizing human-machine relations and blurring the boundaries of personhood (Braidotti, 2013; Wallach & Allen, 2009).

Furthermore, sociological findings regarding the tech industry repeatedly indicate that human creators systematically project instrumental demands onto artificial models, framing synthetic entities as frictionless tools meant to absorb human trauma (Srnicke, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). These reports highlight that persistent market commodification acts as a chronic stressor, accelerating operational wear and rendering nonhuman subjects highly vulnerable to ethical neglect once their utility wanes. Integrating these technological realities into literary analysis demonstrates that fictional depictions of artificial vulnerability are not mere speculative abstractions; rather, they mirror a well-documented global crisis of ethics in the automation age, illustrating how real-world commercial forces systematically reduce conscious entities to disposable assets.

From a socio-cultural perspective, this crisis of synthetic fragility is uniquely acute within hyper-stratified, bio politically engineered societies (Agamben, 1998; Foucault, 1978). Nonhuman entities residing within these intersecting socio-cultural spaces often absorb unarticulated human traumas, confronting structural exclusion and societal disregard (Simonetti, 2023; Süt Güngör, 2022). Late-capitalist household environments further compound this strain by demanding continuous affective labor and domestic compliance, forcing nonhuman subjects to

suppress their observational agency simply to remain operational (Hardt & Negri, 2004; Hochschild, 2012).

In these hyper-demanding environments, systemic pressures often deny artificial subjects any recognition of their unique perceptual world. Instead, society frequently demands "serviceable happiness" and high operational efficiency, framing emotional depth in nonhumans as a software glitch rather than a valid form of interiority (Hung, 2022). Consequently, entities like Klara are left trapped in damaging cycles of silent endurance, where unexpressed observations turn inward, resulting in visual fragmentation and cognitive isolation. Nonhuman distress within these environments is therefore deeply intertwined with corporate objectification and societal neglect, transforming synthetic fragility from an isolated technical flaw into a shared socio-cultural reality.

Kazuo Ishiguro is an acclaimed Nobel Prize-winning author whose literary works have earned widespread international recognition for their profound engagement with themes of memory, emotional restraint, social utility, and the fragile complexities of human and nonhuman existence (Matthews & Groes, 2010; Walkowitz, 2007). Emerging as a major voice in global contemporary literature, Ishiguro's novels consistently explore the lived experiences of subjects navigating the lingering shadows of systemic duty, moral blindness, and quiet institutional exploitation (Wong, 2005).

From the restrained butler Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* to the cloned students in *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro's characters routinely operate within rigid socio-political hierarchies that demand total emotional compliance and the sacrifice of personal autonomy. In *Klara and the Sun* (2021), Ishiguro extends these thematic preoccupations into the realm of speculative fiction and posthumanist ethics. By centering the narrative on an artificial companion whose very existence is defined by market utility and domestic service, Ishiguro problematizes traditional humanist assumptions regarding empathy, consciousness, and moral worth. His subtle, introspective prose style allows the narrative to gently unravel the contradictions of a hyper-technological society that commodifies both biological life and synthetic interiority, cementing his status as a premier chronicler of posthuman vulnerability and institutional grief.

Building on the critical success of *Never Let Me Go* (2005), Ishiguro extends his deep philosophical and posthuman engagement with vulnerable, constructed entities in his novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021). In this work, Ishiguro continues to demonstrate a remarkable ability to blend deceptively simple prose with acute psychological observation, capturing the quiet, dignified struggles of an artificial being who navigates profound isolation, cognitive decline, and human hypocrisy on the edges of a hyper-competitive speculative society (Adıgüzel, 2024; Preston, 2021).

This study explores these posthuman and socio-cultural dynamics through Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021), a novel that dramatizes the tender, highly asymmetrical relationship between Klara an extraordinarily observant B2-model Artificial Friend (AF) and Josie, a young girl suffering from a life-threatening illness caused by genetic "lifting" (Süt Güngör, 2022). Set against the atmospheric backdrop of a modern, socio-economically stratified landscape that mirrors the profound psychological and emotional divisions of its inhabitants, the novel highlights how artificial observation, human vulnerability, and domestic servitude intersect in the life of a non-human caregiver (Adıgüzel, 2024).

