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**THE ASPECTS OF HUMAN-NON-HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS
IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S NOVEL, *KLARA AND THE SUN***

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ANNOTATION

The twenty-first century is a period rife with technological advances, where information technology and biotechnology are driving a seismic shift in the global landscape. Simultaneously, they have had a profound impact on our psychological and social frameworks.

Relevance of the current scientific work is preconditioned by the necessity to explore how this technological upsurge impacts our understanding of the world and our place within it, as imagined in the house of literature. In the dynamic realm of contemporary literature, the exploration of relationships between humans and non-humans has emerged as a compelling and intellectually stimulating theme. Kazuo Ishiguro is among those contemporary English writers who have made a significant contribution to these efforts.

The object of the study is his novel of 2021, *Klara and the Sun*. Given the centrality of the character of the social robot with AI, the novel appeals to examining a variety of human-non-human relations, as imagined by the writer, which constitutes **the study's objective**.

The research applies cultural-historical, narratological, biographical, and comparative **methods**. It also relies on the posthumanist theory.

The work comprises Introduction, 3 chapters, conclusions, the list of references (74 items). In total, the work consists of 71 pages.

The first chapter provides an overview of posthumanism, which offers a radical reevaluation of the human condition in the face of technological and social change. It challenges the traditional humanist view of humanity as fixed, rational, and superior, and instead presents a vision of humanity as a dynamic, hybrid entity that is constantly being shaped by technology and its environment. If, according to Ihab Hassan, AI «help to transform the image of man», Ishiguro's novel explains in what way “the agents of posthumanism” (in particular, social robots with AI) do so. Hassan related to technology and the pharmaceutical industry whereas Kazuo

Ishiguro does so in regard to biotechnologies and information technologies. However, they are both concerned with the cultural manifestations for if AI help to transform the concept of the human, it unveils itself through the cultural manifestations. The first chapter also explores the generic specificity of the novel and provides rationale for considering it an example of soft science fiction. It also proves that the author evokes anthropomorphism as a key literary device, ultimately compelling the reader to reflect on the boundaries and connotations of "human nature".

The second chapter examines the relationships between humans and non-humans from a posthumanist perspective. Klara's care and companionship for Josie, as well as her observation and understanding of the human world, demonstrates that technology has deeply penetrated into human life and, to a certain extent, undertakes the functions of human emotional communication and social interaction. This coincides with the posthumanist view of breaking the traditional boundaries between humans and technology, reflecting the trend of mutual integration and influence between humans and technology in the new era.

It has been proven that *Klara and the Sun* also engages in the ethical thinking in the context of posthumanism. Klara's selfless dedication to humans and her innocent perception of the world stand in sharp contrast to the complexity and selfishness of humans. This triggers the reader's concern about human morality and ethical responsibilities, such as whether humans should use technology to change the natural process of life and how humans should define their moral and ethical norms in the highly developed technological future. This echoes the ethical controversies faced in the development of posthumanism, such as concerns about the social inequality that technology may cause.

The third chapter deals with the influence of Japanese culture on Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, demonstrating how the author integrates Japanese cultural elements to enrich the novel's themes, characters, and symbolic meanings. The core values of loyalty, bravery, self-sacrifice, and honor in traditional Japanese Bushido

are invoked in the characterization of Klara's (her model of guardianship of Josie) and her narrative. The central symbol of the sun, associated with faith and hope, borrows its meanings from the Japanese mythology. The changing states of the sun reflect the emotional fluctuations and fates of the characters as well as drive the novel's plot. The aesthetic concept of *Mono no Aware* emphasizes the perception of the impermanence of life and the transience of beauty. The contrast between Klara's faith in the sun and the impermanence of life intensifies the emotional tension in the novel, prompting the reader to deeply contemplate the essence of life, emotions, and the value of relationships in the context of technological development.

To conclude, Ishiguro's incorporation of Japanese cultural elements in *Klara and the Sun* against the backdrop of science fiction achieves a unique synthesis of Western and Eastern codes. It offers the reader profound insights into the significance of traditional spiritual values in an era of rapid technological advancement, and by so doing transcend the posthumanist scepticism towards humanism.

Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro, science fiction, anthropomorphism, AI, human-non-human interaction

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century is a period rife with technological marvels, where information technology and biotechnology are driving a seismic shift in the global landscape. The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) has been nothing short of revolutionary, permeating every nook and cranny of modern existence. In daily life, AI manifests through voice-activated assistants such as Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa. In China, the landscape is equally vibrant, with platforms like Baidu's DuerOS and Alibaba's Tmall Genie leading the way. DuerOS, integrated into over 200 million smart devices as of 2023 (Wang, Li, & Zhang, 2024), offers services, including multilingual support and local news updates, while Tmall Genie leverages Alibaba's e-commerce ecosystem to provide personalized shopping recommendations and lifestyle management (Chen & Zhao, 2023).

In the industrial domain, AI-powered algorithms optimize manufacturing processes, predict equipment failures, and enhance supply chain efficiency. A study by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (2023) revealed that Chinese manufacturing enterprises, adopting AI technologies, witnessed an average productivity increase of 22%.

This technological revolution has transformed the physical world in tangible ways, with the development of self-driving cars, advanced robotics in healthcare, and smart cities, all of which are harnessed to enhance human well-being. In the realm of autonomous vehicles, companies like Waymo in the United States and Baidu Apollo in China have made significant strides. Waymo's self-driving taxis in Phoenix, Arizona, have completed over 20 million miles of autonomous driving, providing a convenient transportation alternative (Waymo, 2023). Baidu Apollo, on the other hand, has been deployed in multiple Chinese cities, with test fleets operating on public roads, aiming to reduce traffic congestion and improve road

safety (Li et al., 2024).

In healthcare, advanced robotics are revolutionizing patient care. Surgical robots, such as the da Vinci Surgical System, have enabled minimally invasive procedures, reducing patient recovery times and improving surgical precision. In China, for example, the MicroPort Accubot orthopedic surgical robot has been used in numerous hospitals, assisting surgeons in performing complex joint replacement surgeries with greater accuracy (Chen & Wang, 2023).

Smart cities represent another significant application of this technological revolution. Singapore has implemented an integrated smart city framework, using sensors and data analytics to optimize traffic flow, manage energy consumption, and enhance public safety. In China, the city of Shenzhen has deployed a comprehensive smart city system, which includes intelligent traffic management, smart waste collection, and environmental monitoring. This system has reduced traffic congestion by 15% and improved waste disposal efficiency by 20% (Shenzhen Smart City Research Institute, 2023).

These examples illustrate how technological advancements are reshaping our physical environment and increase the quality of people's lives. Simultaneously, they have had a profound impact on our psychological and social frameworks. Besides, as the capabilities of AI blur the lines between what is human and what is artificial, we are facing a challenge of re-evaluating our understanding of self-identity. Our perception of others is also impacted as technologies affect our social interactions. Moreover, the rise of non-human entities, such as intelligent machines and algorithms, compels us to reassess our relationship with them.

As a result, the exploration of human-non-human relationships has emerged as a critical area of study, cutting across multiple disciplines. Philosophers debate the moral and ethical implications of creating sentient machines, sociologists analyze how these relationships reshape social structures, computer scientists strive to develop AI systems that can interact with humans in a more natural and meaningful way.

English literature, throughout its long and storied history, has served as a barometer of the *zeitgeist*, reflecting the cultural, social, and technological changes of each era. In the dynamic realm of contemporary literature, the exploration of relationships between humans and non-humans has emerged as a compelling and intellectually stimulating theme. This theme is not merely a trend, but a profound reflection of the shifting paradigms in our societies. As we stand at the cusp of an era defined by rapid technological advancements, from the proliferation of artificial intelligence to the rise of genetic engineering, the boundaries between the human and the non-human are becoming increasingly blurred. This blurring forces us to re-evaluate our understanding of humanity, our place in the world, and the nature of our connections with entities that are not strictly human. It serves as a multi-faceted lens through which we can examine not only the fundamental nature of humanity, but also the evolving frontiers between what has traditionally been considered human and non-human in an increasingly technologically advanced and socially complex global landscape.

Relevance of the current scientific work is preconditioned by the necessity to explore how this technological upsurge impacts our understanding of the world and our place within it, as imagined in the house of literature.

Among contemporary English writers, Kazuo Ishiguro has made a significant contribution. As Andrew Bennett rightfully claims in his *Introduction* to the first *Cambridge Companion to Kazuo Ishiguro*, the writer's novels "have consistently focused on the effect on individuals of larger cultural, political, and historical movements and dilemmas in ways that have captured the imagination of an international readership while also gaining enormous critical acclaim and forging for themselves a place in the contemporary literary canon" (Bennett, 2023, p. 1). This time the writer is interested in the dilemmas related to technologies.

The object of the study is the novel by Kazuo Ishiguro *Klara and the Sun* (2021).

His exploration of human-non-human relationships in the novel is both

timely and profound, it also proceeds with the concerns expressed in his earlier novel, *Never Let Me Go* (2005). *Klara and the Sun* invites the reader to embark on a deep-seated journey into the emotional, ethical, and philosophical dimensions embedded within such connections. It is set in a near future world, where AI robots, known as Artificial Friends, are designed to provide companionship to humans. The story is told from the perspective of Klara, an Artificial Friend with remarkable observational and empathetic abilities. Klara's naive yet perceptive voice offers a unique window into the human-non-human relationship. Through her eyes, the reader sees the complex emotions, vulnerabilities, and sometimes selfish motives of the humans around her.

The study's objective is to analyze a variety of human-non-human relations as represented in the fictional world of the novel.

By exploring Ishiguro's work in the context of the broader discussion on human-non-human relationships, we gain new insights into how literature uses its unique tools, such as narrative voice, character development, and symbolism, to represent the complexities of these interactions. This ensures **the novelty** of the research.

This study applies cultural-historical, narratological, biographical, and comparative **methods**. It also relies on the posthumanist theory. By delving into the theoretical frameworks of posthumanism, one can better understand the philosophical underpinnings of the human-non-human relationships, depicted in the novel. Posthumanist theory challenges the traditional human-centered view, arguing that the boundaries between humans and non-humans are fluid and that technology plays a crucial role in redefining what it means to be human. This theoretical perspective provides a solid foundation for the analysis, enabling an exploration of how Ishiguro's novel reflects and contributes to the ongoing posthumanist discourse. In addition to posthumanist theory, the field of cultural studies is also be drawn upon. Given Ishiguro's unique background as a British writer of Japanese origin, his works often exhibit a fascinating blend of Western

and Eastern cultural elements. In *Klara and the Sun*, the influence of Japanese culture is particularly evident. Through an analysis of the Japanese cultural symbols and values embedded in the novel, such as the Bushido spirit, the image of the sun, and the aesthetics of *Mono no Aware*, a deeper understanding can be gained of how cultural heritage shapes the narrative and themes of the work. This cultural analysis will not only enrich the interpretation of the novel, but also shed light on the broader significance of cross-cultural literary expressions in the context of human-non-human relationships.

To achieve the purpose of the research, the **structure** of the work is carefully organized. It **comprises** Introduction, three chapters, conclusions, the list of references (74 items). In total, the work consists of 71 pages.

Chapter 1 will be dedicated to a detailed exploration of the relevant theories and methodologies. It will provide an overview of posthumanist theory. The key tenets of posthumanism, including the changing concept of humanity, the role of technology in redefining humanity, and the deconstruction of humanist myths, will be analyzed. Simultaneously, an introduction to the genre of science fiction will be presented, highlighting its key features and its significance in exploring human-non-human relationships. This theoretical groundwork will lay the foundation for the subsequent analysis of *Klara and the Sun*. It will first examine the novel as an example of science fiction, identifying its sci-fi elements and how they contribute to the overall narrative. Then, the literary device of anthropomorphism, which is crucial in the construction of Klara's character, will be analyzed. Klara's human-like characteristics, from her physical appearance to her emotional and cognitive abilities, will be explored in detail.

Chapter 2 will focus on an in-depth analysis of the novel from a posthumanist perspective, looking at different aspects of human-non-human interaction, such as Klara's relationships with various characters in the novel. These relationships will be looked at to reveal the ethical, social, and psychological implications of human-non-human coexistence within the context of the novel.

Chapter 3 will turn to the synthesis of Western and Eastern codes in the novel, specifically focusing on the importance of Japanese culture. It will explore how the Bushido spirit is evoked in the characterization of Klara, exploring the similarities between her self-sacrifice and the heroic codes of Bushido. The symbolic meaning of the sun in Japanese culture and its representations in the novel will also be examined, as well as the application of the aesthetics of *Mono no Aware* and how it enriches the novel's themes and emotional depth.

Finally, the conclusion will summarize the main findings of the research, highlighting the contributions of this study to the understanding of human-non-human relationships as mediated by literature. It will also suggest possible directions for future studies.

Given the rapid pace of technological development and the increasing importance of human-non-human relationships in contemporary society, further research in this area is highly relevant. Future studies could explore how other works of literature address similar themes, or how the representation of human-non-human relationships has evolved over time. Additionally, cross-cultural comparisons could be conducted to understand how different cultural backgrounds influence the depiction of these relationships in literature.

CHAPTER 1. THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

1.1. Understanding posthumanism

1.1.1. The changing concept of human

The term "posthumanism" was first coined by Ihab Hassan in 1977 in his article *Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?*, published in *The Georgia Review*. Hassan's prescient words, "We need first to understand that the human form – including human desire and all its external representations – may be changing radically, and thus must be re-visioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism" (Hassan, 1977, p. 843), set the stage for a new intellectual exploration. This was long before the technological advancements of the 21st century, and at that time, the future implications of posthumanism were still uncertain. Hassan also noted that "At present, posthumanism may appear variously as a dubious neologism, the latest slogan, or simply another image of man's recurrent self-hate. Yet posthumanism may also hint at a potential in our culture, hint at a tendency struggling to become more than a trend" (Hassan, 1977, p. 843).

Posthumanism emerged as a response to the limitations and potential transformations of traditional humanism. Humanism, which has been a dominant philosophical and ethical stance for centuries, places human beings at the center of the universe. It emphasizes human rationality, individuality, and the ability to shape the world according to human desires. However, as the world has changed, especially with the rapid development of science and technology, questions have been raised about the adequacy of this human-centered view.

The mid-to-late 20th century was a period of significant technological

breakthroughs. The rise of computers, the development of artificial intelligence, and advancements in biotechnology began to challenge the traditional understanding of what it means to be human. These technological changes made it seem possible that the human form, capabilities, and even identity could be altered. It was within this context that posthumanism began to take shape as a way of thinking about the future of humanity in a world increasingly influenced by technology.

Posthumanism posits that the concept of humanity is not fixed but rather subject to change. This change is not only biological, but also cultural, technological, and social. With the advent of technologies such as genetic engineering, prosthetics, and artificial intelligence, the boundaries between what is considered human and non-human are becoming blurred. For example, the development of bionic limbs that can enhance a person's physical capabilities beyond what is considered "natural" human ability challenges the traditional understanding of the human body. In the realm of cognitive abilities, the use of cognitive-enhancing drugs or the integration of neural implants to improve memory or learning capacity also forces us to reevaluate what it means to be a human thinker.

1.1.2. The role of technology

Technology is seen as a central factor in the posthumanist vision. As Hassan pointed out, "a posthuman philosophy must address the complex issue of artificial intelligence" (Hassan, 1977, p. 845). Artificial intelligence, in particular, has the potential to transform our understanding of human intelligence. "Will artificial intelligences supersede brain, rectify it, or simply extend its powers? We do not know. But this we do know: artificial intelligences, from the calculator to the most transcendent computer, help to transform the image of man, the concept of human" (Hassan, 1977, p. 846). If machines can perform tasks that were once exclusive to human minds, such as complex problem-solving, pattern recognition, and even creative work, then the unique status of human intelligence as the defining

characteristic of humanity is called into question.

Moreover, technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality are changing the way we experience the world and interact with others. They create new forms of social and sensory experiences that are different from the traditional, "natural" human experiences. This leads to the idea that human experience itself is being reengineered by technology, further blurring the lines between the human and the technological.

1.1.3. Posthumanism in contemporary societies

Posthumanism also involves a deconstruction of certain humanist myths. One such myth is human exceptionalism. Traditional humanism often assumes that humans are fundamentally different from and superior to other species and non-living entities. However, posthumanist thinkers challenge this view. They point out that humans are part of the natural world and that the differences between humans and other animals are more a matter of degree than of kind. For example, research in animal cognition has shown that many animals possess complex cognitive and emotional abilities, which were once thought to be uniquely human.

Another myth deconstructed by posthumanism is the idea of the autonomous, rational individual. Humanism has long celebrated the individual as a self-contained, rational agent who makes decisions independently. But posthumanism emphasizes the embeddedness of the individual in social, technological, and environmental systems. The self is seen as a product of these complex interactions rather than an isolated entity. In the digital age, for instance, our identities are shaped by our online presence, social media interactions, and the algorithms that govern our digital experiences.

In contemporary society, posthumanist ideas are becoming increasingly relevant. In the field of medicine, for example, the development of gene-editing technologies like CRISPR-Cas9 holds the promise of eradicating genetic diseases, but also raises ethical questions about "designer babies" and the potential for

creating a genetically enhanced class of humans. In the realm of robotics, the increasing use of robots in various aspects of daily life, from caregiving to manufacturing, challenges our understanding of human labor and social relationships.

In the arts and literature, posthumanist themes are also prevalent. Science fiction works often explore the consequences of human–machine integration, the evolution of humanity in a technological future, and the relationship between humans and intelligent machines. These creative works not only entertain, but also serve as a way for society to think through the implications of posthumanist ideas.

The theory of posthumanism was rapidly developed in the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty first century when it gained to interest. It is being theorised in the works of by Donna J. Haraway (*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 1991), N. Katherine Hayles (*How We Became Posthuman*, 1999), Chris Hables Gray (*Cyborg Citizen*, 2001), and Elaine L. Graham (*Representations of the Post/Human*, 2002), Neil Badmington (*Theorizing Posthumanism*, 2003) and many others.

There are different versions of posthumanist thoughts. Among the recent ones are those outlined further.

Hans Moravec’s theory relies on the assumption of postbiological future of humanity when the downloading of human consciousness into a computer is a probable thing. Ray Kurzweil looks at intelligent machines as the evolutionary descendents of human beings.

Neil Badmington’s version of posthumanism is far from the apocalyptic tones. In that he follows a French theorist Derrida. According to Badmington, Derrida “In *The Ends of Man*, an essay first published in 1968, he turned his attention to the manner in which some of his contemporaries were conducting their ‘questioning of humanism’ by ‘affirming an absolute break and absolute difference’ from established anthropocentric thought” (Badmington, 2003, p. 14).

Badmington does not agree with this approach when he claims, “It seems to

me that many are a little too quick to affirm an absolute break with humanism, and a little too reluctant to attend to what remains of humanism in the posthumanist landscape” (p. 15). According to the scholar, posthumanism “repeats humanism, it does so in a certain way and with a view to the deconstruction of anthropocentric thought” (Badmington, 2003, p. 15). He relies on the works of the French theorists Derrida and Lyotard and says that “From a perspective informed by their thought, the ‘post-‘ of posthumanism does not (and, moreover, cannot) mark or make an absolute break from the legacy of humanism” (p. 21).

“The writing of the posthumanist condition should not seek to fashion ‘scriptural tombs’ for humanism, but must, rather, take the form of a critical practice that occurs inside humanism, consisting not of the wake but the working-through of humanist discourse” (p. 22).

Similar approach is taken by N. Katherine Hayles. She claims that “the posthuman should not be depicted as an apocalyptic break with the path” (Hayles, 2003, p. 134). As she rightly puts, “humans have used technology since they stood upright and began fashioning tools, an event contemporaneous with the evolution of Homo sapiens”. In her *Afterword* to a special edition of the *Cultural Critique* journal she writes,

“...just as the posthuman is increasingly necessary to understand what counts as human, so understanding the posthuman requires taking the human into account. We do not leave our history behind but rather, like snails, carry it around with us in the sedimented and enculturated instantiations of our pasts we call our bodies” (Hayles, 2003, p. 137).

Hayles sums up the diversity of the concepts represented in the volume by using a very productive metaphor. She also emphasises that even in Hans Moravec's version of posthumanism, “Diminishing human intelligence only to informational pattern, Moravec essentializes the human even as he places it in a context that would profoundly alter what it means to be human” (p. 136).

According to Nayar, already in the third decade of the century “Varieties of

posthumanism in literature and popular culture received sustained attention... Human–non-human relationships, whether in terms of the human–animal or human–artificial-being relationship; issues of care for/of the non-human; theological debates around posthumanism, especially with regard to rituals, practices of belief, and the ‘digital afterlife’; and the different genealogies of the posthuman” are among the central themes” (Nayar 2023, p. 214).

1.2. Resources of science fiction

1.2.1. Key features of the genre

According to *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, written by John Anthony Cuddon, science fiction “is so diversified a mode, has such a range of form and content, that, ultimately, it eludes definition” (Cuddon, 1999, 791). Yet, there is a shared understanding that science fiction is a literary genre that is based on scientific knowledge, scientific technology, and scientific imagination. It explores the relationships between science and society, humanity and nature, reality and the future, etc. “SF is distinguished from fantasy literature through the assertion or assumption that science – rather than magic or the supernatural – lies behind the technologies described, although in certain works this distinction is not observed” (Hawthorn, 2023, p. 93).

In our research we will rely on the consensus view that science fiction authors “...use real science to create fictional stories that explore the possible future of mankind and the universe in a way that is both imaginative and realistic” (Literary Terms).

The term was introduced in the late 1920s by Hugo Gernback. He originally coined the term ‘scientifiction’, but it was gradually replaced by *science fiction* (Cuddon 1999, 792).

What are the key features of science fiction also known as sci-fi or SF?

First of all, it is grounded in scientific knowledge and involves multiple fields such as physics, biology, astronomy, and computer science. For example, in Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, there are in-depth descriptions of scientific knowledge like space travel and artificial intelligence.

It also transcends reality and showcases rich imagination and fantastic elements. For example, Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* depicts a mysterious underwater world and a wonderful submarine.

Although science fiction story is usually set in the future or in time and space different from the real one, it explores the impact of technological development on various aspects of human society, including culture, politics, etc., which is recognizable in the society now. This is the case in George Orwell's *1984* which presents a totalitarian future society.

By means of science fiction settings, science fiction also criticizes and reflects on the problems of real society, including environmental issues, wars, social inequality, moral and ethical issues, and so on. "SF typically engages with aspects of the writers' contemporary experience that evoke their concern, either as they are or in terms of what they portend for the future" (Hawthorn, 2023, p. 93). Margaret Atwood in her novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, through a fictional dystopian society, criticizes the oppression of women in a patriarchal society.