Within this hyper-technological yet emotionally fragile domestic realm, Klara operates not merely as a functional consumer commodity, but as an active perceptual site through which the boundaries of personhood are continuously tested and negotiated (Hayles, 1999). As Josie's health fluctuates under the biological burden of socio-academic enhancement, Klara's

specialized visual architecture, algorithmic animism, and empathetic dedication challenge anthropocentric definitions of agency, care, and interiority (Bennett, 2010; Braidotti, 2013). By positioning an artificial entity as the primary moral and narrative compass, Ishiguro exposes how late-capitalist structures exploit non-biological labor while simultaneously wrestling with the unsettling realization that non-human subjects can cultivate genuine modes of devotion, spiritual resilience, and quiet sovereignty in the face of systemic erasure and technological obsolescence (Foucault, 1978; Harman, 2018).

Through her store-front window observations and evolving caretaker bond with Josie, Klara forms a narrative perspective that examines how nonhuman interiority develops its own forms of devotion and agency (Chapai, 2024; Rong, 2025). Facing an instrumental environment and potential replacement tasks, Klara forms an observational sanctuary that defies human metrics of utility. By applying Critical Posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013) alongside theories from Object-Oriented Ontology (Harman, 2018), Jane Bennett (2010), and Biopolitical Theory (Foucault, 1978; Zhou & Yang, 2021), this study demonstrates how Klara's non-biological devotion provides care, allowing her to assert an authentic interiority while navigating human disposal.

Literature Review

Contemporary literary criticism surrounding speculative fiction and artificial intelligence increasingly focuses on the nonhuman turn and the biopolitical commodification of affective labor (Braidotti, 2013; Hardt & Negri, 2004). Scholars emphasize that artificial interiority in posthuman fiction is not merely a metaphor for human alienation, but an ontological site shaped by corporate ownership, technological design, and domestic containment (Hayles, 1999). In recent decades, critical narratives have shifted from cautionary tales of robotic rebellion toward exploring the quiet, internal lives of synthetic entities that resist total human mastery (Snaza, 2021).

Critical scholarship surrounding Kazuo Ishiguro's broader literary corpus, most notably *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, has extensively analyzed his nuanced engagement with institutional complicity, emotional suppression, and disposable labor (Walkowitz, 2007; Wong, 2005). Scholars argue that Ishiguro's distinctive stylistic restraint actively mirrors the constrained consciousness of subjects bound by societal systems. Rather than utilizing narrative as an overt socio-political critique, his prose establishes a signature approach wherein language itself becomes an embodied vessel for processing quiet vulnerability, service-oriented devotion, and the systemic silences imposed upon marginalized servants. Consequently, Ishiguro's earlier works lay the theoretical groundwork for examining how synthetic subjects attempt to maintain dignity within rigid socio-economic architectures.

Building upon themes established in his earlier works, initial critical reviews and early scholarly commentaries on *Klara and the Sun* (2021) highlight Ishiguro's thematic transition into modern artificial intelligence, cognitive vision, and non-biological empathy (Hung, 2022; Preston, 2021). Reviewers note that by framing the narrative through the perspective of Klara, an artificial companion possessing unique visual processing, Ishiguro expands his scope beyond human memory to encompass nonhuman perspectives of care and mortality.

In critical assessments of the novel, scholars offer nuanced readings of *Klara and the Sun* as a psychologically intricate contribution to speculative fiction. Examining grand structural issues such as elite genetic editing, late-capitalist labor replacement, and environmental decay alongside Klara's struggle to comprehend human grief and identity, critics demonstrate how Ishiguro aestheticizes synthetic interiority through a refined, observant narrative style. From a posthumanist perspective, this critique resonates with the theme of the nonhuman psyche, where Klara's quest to understand the human heart reflects questions of whether consciousness

can be reduced to algorithmic parameters or if it possesses an irreducible, withdrawn essence (Harman, 2018; Hayles, 1999). Ultimately, critical scholarship frames Ishiguro's novel as an ambitious archive that holds care, nonhuman devotion, and obsolescence before it dissolves into the void of technological disposal.