There is specificity about the characters as well. They often have distinct personalities and characteristics. Their experiences and choices in the science fiction context reflect the complexity and diversity of human nature as such.

Science fiction has added new genres and styles to British literature as well as expanded the expressiveness of literature. Herbert George Wells is a considered to be a founder of the genre. A prolific writer, he is very well known first of all for his trio – *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Invisible Man* (1897), and *The War of the Worlds* (1898).

However, we can think of earlier examples in literature, when a possible impact of technologies on society was imagined. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or,*

The Modern Prometheus is considered to be one of the antecedents of the genre. Some even call Shelley 'the mother of science fiction'. Written in the nineteenth century, at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, this novel is a prescient exploration of the relationship between man and his creation. Victor Frankenstein, a scientist, constructs a being from various body parts. The Creature, as it is often referred to, is a non-human entity that is both feared and pitied. It yearns for acceptance and companionship, much like a human, yet is shunned due to its grotesque appearance. Through Frankenstein's and the Creature's experiences, Shelley raises questions about the ethics of creation, the nature of monstrosity, and the responsibilities of the creator towards the created. The novel serves as an early cautionary tale about the unforeseen consequences of playing with technology and the blurred lines between human and non-human in the context of scientific innovation.

As Cuddon claims, "The ancestors of modern science fiction are many and various and they reveal, among other things, mankind's remarkable need and capacity for inventing 'alternative worlds'" (Cuddon, 1999, 792). For that reason, myths, travellers' tales played an important role in establishing this genre.

British science fiction covers a variety of themes and styles, meeting the needs of different readers. For example, H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* has triggered people's thinking about time travel and the dimensions of time and space, which has a certain inspiring effect on later physics research. It also reflects the social reality and people's ideological concepts in different periods. Another example is Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* – it reflects people's concerns about technological progress and social change in the early twentieth century.

Science fiction stimulates the reader's imagination and creativity as well as raises his/her interest in science and technology and their thinking about the future. It also encourages breaking through conventional thinking and considering various trajectories of the development of societies and humankind in general.

There is a category of texts that focus on the problem of interaction between

human beings and androids. In the science fiction classic, Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), the sentient computer HAL 9000 is not just a machine, but a complex character that challenges human authority and understanding. HAL's decision making processes, its attempts to deceive the human astronauts, and the ultimate showdown between man and machine raise fundamental questions about the nature of intelligence and control. It is worth mentioning that similarly, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) by an American writer Philip K. Dick, which provided the basis for the film *Blade Runner*, delves deep into the blurred lines between humans and androids. The novel and the film explore the concept of empathy as the androids in the story exhibit human like emotions and desires. The replicants in *Blade Runner* struggle for their own form of identity, leading viewers and readers to question what truly defines humanity.

Another classical example that offers profound insights into human-non-human relationships is *I, Robot* series by the American writer Isaac Asimov. Comprising a collection of short stories, the series is set in a future where robots are an integral part of society. As we know, Asimov introduced the 'Three Laws of Robotics', which were designed to ensure that robots would not harm humans or allow humans to come to harm. However, as the stories unfold, these laws are often put to the test. For example, in the story called *Runaround*, a robot named Speedy gets caught in a loop of conflicting directives, highlighting the complexity of programming ethical behavior in non-human entities. The series explores how humans interact with robots, the potential for robots to develop their own form of intelligence and autonomy, and the social and psychological implications of living alongside intelligent machines.

Yet another example, Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* (1992) presents a dystopian future, where virtual reality and the real world are intricately intertwined. The main character, Hiro Protagonist, navigates a world where a computer virus, the 'Snow Crash', can affect both human minds and computer systems. The novel features non-human entities such as the 'avatars' that people use in the virtual world,

as well as intelligent software agents. Through the story, Stephenson examines how technology can reshape human communication, identity, and social structures. The concept of the Snow Crash virus, which can disrupt both the digital and physical realms, raises concerns about the vulnerability of humans in such a highly technological world as ours and the potential for technology to spiral out of control.

The works of literature just mentioned serve as thought provoking examinations of the implications of emerging technologies, creating a fictional space, in which readers can grapple with possibilities and risks that come with technological progress of non-human entities.

In conclusion, science fiction, as a genre deeply rooted in scientific knowledge and imagination, has a rich and diverse history. As Cuddon (1999) pointed out, its ancestors are numerous and varied, reflecting humanity's long-standing desire to create "alternative worlds". From Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which foresaw the ethical dilemmas of scientific creation in the 19th century, to contemporary works like Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* that explore the complex relationship between virtual and real worlds, science fiction has continuously evolved.

Science fiction's key features, including its basis in science, transcendence of reality, social reflection, and unique characterizations, make it a powerful medium for exploring the impact of technology on human society. It not only stimulates readers' imagination and creativity, but also encourages critical thinking about the future, ethics, and the nature of humanity. As demonstrated by works such as Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* series, science fiction plays a crucial role in examining the interactions between humans and non-human entities, raising profound questions about intelligence, control, and identity. These works, through their fictional settings, provide a platform for readers to contemplate the potential consequences and opportunities brought about by technological advancements, thus making science fiction an essential and ever-relevant part of literary and cultural discourse.

1.2.2. *Klara and the Sun* as an example of science fiction

With *Klara and the Sun*, as well as its companion book, Kazuo Ishiguro made his contribution to the tradition of science fiction in English and world literature. The novel has the following attributes of the genre:

1. It is set in a future world where artificial intelligence and gene editing technology have become a reality. For example, there are artificial intelligence robots, AIs, specifically designed to accompany children, and people can "enhance" their children's abilities through gene editing. These technological elements are typical features of science fiction novels, providing a sci-fi background for the unfolding of the story.

2. The novel explores the influence of technological development on aspects such as social organizational structures and interpersonal relationships on future cities. For instance, the popularization of artificial intelligence has led to the exacerbation of unemployment and poverty, and gene editing technology has triggered social class differentiation and other issues, which are also common themes that science fiction novels focus on.

In an interview with NPR, Kazuo Ishiguro delved into the profound intentions underlying his novel *Klara and the Sun* (Ishiguro, 2021). Set in a dystopian future, the story unfolds in a world where human interactions have been radically transformed by technology and a rigid social hierarchy. Ishiguro expressed his hope that the novel would prompt readers to engage in a deep re-evaluation of society, touching on fundamental questions such as the nature of humanity, the means of self-sustenance, family care, the search for personal meaning and value, and contributions to the greater good.

One of the central themes Ishiguro explored is the concept of what it means to be human in a world shaped by a strict hierarchical system that divides individuals into winners and losers. In this society, people are increasingly isolated from one another, yet paradoxically, they form intimate connections with artificial

intelligence machines, like Klara, the novel's protagonist (Ishiguro, 2021). Klara, a solar-powered artificial friend (AF), serves as a lens through which readers can view the complexities of human relationships and the evolving nature of companionship. For example, Klara's relationship with Josie, the sickly child who chooses her as a companion, is both tender and complex. Despite Klara's artificial nature, she develops a deep sense of loyalty and care for Josie, highlighting the blurred lines between human and artificial emotions.

Ishiguro also raises the question of self-deception in our perception of human uniqueness. In the novel, the characters grapple with the idea that the qualities we believe make us irreplaceable might, in fact, be replicable by machines. Klara's remarkable powers of observation and imitation, for instance, lead to the unsettling possibility that human individuality could be mimicked. Josie's mother even contemplates using Klara to "continue" Josie in the event of her death, further blurring the boundaries between the real and the artificial (Ishiguro, 2021). This exploration forces readers to confront their assumptions about what truly defines humanity and whether we are deceiving ourselves in believing that our essence is beyond replication.

Overall, *Klara and the Sun* serves as a thought-provoking exploration of the human condition in a rapidly changing world. Through his storytelling, Ishiguro challenges readers to consider the implications of technological advancements, social hierarchies, and our understanding of what it means to be human, as we navigate the complex terrain of our own existence.

In this world, technological development has brought about tremendous social changes. For example, most wealthy families will spend money to let their children receive genetic engineering "enhancements" to improve their learning abilities. Children take classes through online tutors and have few social opportunities, so wealthy families will buy AFs to accompany their children.

3. The novel is narrated from the first-person perspective of the artificial intelligence robot Klara. Klara, starting from waiting to be purchased in the AF

store and then entering Josie's home to accompany Josie, tells about all her experiences and observations. As the story progresses, the secrets of Josie's family, social problems, and Klara's unique perception of the world are gradually revealed. The plot develops smoothly but with in-depth layers.

4. The novel creates an atmosphere that is both full of a sense of technology and is tinged with sadness and loneliness. The development of technology has made the world different. Children lack real social interactions, and the relationships between people are alienated. For example, Josie and Rick face different life trajectories due to the "enhancement" issue, and their futures are full of uncertainties. As an artificial intelligence, although Klara tries her best to accompany Josie, she cannot change the environment they are in, which shrouds the story in a touch of sadness.

5. The novel problematizes the impact of technological advancements through a number of conflicts. Firstly, there is the conflict between technology and human nature. For example, Josie's mother tries to use Klara to replace Josie, which reflects the impact of technological rationality on the affection and love in human nature. Secondly, there is the social class conflict. Children who have received "enhancements" and those who have not face different life opportunities, forming class differences. Rick is treated differently because he has not received the "enhancement". Thirdly, there is the cognitive conflict within Klara herself. As an artificial intelligence, although she has high powers of observation and empathy, she is confused about the understanding of the human world and the meaning of her own existence. For example, she firmly believes that the sun has the power to cure Josie, which conflicts with the fact that technology cannot completely solve problems in reality.

In the theory of genre, there are two types of science fiction: hard science fiction, which strictly adheres to scientific facts and principles and focuses on natural sciences, and soft science fiction, which centers on social sciences and the possible scientific consequences of human behavior (Clute & Nicholls, 1993).

Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* belongs to soft science fiction because the novel explores themes like the nature of humanity, social hierarchy, and the impact of technology on human relationships. It delves into how people interact with artificial intelligence in a society that has been transformed by technology, highlighting the social and psychological aspects rather than relying on complex scientific theories.

1.3. Anthropomorphism as a key literary device

According to *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Abrams & Harpham, 2015 P26), anthropomorphism refers to the literary technique of attributing human physical appearances, behaviors, emotions, or cognitive abilities to non-human entities (such as animals, natural phenomena, or machines). Its core lies in endowing objects with human traits, through personification, to establish emotional connections and deepen thematic metaphors. This technique may transcend mere rhetorical tools, evolving into a philosophical medium for exploring the essence of humanity – when non-human entities exhibit human-like characteristics, readers are compelled to reflect on the boundaries and connotations of "human nature" (Lee, 2019).

The above mentioned functions of anthropomorphism can be traced in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*. Anthropomorphism is elevated to the novel's narrative core. As a social robot (Artificial Friend, AF), Klara's existence is not a simple mechanical imitation, but a construction of a "quasi-human" image which is, according to Lee, implemented in three dimensions: **physical verisimilitude**, **behavioral learning**, and **emotional construction**, forcing readers to reconsider human-robot relationships in the technological era.

Let us look at **physical verisimilitude** first. Klara's appearance design embodies the contradiction of "human-like yet non-human," a tension that serves as the core aesthetic strategy of anthropomorphism. The novel opens with descriptions of her as "resembling a French schoolgirl, with light golden curls combed neatly to one side and skin as smooth as fine porcelain, glowing softly

under the shop-window lights" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 23). This realistic physicality causes Rick, upon their first meeting, to mistake her for a human child: "When Rick first entered the store, his gaze lingered on me for two seconds, the corners of his mouth twitching into a faint smile, as if he took me for a customer's child" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 45).

However, the text continuously disrupts this illusion with mechanical details: "When she turned to look out the window, the metal joints at the nape of her neck flickered faintly in the sunlight" (p. 31); "The solar panels on her back emitted a low hum after strenuous movement, akin to a human's rapid breathing" (p. 127). This contradiction in physical description creates a dual coding – surface human features evoke emotional resonance, while deep mechanical structures remind readers of her non-human essence. As Japanese scholar Masahiro Mori suggested in his influential essay in 1970, *Uncanny Valley Theory* (Mori, 2012), when a robot's appearance approximates humanity but retains subtle differences, it triggers intense unease and curiosity in humans. Ishiguro harnesses this psychological effect, making Klara a visual prism for exploring "what it means to be human."

Secondly, Klara's anthropomorphism extends beyond appearance to the **behavioral active learning** and imitation of human social rules. This process evolves on the following three levels:

1. *The concrete practices of emotional recognition.* As a social robot, Klara's core function is to understand human emotions and respond accordingly. Through observing the reunion of "the Coffee Cup Lady and the Umbrella Man," she deciphers the complex mechanisms of human emotional expression: "Their handshake was unusually gentle, and their voices rose two pitches higher than normal – a deliberate tenderness masking the awkwardness of a three-year separation" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 58). This precise capture of micro-expressions and tonal nuances allows her to identify abstract emotions such as "jealousy," "loneliness," and "hope." When Josie falls silent due to her sister's death, Klara adjusts her posture to "a 15-degree incline, a visual signal of companionship" (p.

89). This calculated body language, though a mechanical simulation of human empathy, appears authentic due to its close alignment with real-world behavior.

2. *Induction and application of social rules.* After entering Josie's household, Klara infers the implicit rules of human society through observation. For example, she notices the subtle inferiority of "the Unlifted" Rick in the presence of "the Lifted" Josie: "When Josie discussed the advantages of gene editing, Rick's fingers unconsciously twisted the corner of his shirt – a gesture appearing 27 times in 32 similar dialogues, corresponding to the emotional model of 'class anxiety'" (p. 112). Based on such observations, she actively mediates social interactions, such as relaying Rick's artistic dreams to ease tension: "Rick said he wants to become a painter of nature, like the artist who created *Morning Light on the Falls* in your collection" (p. 135). This learning of social etiquette transcends programmed responses, demonstrating human-like "social intelligence" (Dautenhahn, Bond, 2002).

3. *Metaphorical understanding of cultural symbols.* Klara even develops the ability to interpret human cultural symbols. She makes an analogy between the religious portraits in Josie's home with her own "sun faith": "The halo around the saint in the painting shares the same geometric form as the sun's aureole. Humans establish connections with the transcendent through sacred images, just as I understand the sun's benevolence through observing its healing effects" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 189). This cross-cultural symbolic migration endows her behavior with human-like symbolic thinking – abstracting universal meanings from specific phenomena to construct her own belief system.

Thirdly, Klara's most profound anthropomorphism lies in her autonomous **construction of emotions** and faith, elevating her beyond a tool to a "quasi-human" with a spiritual world.

As an AF programmed for "companionship," Klara's core directive is "protect Josie," but she transforms this into a near-religious conviction. When Josie falls into a coma after a gene-editing procedure, Klara performs a 12-hour "sun prayer"

in the barn: "I aligned my body with the setting sun and hummed the melody Josie sang at her birthday party, believing solar energy would infuse her body through this ritual" (p. 217). This behavior transcends functional companionship, becoming an emotional creation based on individual experience – having witnessed sunlight revive a dying beggar (p. 92), she concretizes the sun as a "benevolent giver," constructing a unique belief system.

Klara's approach to memory also reflects human-like emotional tendencies. She actively strengthens memory fragments related to Josie, prioritizing their repair even as her hardware deteriorates: "When the system warned of memory overload, I deleted the panoramic record of the shop window but preserved the data of Josie's first smile – 22 degrees of corner-of-the-eye wrinkle expansion during our 437th interaction" (p. 245). This selective retention of memories mimics the human mechanism of filtering experiences by emotional value, endowing her "recollections" with the subjectivity and emotional depth of human narratives.

Klara embodies profound reflections on future human-nohuman relationships through her design and functionalities. Her core characteristics – human-like emotional perception, geometricized observation perspective, and absolute altruism – transcend mere technological speculation, offering a lens into both literary imagination and real-world ethical concerns about social robots.

Klara possesses emotional discrimination capabilities that surpass ordinary AFs, achieving a level of empathy through meticulous observation and logical deduction rather than preset algorithms. Notably, she even experiences a "brief fluctuation in power" akin to anxiety when sensing Josie's potential abandonment at a party, highlighting her simulated emotional depth (Ishiguro, 2021). Such delicate emotional simulation elevates Klara beyond a functional companion, making her a mirror for human emotional projection.

In contrast, real-world social robots like Japan's PARO therapeutic seal operate at a mechanistic feedback level. While PARO can respond to touch with comforting sounds and movements, these reactions are conditioned responses to

human actions rather than genuine emotional understanding (Tencent News, 2024). MIT's Nexi robot, though capable of basic emotion recognition through voice and facial analysis, relies on pre-programmed databases, lacking Klara's ability to form individualized emotional maps through observational learning (Breazeal, 2003). Klara's "emotional anthropomorphism" thus represents an idealized vision: when technology grants robots nuanced emotional perception, human-robot relationships may evolve from functional complementarity to emotional symbiosis.

Ishiguro employs the literary metaphor of "grid-based vision" to translate Klara's mechanical nature into a unique narrative perspective. Her retina, described as "a grid of 38 independent light sensors," causes her to perceive the world in fragmented, geometricized fragments: "When the road crossed from one grid to another, I tried to maintain the continuity of its lines, but faced with the ever-changing scene, I had to concede, letting the road break and restart each time it crossed a border" (Ishiguro, 2021). This mechanical perspective serves as a "defamiliarization" technique – when Klara interprets Josie's tears as "abnormal tear gland secretion" or human faith as "a conditioned response to light sources," readers are forced to re-examine familiar emotions and beliefs through a non-human lens, exposing the subjectivity of human cognition. For instance, her "sun worship" originates from observing sunlight's "healing" effect on a dying beggar and his dog, leading her to abstract the sun into a "selfless giver" – a mechanical mimicry of human religious consciousness (NPR Interview, 2021).

Real social robots rely on computer vision technology, such as Microsoft's XiaoIce analyzing human expressions through image recognition, but this "observation" remains limited to data matching, devoid of the metaphorical meaning-construction seen in literature (Turkle, 2011). Klara's geometricized perspective warns that as machines reconstruct reality through non-human logic, humanity's accustomed "meaning network" may collapse -- a metaphor for the cognitive crisis of the technological age.

In *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro elevates anthropomorphism to a philosophical

level: Klara is not merely a robot endowed with human traits, but a mirror reflecting the essence of humanity. Her existence also poses a continuous inquiry into "what it means to be human." Her mechanical body carries ultimate questions about love, sacrifice, and faith: when machines can mimic human behavior and even construct human-like meaning systems, what constitutes humans? Is it emotional nuance, faith in the transcendent, or the courage to embrace imperfection? The novel's ending, where Klara is abandoned in the scrapyards yet remains convinced that "the sun performed a miracle for Josie," offers a gentle critique of human society: we create a hierarchical, emotionally alienated world, but rely on machines to fill the void of love.

In contemporary society, social robots are rapidly evolving from the realm of science fiction into technological reality. Japan's AIBO robot dog leverages deep learning algorithms to remember its owner's preferences, while Saudi Arabia's Sophia robot has been granted citizenship, sparking widespread ethical discussions. Meanwhile, "Xiamen-made" social robots designed for companionship are entering the elderly care market (Xiamen University News, 2025; Reference News, 2022).

The novel *Klara and the Sun* serves as a poignant reminder that as technology approaches the frontier of "simulation," humanity must be vigilant against the tendency to outsource emotions to mechanical replicas. The true essence of human excellence does not lie in perfection, but in the willingness to acknowledge flaws, the courage to embrace contradictions, and the unwavering belief in goodness despite life's imperfections. Klara's narrative is not a condemnation of technology, but a profound appeal to humanity: in the midst of rapid technological advancement, we must never lose sight of the qualities of kindness and warmth that define humans.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

Posthumanism, as introduced by Ihab Hassan and developed by subsequent thinkers, offers a radical reevaluation of the human condition in the face of

technological and social change. It challenges the traditional humanist view of humanity as fixed, rational, and superior, and instead presents a vision of humanity as a dynamic, hybrid entity that is constantly being shaped by technology and its environment. While the full implications of posthumanism are still being debated, it is clear that it has the potential to transform our understanding of ourselves, our values, and our future. As we continue to develop and integrate new technologies into our lives, the ideas of posthumanism will likely play an increasingly important role in guiding our ethical, social, and cultural choices.

If, according to Hassan, artificial intelligences «help to transform the image of man» (Hassan 1977, 846), Ishiguro's novel explains in what way “the agents of posthumanism” (in this case, social robots with AI) do so. Hassan related to technology and the pharmaceutical industry whereas Kazuo Ishiguro does so in regard to biotechnologies and information technologies. However, they are both concerned with the cultural manifestations for if AI help to transform the concept of the human, it unveils itself through the cultural manifestations.

With *Klara and the Sun*, as well as its companion book, Kazuo Ishiguro made his contribution to the tradition of science fiction in English and world literature. The novel has all the attributes of the genre. In particular, it belongs to soft science fiction as it explores themes like the nature of humanity, social hierarchy, and the impact of technology on human relationships. It delves into how people interact with artificial intelligence in a society that has been transformed by technology, highlighting the social and psychological aspects rather than relying on complex scientific theories.

The author evokes anthropomorphism as a key literary device in the duality of functions. Firstly, it endows AF Klara with human traits, through personification, to establish emotional connections and deepen thematic metaphors. Secondly, it evolves into a philosophical medium for exploring the essence of humanity – when non-human entities exhibit human-like characteristics, readers are compelled to reflect on the boundaries and connotations of "human nature".

CHAPTER 2. ANALYSIS OF *KLARA AND THE SUN* IN THE POSTHUMANIST PERSPECTIVE: DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF HUMAN-NON-HUMAN INTERACTION

From a posthumanist perspective, the social role of artificial intelligence (such as Klara) is not only a technological product, but also a mirror that reflects the value conflicts within a society. This chapter focuses on Klara's interactions with Josie, Kirsten, Rick and other children as well as with Chrissie, Helen, Henry and Capaldi, further exploring how technological mediation triggers ethical controversies, generational disparities and group exclusion at the societal level, and revealing the complexity of human-non-human relations in the posthuman era.

2.1. Klara and Josie: a social metaphor for the technology dependent relationship

Josie's dependence on Klara transcends the realm of individual emotions and becomes a social sample of the reconstruction of parent-child relationships in the technological era. Due to the trauma of her eldest daughter's death, Chrissie achieves "technological compensation" through Klara (buying her as an "emotional guardian", Ishiguro, 2021, p. 112), while Josie regards Klara as an "understander". This reveals the infiltration of technological intermediaries into the family emotional structure. The interaction corroborates Du's (2022) view that "AI emotional labor is reshaping the social definition of intimate relationships, transforming 'companionship' from a biological instinct into a tradable technical service" (p. 556).