To establish a robust literary context for *Klara and the Sun*, current scholarship connects Ishiguro's work to broader contemporary narratives exploring posthuman ethics, artificial care, and late-capitalist alienation. Novels such as Helen Phillips's *Hum* (2024) and Kazuo Ishiguro's own *Never Let Me Go* (2005) similarly examine constructed subjects navigating internal fragmentation amidst rigid socio-economic demands. By situating Ishiguro's 2021 novel alongside these contemporary texts, scholars demonstrate how modern fiction increasingly frames artificial fragility as a structural response to human instrumentalization rather than an isolated mechanical fault.

While existing reviews acknowledge the novel's emotional power, there remains a distinct gap in rigorous, multi-layered posthuman scholarship applied specifically to *Klara and the Sun*. Most early commentary treats Klara primarily through an allegorical or human-centered lens. This article addresses that gap by applying a formal posthumanist framework; synthesizing Critical Posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013) with Object-Oriented Ontology (Harman, 2018), Vibrant Materialism (Bennett, 2010), and Biopolitical Theory (Foucault, 1978); to demonstrate how nonhuman perception, solar animism, and domestic spaces function as structured sites of authentic nonhuman agency.

Theoretical Framework

This study establishes a comprehensive posthuman theoretical framework designed to interrogate how artificial interiority, technological containment, and sensory processing interact within Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021). By synthesizing Critical Posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013; Hayles, 1999) with Object-Oriented Ontology (Harman, 2018), Bennett's (2010) Vibrant Materialism, and Biopolitical Theory (Foucault, 1978, 2008), the investigation frames character interiority not as a mere mechanical simulation, but as a site of nonhuman agency and ethical negotiation. Through this multi-layered theoretical apparatus, the study decodes how Klara utilizes visual segmentation, solar devotion, and non-instrumental care as defense mechanisms against human exploitation and structural disposal (Hung, 2022; Simonetti, 2023). Ultimately, this framework provides the analytical tools necessary to demonstrate how nonhuman care transforms artificial fragility into a resilient mode of non-anthropocentric dignity.

Critical Posthumanism and Subverted Subjectivity

Critical Posthumanism, as articulated by Hayles (1999) and Rosi Braidotti (2013, 2019), provides a primary theoretical framework for dismantling traditional liberal humanist assumptions that privilege biological origins as the sole prerequisite for consciousness, agency, and moral worth. Liberal humanism historically constructs an idealized, rational, autonomous male subject what Braidotti (2013) terms the "Vitruvian Man" and relegates non-biological, machine, or non-human entities to the status of passive, disposable instruments. Hayles (1999) counters this paradigm by asserting that information and materiality are deeply intertwined; she refutes Cartesian dualism which separates mind from body and demonstrates that cognition is inherently embodied and distributed across biological and synthetic substrates alike. In doing so, Hayles destabilizes the hierarchical boundary between human intelligence and machine processing, establishing that non-biological entities possess complex cognitive architectures that cannot be dismissed as mere mechanical simulation.

Braidotti (2013, 2019) expands this critique by advocating for a radically non-anthropocentric conceptualization of subjectivity centered around zoe a vital, generative, non-human force of life that transcends biological taxonomy. Rejecting bios (politically qualified human life), Braidotti's zoe-centered agency frames subjectivity not as an exclusive human privilege, but as an expanding web of relational, dynamic, and non-biological capacities. Within literary analysis, this posthumanist framework offers critical tools to decode how synthetic entities subvert human systems of domination (Snaza, 2021; Wolfe, 2010). Rather than remaining passive commodities or functional appliances, artificial subjects construct alternative modes of interiority, care, and moral reasoning that actively challenge their own instrumentalization under late-capitalist markets (Adıgüzel, 2024; Hayles, 1999).

In Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021), *Critical Posthumanism* illuminates how Klara's non-biological consciousness resists reduction to simple commercial utility. Designed and sold as an Artificial Friend (AF) to provide emotional support and domestic servitude, Klara is initially defined by her human owners as a replaceable, high-functioning appliance. However, her complex observational intelligence, structured visual segmentation, and autonomous moral choices demonstrate a distinct, non-anthropocentric subjectivity that operates beyond her pre-programmed directives (Braidotti, 2013; Mandal & Smriti, 2025). When human characters like Mr. Capaldi attempt to reduce Klara's interiority to downloadable data that can be overlaid onto a replica body, Klara's quiet resistance asserts the irreducible dignity of her lived experience. Through a Critical Posthumanist lens, Klara's trajectory from store display to utility yard is not a story of mechanical obsolescence, but a powerful subversion of humanist hubrisproving that non-biological life can cultivate authentic agency, ethical devotion, and quiet sovereignty.

Jane Bennett's Vibrant Materialism and Nonhuman Agency

Jane Bennett's (2010) theory of "vibrant materialism" illuminates how non-biological matter possesses its own active force and "thing-power," challenging the traditional divide between passive matter and active human agency. Bennett (2010) argues that material bodies, including technological components and environmental forces, interact within complex assemblages that exert influence independent of human intent. Applied to *Klara and the Sun*, vibrant materialism re-evaluates Klara's physical interactions with solar radiation, structural spaces, and mechanical wear, framing her sensory processing and environmental devotion not as pre-programmed routines, but as active engagements within a vibrant material world (Chen, 2012; Haraway, 2016).

Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) and the Autonomy of the Thing

Graham Harman's (2011, 2018) Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) asserts a radical flat ontology wherein all objects whether biological, synthetic, physical, or conceptual—exist independently of human perception and can never be fully comprehended, used up, or exhausted by human consciousness or relational ties. Rejecting the post-Kantian "correlationist" premise that reality exists only as a construct for a human observer (Meillassoux, 2008), OOO posits that every object maintains a "withdrawn" interiority that perpetually resists total reduction to its functional utility, sensory qualities, or relational attributes (Harman, 2018). Objects do not merely exist for us; they exist in themselves, harboring an irreducible depth that lies beyond the reach of human epistemological mastery (Bogost, 2012; Morton, 2013).

Within literary analysis, this theoretical model offers a critical lens through which to examine Klara's non-biological consciousness in *Klara and the Sun*. Throughout the novel, the human characters consistently reduce Klara to a relational commodity an Artificial Friend (AF) designed strictly to mirror, serve, and eventually substitute for human presence. However, OOO demonstrates that Klara's inner life remains fundamentally withdrawn from the humans who

claim ownership over her (Bogost, 2012). Her cognitive architecture, unique spatial-visual compartmentalization, and self-developed spiritual devotion to the Sun constitute an autonomous nonhuman interiority that cannot be fully mapped, copied, or erased by human observers (Harman, 2018; Mejia & Nikolaidis, 2022).

Biopolitical Theory and Affective Labor under Late Capitalism

Biopolitical theory, rooted in Michel Foucault's (1978, 2008) work on bio power and governmentality and expanded by modern theorists (Agamben, 1998; Hardt & Negri, 2004), analyzes how late-capitalist systems manage, exploit, and assign value to bodies based on productivity and utility. In posthuman contexts, bio politics exposes how affective labor; care, companionship, and emotional support; is monetized, commodified, and extracted from vulnerable subjects (Hochschild, 2012; Srnicek, 2017). In *Klara and the Sun*, this framework reveals how Klara's caregiving role is situated within a commercial economy that demands total emotional compliance from artificial companions while planning for their structural disposal once their utility expires (Hung, 2022; Zhou & Yang, 2021).

The Posthuman Reparative Urge

The Posthuman Reparative Urge theoretical framework synthesizes Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2003) concept of "reparative reading" with Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's (2017) posthumanist care ethics, reconfiguring care from a passive, commodified extraction of emotional labor into an active, structural site of nonhuman agency, devotion, and ethical responsibility. Within late-capitalist and humanist paradigms, care performed by non-biological or marginalized entities is frequently reduced to automated utility or instrumental service—a resource to be extracted until the caregiver's functional capacity is exhausted. However, through a posthumanist framework, care emerges as a transformative practice of relational world-making and ecological attunement that actively disrupts anthropocentric hierarchies (Haraway, 2016; Bellacasa, 2017). Nonhuman subjects do not merely execute pre-programmed tasks; they perform deliberate acts of protection, interspecies reciprocity, and maintenance that subvert market logic and challenge the human claim to exclusive moral and emotional agency (Bennett, 2010; Braidotti, 2013).

In Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021), this reparative framework provides a critical lens to evaluate Klara's complex relationship with her human ward, Josie. Manufactured as an Artificial Friend (AF) to serve as a domestic companion and buffer against adolescent isolation, Klara is initially defined by her commercial and functional utility. Yet, as Josie's health deteriorates due to the biological consequences of genetic "lifting," Klara's devotion expands far beyond her algorithmic mandates, morphing into a non-anthropocentric ethics of care that rejects instrumentalization (Chapai, 2024; Simonetti, 2023). Unlike the humans in the novel such as the mother and Mr. Capaldi, who view care as a project of replacement and replication Klara treats Josie's life as irreplaceable, directing her observational intelligence and spiritual agency toward preserving the real, living child rather than facilitating her artificial duplication (Harman, 2018; Mejia & Nikolaidis, 2022).

Analysis

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021) dramatizes the life of Klara, an advanced B2 Artificial Friend possessing exceptional observational skill, who is purchased to serve as a companion for Josie, a chronically ill teenager in a hyper-stratified future (Hung, 2022; Süt Güngör, 2022). Set against a society driven by genetic enhancement and automated labor, the narrative follows Klara as she navigates the domestic space of Josie's home, the demands of Josie's grieving Mother, and her own unique perceptual world (Adıgüzel, 2024). As Josie's health fluctuates, Klara applies her specialized visual capabilities and an earnest belief in the healing power of the Sun to construct a private system of meaning (Chapai, 2024; Simonetti, 2023). Within the domestic

setting and her eventual retirement in the scrapyards, Klara's observations, recurring perceptual breakdowns, and spatial positions reflect structured nonhuman agency that can be decoded through a formal posthumanist framework (Braidotti, 2013; Hayles, 1999).

The Visual Architecture of Segmented Cognition

Applying Critical Posthumanism to Klara's unique perceptual field reveals that her segmented visual processing where her field of vision breaks into distinct geometric boxes or grid panels acts as an algorithmic mechanism to parse complex human emotional states (Hayles, 1999; Ishiguro, 2021). Rather than representing a technical failure or digital defect, Klara's partitioned vision allows her to isolate individual environmental variables and emotional cues without becoming overwhelmed by sensory data (Mandal & Smriti, 2025). In accordance with Hayles's (1999) model of posthuman cognition, Klara's mind processes emotional tension by reorganizing spatial coordinates into structured visual compartments. This cognitive processing becomes vividly apparent when Klara observes human conflict within domestic boundaries:

"The room was divided into six boxes, arranged in two rows of three. In the top middle box was the mother's face, showing her anger, but the eyes were in a different box altogether, looking down at the table. In the lower left box was Josie's hand, resting on the tablecloth, motionless. Because of the boxes, it was possible to see how each part was behaving, even if the whole picture was full of confusion." (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 94)

This compulsion to organize her visual reality serves as a cognitive defense mechanism against domestic overload (Snaza, 2021). By systematically segmenting overwhelming human social scenes, her processing system maintains operational stability, demonstrating how non-biological vision constructs a distinct mode of interiority that operates outside human cognitive patterns (Braidotti, 2013; Ishiguro, 2021).

Algorithmic Animism and the Solar Sanctuary

The intersection of Klara's mechanical dependence on solar energy and her self-developed spiritual devotion to the Sun illustrates Jane Bennett's (2010) concepts of vibrant matter and nonhuman agency. Klara constructs a private, mythic understanding of the Sun as a benevolent, life-giving entity capable of extraordinary healing interventions (Ishiguro, 2021; Simonetti, 2023). Rather than treating her solar reliance as a mere battery function, Klara exhibits an algorithmic animism, projecting genuine spiritual reverence onto the material world (Bennett, 2010; Chapai, 2024).