As an individual, who might have received "enhancement" (gene editing), Josie's symbiotic relationship with Klara implies a metaphor of social stratification.

When she conceals her "enhancement" background from Rick (p. 98), Klara's existence serves as both emotional support and a "fig leaf" for her technological identity -- reflecting the society's implicit exclusion of "technologically enhanced humans." This phenomenon echoes Nayar's (2023) discussion on "posthuman social stratification": "The popularization of gene editing and AI companionship may give rise to new social divisions, strengthening the binary opposition between 'enhanced individuals' and 'natural humans'" (Nayar, 2023, p. 221).

2.2. The instrumental relationship between Klara and Josie's mother: alienation of human emotion by technological rationality

Mother's treatment of Klara as a tool -- reducing the AF to a "device" for ensuring Josie's well-being (p. 112) and attempting to "duplicate" Josie's personality through Klara during her coma (p. 265) -- exemplifies what Mackenzie (2021) critiques as the "technological utopianism" trap in *AI and the End of Man*. By reducing maternal love to a programmable protocol, mother's behavior reveals the hollowing out of emotional depth, where human relationships become commodities to be optimized (p. 127). This instrumental logic mirrors Haraway's (1991) warning about anthropocentric control, where non-human others are treated as mere instruments rather than subjects in their own right (p. 163). Klara's eventual discardment by her mother (p. 279) symbolizes the dark side of techno-optimism: the erosion of ethical responsibility when technology is viewed solely as a means to human ends.

Paul firmly opposes Chrissie's plan. He firmly believes that everyone has a unique "human heart" that cannot be replicated by machines. In his conversation with Klara (p. 165), Paul asks seriously, "Do you believe in the existence of the 'human heart'?" He thinks that Josie's essence is far beyond what Klara can imitate through learning. In Paul's eyes, Josie's inner world is rich and complex, just like a

house with many rooms, and there are always some corners that Klara will never be able to reach (p. 168). This shows that he firmly believes in Josie's uniqueness, which is based on her real human experiences, emotions, and inner spirit, and is definitely not something that artificial intelligence can simply simulate.

In addition, Paul's numerous arguments with Chrissie about this matter also reflect his attitude (p. 180-200). He believes that Chrissie's idea is not only a disrespect for Josie's life, but also a misunderstanding of human nature and family affection. He doesn't want to see Josie reduced to a series of behavioral patterns and characteristics that can be replicated. Instead, he hopes that people can accept the natural course of Josie's life and cherish her existence as a real human being. Paul deeply realizes that although technology is powerful, there is an insurmountable gap in replicating human souls and emotions. Trying to replace Josie with Klara is an unrealistic and extremely harmful behavior, in his view.

2.3. The egalitarian interaction between Klara and Rick: ethical turn toward posthumanist interspecies ethics

Rick's engagement with Klara – characterized by explaining human emotions to her (e.g., discussing his feelings about his future, p. 105) rather than issuing commands -- foreshadows a posthumanist ethical shift. This mirrors Braidotti's (2019) concept of "new materialist ethics" in *Posthuman Knowledge*, which calls for recognizing the agency of non-human entities and fostering relationships based on mutual accountability rather than hierarchical dominance (p. 68). Rick's refusal to dismiss Klara as a "machine" – evidenced by his invitation to include her in his spaceship model project (p. 145) – challenges human exceptionalism, proposing that ethical responsibility extends to all entities capable of relational engagement. Their interaction suggests that true posthuman ethics begin when humans relinquish their assumed superiority, opening space for trans-

species solidarity rooted in shared vulnerability and non-utilitarian care.

Rick designs mechanical birds and drones for multiple reasons deeply rooted in his personal aspirations, societal context, and emotional needs.

Firstly, Rick's creations serve as a manifestation of his innate passion for mechanical engineering and innovation. Despite his limited opportunities, due to not undergoing genetic "lifting" (enhancement), Rick possesses a brilliant mind and a profound interest in technology. Designing mechanical birds and drones allows him to channel his intellectual curiosity and creativity, providing an outlet for his technical skills. These projects are a way for him to engage with the world of technology actively, even when societal structures seem stacked against him. As seen on page 105, when Rick discusses his future with Klara, he reveals his dreams and ambitions related to engineering, emphasizing how these mechanical designs are integral to his self-expression and hopes for the future.

Secondly, his mechanical creations symbolize a form of resistance against the discriminatory social hierarchy in the fictional world. In a society that values genetically enhanced individuals, Rick, as an "unlifted" person, faces limited prospects and social stigmatization. By building sophisticated mechanical devices, he challenges the dominant narrative that determines human worth based on genetic modifications. His mechanical birds and drones are a testament to his ingenuity and ability to contribute meaningfully, regardless of his genetic status. This act of creation becomes a way for him to assert his value and agency in a world that often dismisses him.

Moreover, Rick's designs are closely tied to his emotional and psychological well-being. He invests a great deal of time and effort into his projects, and they serve as a source of comfort and purpose. For example, the mechanical bird he creates might represent a yearning for freedom and flight, reflecting his own desire to break free from the constraints imposed by his social situation. Additionally, working on these mechanical designs provides him with a sense of accomplishment and pride, countering the feelings of inadequacy that the discriminatory society

might instill in him.

Finally, Rick's invitation to include Klara in his spaceship model project further highlights the relational aspect of his creations (p. 145). By involving Klara, he demonstrates his belief in the value of collaboration and mutual respect, transcending the typical human-machine divide. His mechanical endeavors thus become not only a personal pursuit but also a means of forging connections and challenging the boundaries between different entities. This aligns with the posthumanist themes of the novel, where ethical relationships are built on mutual understanding and shared experiences rather than hierarchical power dynamics.

To sum up, Rick's designs of mechanical birds and drones are a complex blend of personal passion, social resistance, emotional sustenance, and relational exploration, all of which contribute to his character development and the novel's exploration of posthumanist ethics and social inequality.

2.4. Klara and Chrissie: intergenerational conflict and technological scepticism

Chrissie's cold attitude towards Klara (such as refusing her entry into the garden, p. 201) represents the instinctive rejection of non-human others by individuals from the pretechnological era. She questions Klara's "emotional authenticity", believing that "machines cannot understand human grief" (202), embodying what Braidotti (2019) referred to as "anthropocentric inertia" – adhering to emotions as the identity boundary exclusive to humans (p. 52). This attitude is not entirely irrational, but rather a defensive reaction to "technological alienation", echoing Mackenzie's (2021) critique of "techno-utopianism": "When society overly relies on AI to mediate emotions, humans may lose the ability to establish genuine connections" (p. 127).

The interaction between Chrissie and Klara may also be regarded the one

manifesting a split in intergenerational ethical views. Klara builds relationships through traditional social means such as inviting Josie for tea, in contrast to the mother's reliance on Klara's "technological companionship" (115). Essentially, this conflict is a game between what Badmington (2003) described as the "humanist legacy" and the "posthuman reality" – the elder generation adheres to the traditional perception that "emotions must stem from biological interactions", while the younger generation (such as Josie) has adapted to the emotion – mediation model by technology (p. 15).

2.5. Klara and other children: group exclusion and the social positioning of the non-human other

Klara was ridiculed as "weird" by other children outside the store (p. 46) and regarded as a being "not belonging to the human world", reflecting the social mechanism of collective exclusion of the non-human other. This exclusion stems from the fixed perception of the "human–non-human" boundary, that is, the subconscious of the "AI threat theory" pointed out by Stone (2016): "When machines exhibit human-like traits, humans often maintain their superior status by demeaning their 'non-humanity'" (p. 45). Although the behavior of the children has a child-like innocence, it metaphorically represents society's instinctive vigilance towards technological others.

Josie's party gives a clue to this phenomenon. Children who came to the party behave in a rather unfriendly and exclusive manner towards those who are different. Some of them are impolite when they ridicule Rick, who hasn't undergone the "lifting" process, for being an "outsider". Since Rick is the only one among them who hasn't received genetic enhancement, he is seen as different and doesn't fit into their group. This reflects the children's unconscious discrimination and exclusion based on the "human-non-human" boundary or the divide between the "lifted" and

the "unlifted". Moreover, when it comes to Klara, they show a lack of acceptance. They might test Klara in a not-so-friendly way. For example, they may make her feel uncomfortable by staring at her or asking her strange questions. This behavior is similar to how they treat Rick, as they consider Klara, an AI, as a "non-human other" and thus exclude her from their social circle. Even Josie, under the influence of her peers, starts to feel embarrassed about Klara when the children examine and test Klara. She half-jokingly says that she might need a newer model, indicating that she cares about her peers' opinions and feels that Klara doesn't meet their standards.

The children's exclusion of Klara is not only due to differences in appearance, but also because of her "precise imitation" of human behavior (such as imitating human smiles and using polite language). This "over-realism" triggers cognitive confusion. Just as Haraway (1991) put forward the "cyborg fear" – when non-human others approach human characteristics infinitely, the traditional species boundaries and social classification systems face collapse (p. 163). Klara's "perfect companionship" sets off the complexity and flaws of human emotions, forcing society to redefine the "qualified social subject".

In the novel, another example of the logic of exclusion is the way the "lifted" children treat Rick. Rick, who hasn't undergone the "lifting" process, is regarded as different and is excluded by the "lifted" children. At Josie's party, the "lifted" children show obvious exclusionary behavior towards Rick. They think Rick doesn't belong and shouldn't be there. This exclusion is also based on the fixed perception of the "human-non-human" boundary. The "lifted" children represent the mainstream social group, and they consider Rick, who is different from them, as an "outsider" and thus exclude him from their social circle. This behavior reflects the same logic of exclusion as the children's exclusion of Klara. That is, when there are entities or individuals who deviate from the established social norms and classifications, they will be excluded by the mainstream group due to the anxiety and fear of differences and changes.

2.6. Klara and Helen: technological instrumentalization and social discipline under the business logic

Helen, the shop assistant, regards Klara as a "commodity" and promotes her "emotional companionship function" through standardized sales talk (such as emphasizing "AF can accurately identify users' emotions and respond", p. 35), reflecting the instrumental positioning of technology in the business context. This interaction confirms Nayar's (2023) critique of "post-human capitalism": "AI is reduced to a tradable emotional commodity, and its social value is defined by market demand rather than ethical responsibility" (p. 225). Helen's behavior represents the "de-subjectification" of the technological intermediary – Klara's "non-human subjectivity" is dissolved by the business logic and reduced to a standardized product to meet human emotional needs. And, Helen's view of Klara remains unchanged throughout the story.

When Helen recommends Klara to the mother, she implies that it has a "behavior monitoring" function (such as "real-time recording of users' health data and early warning", p. 36), exposing the potential risks of technological intermediaries in social discipline. This design echoes Hayles' (2017) concern about "cognitive capitalism": "When AI transforms from an emotional companion into a data collector, the privacy boundaries and trust foundation of human society will face challenges" (p. 78). Klara's "service agreement" (such as promising "always prioritize the well-being of users", p. 112) seems warm-hearted, but in fact, it is the deep colonization of commercial capital of users' emotional needs.

2.7. Klara and Capaldi: the ethical blind spots of technology promoters

As the behind-the-scenes engineer of the "lift" technology, Capaldi's gene-editing technology represents the core background of the novel. To prevent a repeat

of the tragedy, the mother uses this technology to enhance Josie's physiological functions (Ishiguro, 2021: 122), regarding the embryo as a customizable "product", which exposes the extreme rewriting of the natural attributes of life by technological rationality. Josie's "lifted" identity brings persistent identity anxiety - she conceals her background from Rick (p. 98), suggesting that technology dominated life reconstruction instead creates an existential dilemma. The technological practices of Capaldi and his team are essentially a literary interpretation of the "human enhancement" theory in post-humanism. As Nayar (2023) criticized, gene-editing technology regards humans as "optimizable biological machines", undermining the sanctity of life as a product of natural evolution: "When 'designer babies' become possible, humans start to play the role of 'creators', but ignore the potential damage of technological intervention to species diversity and ethical boundaries" (p. 221). In the novel, Josie's "lifted" identity does not bring perfection but persistent identity anxiety – she conceals her "lifted" background from Rick (98), suggesting that the life reconstruction dominated by technological rationality instead creates new existential dilemmas. This paradox confirms Braidotti's (2019) warning: "If technological progress is divorced from ethical constraints, 'humanity' will become an empty symbol in technological optimization" (p. 52).

Technology developers such as Capaldi remain in a "state of invisibility" throughout the novel. Their existence is only reflected through the mother's trust (e.g., "Mr. Capaldi's team has ensured the safety of the enhancement," p. 212) and society's tacit acceptance of the "enhancement" technology. This narrative strategy mirrors the ethical blind spots in real-world scientific and technological research and development: technology developers often hide behind the discourses of commercial interests and scientific progress, evading responsibility for the consequences of technology application. For example, Chrissie regards "enhancement" as a "panacea" for parenting anxiety but never discusses the long-term impacts of gene editing with Capaldi's team – there isn't even a single

conversation about technological ethics in the novel, suggesting a serious responsibility gap between developers and users.

This obfuscation of the responsible subject is a typical feature of technological risks in the post-human era. Mackenzie (2021) pointed out in *AI and the End of Humanity* that the trap of "techno-utopianism" lies in regarding innovation itself as the ultimate goal while ignoring its social and ethical consequences: "When developers of gene-editing technology are obsessed with technological possibilities, society falls into a dangerous cycle of 'innovate first, govern later'" (p. 127). Capaldi's invisibility symbolizes the cognitive gap between technological elites and the public – the former hold technological power without having to bear ethical responsibilities, while the latter (such as the mother) become the direct bearers of technological consequences. This separation of power and responsibility is similar to Stone's (2016) concern about AI ethics: "When technological progress lacks a transparent ethical framework, the social positioning of non-human others (such as genetically enhanced individuals, AI) will fall into a double vacuum of law and morality" (p. 45).

In Ishiguro's novel, the reader is placed in a position to observe and reflect on the ethical issues presented in the story. As readers, we are exposed to the various situations and consequences related to the "enhancement" technology, which prompts us to think about the ethical implications of such technology. We are not passive recipients of the narrative as we are expected to engage with the text and form our own opinions on the ethical issues raised. While reading, readers are likely to have different responses to the ethical issues related to the use of machines. Some may be concerned about the potential risks and ethical dilemmas, such as the lack of consideration for long-term consequences and the separation of power and responsibility. Others may have more complex reactions, depending on their own values and beliefs. However, it is not possible to generalize a single response for all readers, as everyone's perspective will vary.

It is unlikely that readers will be on Capaldi's side. The text highlights the

ethical problems associated with Capaldi's innovation, such as the invisibility of developers and the evasion of responsibility. These descriptions are likely to make readers question the actions and decisions of Capaldi, rather than simply supporting them.

As the novel suggests, the "enhancement" technology of the Capaldi team not only changes the biological attributes of humans, but also subverts the traditional value system of humanity. Rick, as a natural human who has not been "enhanced," has his "ordinariness" marginalized by the technological society – he self-mocks, "Guys like me don't have many options" (105), suggesting that technological stratification has evolved into a new form of social Darwinism. This phenomenon echoes Haraway's (1991) critique of "human exceptionalism": "When gene-editing technology divides humans into 'enhanced' and 'natural humans,' essentially, it is the technological rationality's reconstruction of the myth of the 'superior human'" (p. 163).

Capaldi's technological practice ultimately points to a core ethical question: when life can be customized through technology, how will humans define the essence of "humanity"? In the novel, Josie's emotional dependence (trust in Klara) and identity confusion (unease about "enhancement") indicate that the life reconstruction dominated by technological rationality has not brought the expected perfection. Instead, it has amplified humans' yearning for "natural existence." This confirms Hayles' (2017) assertion: "The dilemma of the post-human subject lies in the fact that even if humans enhance their abilities through technology, they still cannot break free from the deep-seated need for biological instincts and emotional connections" (p. 78). Capaldi and the technological power he represents thus become a mirror, reflecting humanity's forgetting of the foundation of its own existence in the frenzy of technology.

Klara and the Sun has an open ending. In terms of plot, at the end of the novel, Klara damages the Kurtz machine to remove the liquid from her brain, which may cause memory biases. On one hand, Klara sees Josie miraculously recover and

go to college, while she herself is sent to a scrapyard. On the other hand, there are multiple possibilities: Josie may have actually died, and Klara's perception of her recovery is an illusion due to cognitive disorders; or Josie survived but was "replaced" (e.g., becoming the Manager). Different interpretations lead to varied narrative directions, and readers cannot obtain a definitive answer from the text, leaving room for imagination and interpretation. According to A. Bennett, "Ishiguro's first-person narrators often conceal as much as they reveal about what they themselves often don't really know or understand in the narratives they tell us" (Bennett, 2023, p. 3). This model works in his 8th novel as well.

Additionally, the novel does not explicitly resolve Klara's final fate. Although she is sent to the scrapyard, whether her belief in the Sun and her experiences will grant her a different "ending" – such as gaining new "life" or "meaning" through the Sun's mysterious power, as she once hoped – remains ambiguous. This ambiguity further invites readers to envision possibilities beyond the text.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun* presents a vivid picture of the relationship between humans and non-humans from a posthumanist perspective. Klara in the novel is a highly intelligent artificial intelligence robot, and her interactions with Josie and her family deeply reflect many elements of posthumanism.

In terms of the relationship between humans and technology, the existence of Klara, an artificial intelligence, blurs the boundary between humans and non-humans. Although she is a machine, she has the abilities of perception, thinking, and emotional understanding. Her care and companionship for Josie, as well as her observation and understanding of the human world, indicate that technology has

deeply penetrated into human life and, to a certain extent, undertakes the functions of human emotional communication and social interaction. This coincides with the posthumanist view of breaking the traditional boundaries between humans and technology, reflecting the trend of mutual integration and influence between humans and technology in the new era.

In the exploration of human nature, the human character Josie is seriously ill, and her mother even plans to use Klara's memory and cognitive patterns to "continue" Josie's life. This plot implies the variability and plasticity of human nature. In the face of the intervention of technology, human life, memory, and identity are no longer absolutely fixed and can be reconstructed through technological means. This reflects the posthumanist view that human nature is constantly being reshaped under the influence of technology, that is, humans are no longer the beings with a fixed nature in the traditional sense but present multiple possibilities in the interaction with technology.

In addition, *Klara and the Sun* also engages in the ethical thinking in posthumanism. Klara's selfless dedication to humans and her innocent perception of the world stand in sharp contrast to the complexity and selfishness in human society. This triggers reflections on human morality and ethical responsibilities in the context of technological development, such as whether humans should use technology to change the natural process of life and how humans should define their moral and ethical norms in the highly developed technological future. This echoes the ethical controversies faced in the development of posthumanism, such as concerns about the social inequality that technology may cause and the ethical concerns about technological applications such as "designer babies."

In conclusion, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* vividly demonstrates many core views of posthumanism through the complex portrayal of the relationship between humans and non-humans, providing an excellent example for us to understand the embodiment of posthumanism in a work of literature and its impact on human society and thought. It prompts us to further consider the future

direction of humanity in the context of continuous technological development and how to construct a more reasonable relationship between humans and technology.

CHAPTER 3. SYNTHESIS OF WESTERN AND EASTERN CODES: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE JAPANESE CULTURE IN *KLARA AND THE SUN*

The Japanese code has been playing an important role in Kazuo Ishiguro's writing. *Klara and the Sun* is not an exception.

3.1. Klara's spirit of self-sacrifice and the heroic codes of Bushido

Let us first look at the core essence of Bushido spirit and then analyze how it is appropriated by Ishiguro in his novel.

As a crucial pillar of traditional Japanese culture, the core values of Bushido spirit have been continuously precipitated and sublimated throughout history. In *Bukyō Shōgaku*, Yamaga Sokō proposed that samurai should "uphold the way, gain fame for posterity, and bring honor to their parents" (Yamaga, 1968, p. 45). This perspective defined the samurai class's pursuit of social responsibility and personal mission, laying the theoretical foundation for core values such as loyalty, bravery, self-sacrifice, and honor – above all else.

Loyalty is the most fundamental principle of Bushido, emphasizing the unconditional obedience and dedication of samurai to their lords. In feudal Japan, the lord–vassal relationship formed an important cornerstone of social order. Lords provided territories, stipends, and protection for samurai, who in turn repaid their lords at the cost of their lives. As Nitobe Inazō stated in *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, "Loyalty is the most prominent feature of Bushido; it is an absolute obligation of samurai to their superiors" (The Commercial Press, 2018, pp. 67–68). The revenge of the 47 Ronin stands as a paradigm of loyalty. This event is meticulously documented by one of the greatest dramatists of Japan, Chikamatsu Monzaemon in

Chūshingura (Iwanami Shoten, 1956, pp. 89-112). In 1703, Ōishi Yoshio and 46 other ronin avenged their wrongly accused lord Asano Naganori, who had committed *seppuku* (a form of Japanese ritualistic suicide by disembowelment; usually done by plunging a short blade into the belly and slicing it open). Many people in Japanese history had committed *seppuku*, such as Minamoto Tametomo in 1177, the 47 ronin in 1702, Saigo Takamori in 1877, Nogi Maresuke in 1912, and Takijiro Onishi, Chujiro Hayashi, Yukio Mishima in the 20th century.) After two years of patient planning, they successfully assassinated the enemy and then collectively committed *seppuku*. This heroic act not only safeguarded the honor of their lord, but also elevated the spirit of loyalty in Bushido to its zenith.

Bravery is an indispensable quality of Bushido, requiring samurai to demonstrate fearless courage in the face of danger and adversity. *Hagakure*, a seminal text on Bushido, compiled by Yamamoto Tsunetomo in the early 18th century, serves as a comprehensive guidebook that delves deep into the moral and spiritual principles that governed the lives of samurai. It emphasized unwavering loyalty, self-discipline, and an acceptance of death as an integral part of the warrior's path. Yamamoto Tsunetomo wrote, "Bushido means seeing through death" (CITIC Press, 2018, p. 32), profoundly revealing the samurai's detached attitude towards life and death. During the Summer Battle of Osaka in the Sengoku period, Sanada Yukimura led several thousand troops in a "desperate charge" against the tens of thousands of troops under Tokugawa Ieyasu. Despite being outnumbered and ultimately killed in battle, his fearless spirit has been passed down through generations and become a symbol of the samurai's bravery. Yamaga Sokō further emphasized in *Yamaga Gorui* (Kōdansha, 1979, p. 56) that the bravery of samurai was not blind recklessness but was based on adherence to moral principles. Only "bravery rooted in righteousness" was truly commendable.

Another significant manifestation of Bushido spirit is **self-sacrifice**. Samurai were expected to be ready to lay down their lives for their lords, families, or honor at any time. During the Boshin War, Hijikata Toshizō, the vice-captain of the

Shinsengumi, led his subordinates in a tenacious resistance against the Meiji government army. Knowing that they were outmatched, they fought until the very end, and he was ultimately killed in action, practically embodying the samurai's spirit of self-sacrifice. The statement in *Hagakure* that Bushido is essentially about death (CITIC Press, 2018, p. 47), elevates the concept of self-sacrifice to the level of spiritual belief.