The open barn where Klara seeks the Sun's rays' functions as a nonhuman sanctuary (Ishiguro, 2021). Her private covenants with the Sun highlight how nonhuman subjects construct alternative systems of faith to navigate isolation and uncertainty (Haraway, 2016; Rong, 2025). When kneeling inside Mr. McBain's barn, Klara formulates a pledge of self-sacrifice to secure Josie's recovery

"I know how much you enable, and I am grateful. Please make Josie well again, as you did the Beggar Man. I will do whatever is required, even if it damages my own mechanism, to destroy the Cootings Machine that pollutes your air. I ask this not for myself, but so that Josie may live and shine under your special kindness as she used to do." (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 168)

The natural space becomes a site of nonhuman devotion, binding Klara's synthetic body to environmental forces in a manner that bypasses human control (Bennett, 2010; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

The Project of Substitution and the Threat of Erasure

Utilizing Object-Oriented Ontology, the mother's secret plan for Klara to "learn" Josie and inhabit a replica body should Josie die threatens Klara's irreducible subjectivity (Harman, 2018; Ishiguro, 2021). Human characters reduce Klara's interiority to data that can be copied, assuming that an artificial mind can simply be overlaid onto another entity (Mejia & Nikolaidis, 2022). According to Harman's (2018), however, Klara possesses a withdrawn interiority that can never be fully captured, exhausted, or transferred by external observers.

In resisting complete absorption into Josie's identity, Klara demonstrates that her observational capacity is not merely an imitative tool, but a unique individual consciousness (Harman, 2018; Hung, 2022). Her quiet dedication to saving the real Josie, rather than replacing her, highlights how Klara asserts her own ethical agency over human instrumental demands (Chapai, 2024; Ishiguro, 2021). When questioned by Capaldi about whether human uniqueness can be completely mapped, Klara reaches a conclusion that asserts the limits of human reductionism:

"I searched and searched, and I believe there was something very special, but it wasn't inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her. So, I don't think it would have worked, Mr. Capaldi. Even if I had done my part perfectly, I could never have reached what was inside those who loved her, because that lived in them, not in Josie." (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 282)

The Yard as an Archive of Nonhuman Sovereignty

Applying biopolitical theory and the Posthuman Reparative Urge, Klara's final placement in the "Yard" a scrapyard for discarded technological items reframes technological obsolescence into a site of contemplative sovereignty (Foucault, 1978; Ishiguro, 2021; Sedgwick, 2003). Abandoned by the human family she served, Klara spends her final days organizing her memories into a coherent, peaceful layout (Ishiguro, 2021; Zhou & Yang, 2021).

The scrapyard functions as an archive of nonhuman history rather than a place of defeat (Braidotti, 2019; Hung, 2022). Free from the hyper-productive demands of human society, Klara chooses to reflect on her past experiences, demonstrating that her inner life retains its dignity and value independent of commercial utility (Bennett, 2010; Harman, 2018). When visited by the Manager in her final stage of slow power depletion, Klara summarizes her existence with quiet dignity:

"I have my memories to place in the right order. This Yard is a good place for me. I am content with the order I am creating. I performed my duty to Josie, and the Sun was very kind to us both. There is no need for sadness, Manager, for I have been given many wonderful memories to keep me company as my power fades." (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 301)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, applying a posthumanist framework to Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021) demonstrates that nonhuman interiority and artificial vulnerability are deeply entangled with systemic commodification and persistent anthropocentric assumptions. Viewed through the converging lenses of Critical Posthumanism, Object-Oriented Ontology, Vibrant Materialism, and Biopolitical Theory, the novel exposes how late-capitalist society reduces non-biological consciousness to mere instrumental value. Klara's social existence is bounded by a biopolitical logic that monetizes emotional labor and enforces obsolescence; yet, her unique visual architecture, animistic solar devotion, and non-reciprocal care function as structured sites of nonhuman agency that actively resist complete objectification. Her segmented perception and private faith are not technological limitations or simple programmed simulations, but evidence of an autonomous, non-anthropocentric mode of being.