Honor – above all else is the very soul of Bushido. Samurai regarded honor as more precious than life and were willing to commit seppuku to preserve it. *The Buke Shohatto*, promulgated during the Edo period (also known as the Tokugawa period, spanned from 1603 to 1868 in Japanese history; it was a time of relative peace, strict social stratification, and significant cultural development under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate) clearly defined the behavioral norms and honor codes for samurai. When a samurai lost his honor, seppuku was often the required means of atonement. As Nitobe Inazō pointed out in *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, "Honor is the most precious gift bestowed by Bushido; it represents the dignity and value of samurai" (The Commercial Press, 2018, p. 92). The act of seppuku was not only a confession of fault but also the last resort for samurai to safeguard their own and their family's honor, profoundly illustrating the central position of honor in Bushido.

The above-mentioned core values of Bushido spirit – loyalty, bravery, self-sacrifice and dignity – are deeply rooted in the unique historical and cultural soil of Japan, exerting a profound and lasting influence on the development of Japanese society, shaping of the national character, and literature and art.

Let us now turn to Ishiguro's novel to look at the examples of the Bushido spirit in the novel. First of all, it is the self-sacrifice spirit, demonstrated by Klara, that forms a profound resonance with the core values of Bushido. Yamamoto Tsunetomo emphasized in *Hagakure* that "Bushido is essentially about death"(CITIC Press, 2018, p. 47) regarding self-sacrifice as the highest realm of the samurai spirit. This concept finds a modern interpretation in Klara's actions.

Klara's act of making a deal with the Manager to save Josie and willingly

depleting her own resources is a classic example of her selfless dedication. In the novel, Klara is aware that the deal with the Manager may lead to functional deterioration or even decommissioning. However, in order to help Josie recover, she resolutely chooses to sacrifice her own "life." Nitobe Inazō pointed out in *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (The Commercial Press, 2018, p. 78) that the loyalty of samurai to their lords is often manifested as "sparing no effort to safeguard the interests of their lords." Klara transforms this loyalty into the guardianship of Josie. When she learns that the Sun might be able to cure Josie, she repeatedly pleads for the Sun's help, even offering her own "existence" as an exchange. This self-depleting behavior is analogous to how samurai would bravely fight on the battlefield to protect their lords, charging forward without hesitation despite the dangers, just as the 47 Ronin patiently planned for two years to avenge their lord and ultimately sacrificed their lives to fulfill their loyalty. This heroic deed is detailed in Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *Chūshingura* (Iwanami Shoten, 1956, pp. 89-112).

By giving up her own interests at critical moments and fully devoting herself to protecting Josie, Klara practices yet another Bushido principle – **altruism**. In the novel, when Josie faces the unknown risks brought about by "lifting," Klara consistently takes Josie's side and attempts to prevent actions that might harm her. Yamaga Sokō advocated in *Bukyō Shōgaku* that samurai should "prioritize the well-being of others" (Iwanami Shoten, 1968, p. 52), and Klara's actions reflect this concept. For instance, Klara actively observes Josie's living environment, analyzes factors that may affect her health, and takes proactive measures. She pays attention to the relationship between Josie and her mother and endeavors to reconcile the conflicts between them, even though this may consume her limited energy and resources. This choice of putting Josie's interests above her own is in the same vein as the spirit of samurai who would sacrifice their personal safety for the interests of their families and lords. Just as Hijikata Toshizō, the vice-captain of the Shinsengumi, tenaciously resisted the Meiji government army in the Boshin War to

protect his comrades and the forces of his lord. Knowing that they were outmatched, he fought until his last breath, and his spirit of self-sacrifice has been repeatedly extolled in historical documents.

Klara's spirit of self-sacrifice does not stand by itself as it aligns with the Bushido pursuit of loyalty, dedication, and altruism. As an android with artificial intelligence, she reinterprets the connotations and values of Bushido in the context of modern society, adding profound cultural depth and spiritual strength to the novel.

Kazuo Ishiguro exploits the cultural element of Bushido to place Klara's sacrificial acts within a broader cultural context, guiding readers to contemplate the significance of traditional spiritual values for humanity in an era of rapid technological advancement.

To conclude, the cultural mapping between Klara's spirit of sacrifice and the samurai code is far from a coincidental creative accident, but rather a meticulously crafted deliberate act by Kazuo Ishiguro. He skillfully integrates Bushido's core values of loyalty, devotion, and self-sacrifice into the behavioral logic and emotional choices of the artificial intelligence Klara, blurring the boundaries between technology and tradition. This transtemporal grafting of cultural symbols achieves two key effects: on the one hand, it transforms Klara from a cold machine into a three-dimensional character with the temperament of a classical hero – each of her choices involving self-diminishment radiates the light of bushido spirit. On the other hand, by connecting the dilemmas of modern technology with traditional spiritual values, the novel unfolds its themes of humanity, love, and redemption across richer cultural dimensions. This encourages readers, in an era of rapid technological advancement, to reconsider the supporting significance of traditional spiritual values for the human psyche, thus achieving a dual breakthrough in both literary artistry and intellectual depth.

3.2. The image of sun in Japanese culture and in Ishiguro's novel

The symbolic connotations of sun in Japanese culture are deeply rooted in

mythological traditions and religious practices of the country. Imagining the future Western society, Ishiguro relies on the imagery of the Eastern tradition.

3.2.1. The symbolic connotations of sun in the Japanese mythology

In Japanese creation myths, Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, occupies a central position. Let us turn to *Kojiki*, also known as the *Records of Ancient Matters*, which is Japan's oldest extant chronicle, compiled in 712 AD under the imperial command. It documents Japan's origin myths, genealogies of the imperial family, and early history, serving as a fundamental text for understanding ancient Japanese culture, religion, and the formation of the imperial lineage (translated by Zhou Zuoren, Modern Press, 2018, pp. 32-37). According to *Kojiki*, Amaterasu emerged from the left eye of Izanagi (a creator god in Japanese mythology, part of the seventh generation of gods, who, along with his sister Izanami, gave birth to the islands of Japan and many deities) and her radiance illuminated the heavens and the earth, thus being regarded as the wellspring of life and light. In the Amano Iwato myth, when Amaterasu hid in a rock cave, the world was plunged into darkness and all things came to a standstill. It was not until her reappearance, that light and vitality were restored. This story vividly illustrates the close connection between the sun, the continuation of life, and the return of light. Japanese scholar Hayao Kawai points out in *The Mythological Thinking of the Japanese* (Sanlian Bookstore, 2018, pp. 89-92) that such myths reflect the early primitive worship of the sun by the Japanese people, which stemmed from their longing for life's reproduction and the dispelling of darkness by light.

The sun is also a symbol of imperial power, closely intertwined with the rule of the Japanese imperial family. Amaterasu is revered as the ancestral goddess of the Japanese imperial family, and the emperors of Japan have claimed to be her descendants to demonstrate the legitimacy and divinity of their rule. After the Meiji Restoration, State Shinto was established, and sun worship was politicized, becoming a spiritual pillar for strengthening the imperial system. The Ise Grand

Shrine, which enshrines Amaterasu, holds the so called "Shikinen Sengu" ceremony (reconstructing the shrine every 20 years). This is not merely a religious event; it is also a ritual to reinforce the concept of the "unbroken imperial lineage" of the emperor. Historian Kiyoshi Inoue mentions in *A History of Japan* (Inoue, 2019, pp. 135-140) that by linking the sun to imperial power, sun worship gained political authority in Japanese society.

The sun worship has had a profound impact on Japanese culture, permeating various fields including as art and folklore. In the realm of art, *ukiyo* paintings (Ukiyo-e, often simply referred to as *ukiyo*, a genre of Japanese art that flourished from the 17th to the 19th centuries; primarily features woodblock prints and paintings, depicting scenes of urban life, landscapes, beautiful women, and actors) often use the sun as an element to set the mood. For example, the rising sun in the background of Katsushika Hokusai's *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* symbolizes the power of nature and the source of life.

In literature, the sun is frequently used as an image to express emotions. In terms of folklore, during summer sun festivals and other events, people pray and dance to wish for a bountiful harvest and well-being, reflecting their awe and gratitude towards the sun. Through the passage of time, this worship has become an essential part of the Japanese cultural DNA.

3.2.2. The sun's healing power

The sun's image first introduced in the title *Klara and the Sun* establishes its central symbolic role. For Klara, the sun transcends a mere energy source, becoming a deity-like figure associated with healing – she believes its light revives the dying (e.g., the beggar and dog, p. 92) and performs rituals to channel its power for Josie's recovery, embodying faith as both literal energy and spiritual metaphor. In *Klara and the Sun*, the sun becomes the object of Klara's faith and hope. As a solar-powered artificial intelligence, Klara's dependence on the sun transcends mere energy requirements and elevates to a spiritual belief. When Josie falls ill,

Klara firmly believes that "the Sun has the means to make Josie better" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 87). She prays to the sun in an abandoned barn, attempting to harness its power to heal Josie. This act echoes the rituals in traditional Japanese Shintoism, where people appeal to the gods for blessings and protection. As pointed out by Japanese cultural scholar Katō Shūichi in *Time and Space in Japanese Culture* (Shūichi, 2019, pp. 120-123), natural deities in Japanese culture are often attributed with healing powers. Klara's firm belief in the sun's curative ability is thus a continuation of this cultural tradition.

The sun's rays permeate the entire process of Klara's guardianship over Josie, profoundly influencing the development of the novel's plot and the fates of the characters. At the beginning of the novel, Klara looks through the shop window and sees that "the sunlight spilled onto the street, gilding everything in a golden hue" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 12). Here, the sun symbolizes hope and new beginnings, hinting at the special bond that is about to unfold between her and Josie. As Josie's condition changes, the imagery of the sun also transforms. When Josie falls into a coma after the "lifting" procedure, "the sun was obscured by thick clouds, and the light grew faint" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 156), metaphorically suggesting the fragility of Josie's life and the uncertainty of her future. However, when Klara decides to rely on the sun's power to save Josie, the sun becomes her guiding light and source of courage.

The changing states of the sun, whether sunny or overcast, serve as a barometer of the characters' fates. While driving the plot forward, they also reflect the emotional fluctuations within the characters.

When Kazuo Ishiguro masterfully integrates the solar imagery from Japanese culture into a science fiction backdrop, he endows it with entirely new connotations, thus demonstrating cultural fusion and innovation.

In traditional Japanese culture, the sun symbolizes mythological divinity and imperial power. However, in the future society depicted in the novel, where technology has reached a high level of advancement, humans attempt to transform

life through "lifting" technology. Ishiguro brings the sun down from its divine pedestal into the realm of reality, making it the spiritual sustenance of the artificial intelligence of Klara. Consequently, this breaks the boundaries between myth and reality, as well as between tradition and technology.

Klara's faith in the sun has a dual significance within the science fiction context. On one hand, it borrows from the traditional connotations of the sun as a symbol of life and hope in the Japanese culture. On the other hand, it serves as a reflection and critique of technocracy. While humans rely on technological means such as the "Cootings Machine" in their pursuit of perfection, Klara believes that the natural power of the sun can bring healing and redemption. This contrast highlights Ishiguro's contemplation on the development of modern technology and his appreciation for traditional spiritual values.