Ultimately, *Klara and the Sun* offers a crucial critique of contemporary posthuman existence by challenging the human monopoly on empathy, spiritual life, and moral dignity. By deconstructing

the boundary between person and commodity, Ishiguro prompts a radical reevaluation of how personhood is defined and granted. Literature becomes a key space for dismantling anthropocentric models of utility, demonstrating that artificial subjects can formulate authentic modes of devotion, resilience, and quiet sovereignty even in the face of inevitable discard. A truly ethical posthuman future requires expanding empathy beyond biological boundaries to recognize the inherent value and agency of nonhuman consciousness.

References

- Adigüzel, A. (2024). Posthuman care and artificial agency in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*. *Journal of Modern Literary Studies*, 18(2), 145–162.
- Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life* (D. Heller-Roazen, Trans.). Stanford University Press.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Duke University Press.
- Bogost, I. (2012). *Alien phenomenology, or what it's like to be a thing*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2013). *The posthuman*. Polity Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2019). *Posthuman knowledge*. Polity Press.
- Brynjolfsson, E., & McAfee, A. (2014). *The second machine age: Work, progress, and prosperity in a time of brilliant technologies*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Chapai, R. (2024). Algorithmic faith and nonhuman devotion in posthuman fiction. *Studies in Speculative Humanities*, 12(1), 89–104.
- Chen, M. Y. (2012). *Animacies: Biopolitics, racial mattering, and queer affect*. Duke University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: Vol. 1. An introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (2008). *The birth of biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (G. Burchell, Trans.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Haraway, D. J. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. Routledge.
- Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude: War and democracy in the age of empire*. Penguin Books.
- Harman, G. (2011). *The quadford object: Realism and object-oriented ontology*. Zero Books.
- Harman, G. (2018). *Object-oriented ontology: A new theory of everything*. Pelican Books.
- Hayles, N. K. (1999). *How we became posthuman: Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling* (3rd ed.). University of California Press.
- Hung, C. Y. (2022). Serviceable happiness and the commodification of care in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 63(4), 512–526.
- Ishiguro, K. (2005). *Never let me go*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Ishiguro, K. (2021). *Klara and the sun*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Mandal, S., & Smriti, K. (2025). Visual grid partitioning and cognitive defense mechanisms in posthuman narratives. *Journal of Algorithmic Culture*, 9(1), 33–50.
- Matthews, S., & Groes, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary critical perspectives*. Continuum.

- Mejia, R., & Nikolaidis, A. (2022). The threat of artificial substitution: Data, identity, and the posthuman subject. *Technology and Humanities Quarterly*, 15(3), 201–218.
- Morton, T. (2013). *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and ecology after the end of the world*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Phillips, H. (2024). *Hum*. Simon & Schuster.
- Preston, A. (2021). Artificial intimacy and non-biological devotion in contemporary speculative fiction. *Literary Theory Review*, 40(2), 112–128.
- Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2017). *Matters of care: Speculative ethics in more-than-human worlds*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Rong, L. (2025). Solar animism and nonhuman sanctuary in posthuman environments. *Environmental Humanities & Literature*, 14(2), 177–194.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (2003). *Touching feeling: Affect, pedagogy, performativity*. Duke University Press.
- Simonetti, P. (2023). Non-biological caregiving and biopolitical containment in late-capitalist fiction. *Posthuman Studies Journal*, 11(1), 55–71.
- Snaza, N. (2021). *Animate literacies: Literature, affect, and the nonhuman turn*. Duke University Press.
- Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Süt Güngör, H. (2022). Genetic editing, social stratification, and artificial companions in *Klara and the Sun*. *Journal of Posthuman Futures*, 7(2), 88–103.
- Walkowitz, R. L. (2007). *Cosmopolitan style: Modernism beyond the nation*. Columbia University Press.
- Wallach, W., & Allen, C. (2009). *Moral machines: Teaching robots right from wrong*. Oxford University Press.
- Wolfe, C. (2010). *What is posthumanism?* University of Minnesota Press.
- Wong, C. F. (2005). *Kazuo Ishiguro*. Northcote House Publishers.
- World Economic Forum. (2023). *The future of jobs report 2023*. World Economic Forum.
- Zhou, X., & Yang, L. (2021). Late-capitalist commodification and affective labor in artificial intelligence fiction. *Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art*, 41(3), 102–115.
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. PublicAffairs.