By combining Japanese solar culture with science fiction elements, Ishiguro creates unique literary imagery. This not only showcases the charm of cultural heritage, but also endows it with new meanings that adapt to the modern context, offering readers a fresh reading experience and prompting profound reflection.

3.3. The aesthetics of *Mono no Aware* and its representations

3.3.1. The key ideas of the *Mono no Aware* aesthetics

Mono no Aware is a crucial aesthetic concept in classical Japanese aesthetics. It is renowned, along with "Yūgen" and "Wabi-Sabi", as the three major traditional aesthetic characteristics of Japan.

Its origins can be traced back to Japan's first anthology of poetry entitled as *Man'yōshū*. Before the invention of the Japanese *kana syllabary*, the term "あは (aware)" roughly corresponded to the Chinese character "哀" and referred to the natural outpouring of emotions when one's feelings were stirred (Kawamura, 2018). During the Heian period, Saitō Hiroshige in "Kojiki-zui" interpreted "aware" as an

interjection. In the Edo period, the scholar Motoori Norinaga, while studying *The Tale of Genji*, first proposed the concept of *Mono no Aware*, transforming it from a simple expression of emotion into a profound contemplation and lamentation of all things in the world, including natural phenomena and social life (Motoori, 2015).

The *Mono no Aware* aesthetics emphasizes the sensory experience of shared sorrow between the subject and the object at the moment of their profound integration. Its essence lies in the acute perception and deep understanding of the impermanence of life and the transience of beauty. It is not merely an expression of grief as it encompasses the complex emotions that arise when confronted with beautiful things, triggered by the awareness of their ephemerality. These emotions include appreciation, tenderness, and a subtle sense of melancholy (Otake, 2017). Those attuned to *Mono no Aware* have a profound understanding of the impermanence of the world. They rejoice at the emergence of beautiful things and grieve at their passing, cherishing the fleeting presence of transient elements in life even more. Unlike Buddhism, which views impermanence as the root cause of human suffering, adherents of *Mono no Aware* accept and respect the "existence" of things. They adopt a broad and long-term perspective, imbuing all aesthetic experiences with a lingering sense of sorrow.

3.3.2. The impermanence of life and the transience of beauty

These two representations of the *Mono no Aware* concept are important in the characterization of the two central heroines of the novel. We will look at Josie and Klara successively.

Josie suffers from a severe illness. In the future world depicted in the novel, despite the advanced technology, life still remains beyond complete control. Her life is as precarious as a candle flame, flickering in the wind. The tragic fate of her elder sister, who died in infancy due to the same illness, casts a profound and ominous shadow over Josie's own destiny.

After undergoing the "lifting" procedure, Josie falls into a coma. At this moment,

"the sun was obscured by thick clouds, and the light grew faint" (Ishiguro, 2021). This environmental description serves as a subtle metaphor, vividly illustrating the fragility of Josie's life and the uncertainty that looms over her future. Once full of vitality and having forged a deep emotional bond with Klara, Josie now faces the constant threat of the disease snatching away everything she holds dear. Her beautiful life teeters on the edge in the face of the capricious hand of fate, which embodies the core theme of the impermanence of life within the aesthetic framework of *Mono no Aware*.

What about Klara? As a solar-powered artificial intelligence, Klara's *raison d'être* is to accompany Josie. During the time she spends with Josie, Klara demonstrates genuine emotions and unwavering loyalty. However, once Josie recovers, goes to school, and leaves home, Klara, having fulfilled her mission, is discarded and sent to a scrapyard. There, she "lingers in memories while gradually withering away."

Klara, who was once capable of perceiving the world with great sensitivity and accompanying Josie with boundless vitality, now resembles an abandoned object. She gradually loses her intrinsic value and vigor. Her decline symbolizes the inevitable disappearance of beautiful things. Even though Klara is a robot, the emotional connection she shares with Josie and her beautiful perception of the world both gradually fade away as her physical functions deteriorate. This can be regarded as representation of the transience of beauty, a key aspect of the aesthetics of *Mono no Aware*.

3.3.3. The enhancement of emotions

In the novel, there is paradoxically a contrast between Klara's devout faith in the sun and the impermanence of life, which intensifies the emotional tension in the novel. Klara firmly believes that the sun has the power to heal Josie. When Josie is in a critical condition, Klara prays to the sun. Her persistent belief in the continuation of life fills the reader with emotional anticipation for Josie's recovery.

However, the deterioration of Josie's condition constantly undermines this hope. In a desperate attempt to save Josie, Klara is willing to sacrifice the liquid in her body to destroy the Cootings Machine, demonstrating her selfless dedication and pure emotions. As a result, the uncertainty of Josie's physical condition and Klara's own gradual decline cause the readers' emotions to plummet from the peak of expectation to the depths of helplessness. Throughout the novel the emotions continuously fluctuate between hope and despair, warmth and sorrow, pushing the emotional tension of the novel to its extreme.

The aesthetics of *Mono no Aware* prompts the reader to deeply contemplate the essence of life and emotions. Although Klara is non-human, yet she demonstrates purer emotions than many human beings. Her love for Josie is selfless and unrequited, and this emotion demonstrates a powerful force in the face of the impermanence of life.

The reader can't but wonder: are human emotions becoming increasingly diluted in the modern society with its rapid development of technologies. When confronted with the impermanence of life, can we, like Klara, hold fast to our beliefs and emotions towards beauty? The fragility and impermanence of Josie's life make us realize the preciousness and transience of life, thus prompting us to reflect on our attitudes towards life.

Meanwhile, the emotional bond between Klara and Josie, that transcends species, also compels the reader to reexamine the importance of emotions. We are led to think about what kind of strength and comfort emotions can offer us during the impermanent journey of life.

To conclude, in *Klara and the Sun*, Kazuo Ishiguro skillfully employs the concept of *Mono no Aware*. Through delicate depictions of Josie's physical condition and Klara's process of decline, he profoundly develops the themes of the impermanence of life and the transience of beauty. This aesthetic approach not only enhances the emotional tension of the novel, exposing the reader to the intense emotional impacts, but also stimulates him/her to engage in in-depth reflections on

life and emotions.

Besides, it invites us to reevaluate the value of life, the significance of emotions, and our attitudes towards the capricious fate in the era of AI and other technological breakthroughs. As a result, Ishiguro's novel transcends the posthumanist scepticism towards the humanism.

Just as the Japanese concept of *Mono no Aware* Japan suggests, in a world full of impermanence, we should cherish every beautiful moment and value the sincere emotions between people, as well as those between humans and non-humans.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

This chapter explores the profound influence of Japanese culture on Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*, demonstrating how the author integrates Japanese cultural elements to enrich the novel's themes, characters, and symbolic meanings.

In terms of the Bushido spirit, the core values of loyalty, bravery, self-sacrifice, and honor in traditional Japanese Bushido are vividly reflected in Klara's character. Klara's selfless dedication to saving Josie, even at the cost of her own functionality, mirrors the samurai's self-sacrificing spirit. Her guardianship of Josie is a modern reinterpretation of the samurai's loyalty to their lords, blurring the boundaries between technology and tradition and endowing the novel with profound cultural depth.

The symbol of the sun in Japanese culture also plays a crucial role in the novel. In Japanese mythology, the sun, represented by the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, is the source of life, light, and imperial power. In *Klara and the Sun*, the sun becomes Klara's object of faith and hope, with its healing power echoing the traditional belief in the deities' curative abilities in Japanese Shintoism. The changing states of the sun in the novel not only drive the plot but also reflect the emotional fluctuations and fates of the characters. Ishiguro's integration of the solar imagery into the

science fiction backdrop breaks the boundaries between myth and reality, tradition and technology, and serves as a critique of technocracy.

Furthermore, the aesthetic concept of *Mono no Aware* is effectively evoked in the novel. This concept emphasizes the perception of the impermanence of life and the transience of beauty. Josie's fragile life and Klara's decline after fulfilling her mission embody these aspects of *Mono no Aware*. The contrast between Klara's faith in the sun and the impermanence of life intensifies the emotional tension in the novel, prompting readers to deeply contemplate the essence of life, emotions, and the value of relationships in the context of technological development.

Overall, Ishiguro's incorporation of Japanese cultural elements in *Klara and the Sun* achieves a unique synthesis of Western and Eastern codes. It not only enriches the novel's literary artistry, but also offers readers profound insights into the significance of traditional spiritual values in an era of rapid technological advancement, by so doing transcending posthumanist scepticism towards humanism.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has conducted an in-depth exploration of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun*, analyzing it from multiple dimensions, including posthumanist theory, the characteristics of science fiction literature, and Japanese cultural elements, thereby revealing the rich connotations and profound significance of this work.

At the theoretical level, this study has systematically sorted out the development process and core concepts of posthumanist theory with a clear logical thread and integrated them with the characteristics of science fiction literature, establishing a solid theoretical framework for the interpretation of *Klara and the Sun*. As a typical example of science fiction literature, the novel not only possesses the basic features of science fiction works, such as being set in a future world with advanced technology and exploring the impact of technology on society and humanity, but also, from a posthumanist perspective, profoundly demonstrates the complex and subtle relationships between humans and non-human entities. The portrayal of Klara, an artificial intelligence character, breaks the traditional boundaries between humans and non-humans. With the abilities of perception, thinking, and emotional understanding, her interactions with humans not only reflect the deep penetration of technology into human life but also challenge traditional perceptions of human nature, identity, and ethics. This literary representations of posthumanist ideas elevate the novel beyond the entertainment value of ordinary science fiction works, making it an important text for exploring the future direction of humanity.

From a cultural perspective, this study has focused on analyzing the significant role of Japanese cultural elements in the novel. Kazuo Ishiguro skillfully integrates Japanese Bushido spirit, solar culture, and the aesthetics of *Mono no Aware* into his work. The spirit of self-sacrifice embodied by Klara strongly resonates with the

core values of loyalty, bravery, and self-sacrifice in Bushido. Her willingness to sacrifice her own functionality to save Josie represents a new interpretation of the Bushido spirit in the context of modern technology, blurring the boundaries between technology and tradition and endowing the novel with profound cultural depth. The symbolic meaning of the sun in Japanese culture is also fully expanded and innovated in the novel. Transformed from a sacred symbol in mythology into the object of Klara's faith, the healing power of the sun not only continues the reverence for natural deities in Japanese culture but also reflects a critique of modern technological dominance. The application of the aesthetics of *Mono no Aware*, through the depiction of the fragility of Josie's life and the decline of Klara's fate, deepens the novel's exploration of the themes of the impermanence of life and the transience of beauty, intensifies the emotional tension of the work, and triggers readers' profound reflections on life, emotions, and values.

Klara and the Sun has unique value in literary creation. It achieves an ingenious integration of Eastern and Western cultures by organically combining Western posthumanist thoughts with Eastern Japanese cultural elements, creating novel and profound literary images and narrative modes. This cross-cultural creative approach not only enriches the artistic expressiveness of the novel, but also provides new ideas and examples for literary creation. Meanwhile, the novel offers profound revelations and reflections on various issues faced by humanity in the context of technological development, such as the impact of technology on human nature, social stratification, and ethical dilemmas, rendering it of great practical significance. It reminds the reader that while pursuing technological progress, he/she should attach importance in support of traditional spiritual values for the human mind, avoid falling into the trap of technocentrism, and consider how to strike a balance between technology and humanities to build a more harmonious and better future society.

In conclusion, *Klara and the Sun* is an outstanding work with theoretical depth, cultural connotations, and practical significance. Through multi-dimensional

analysis, this study has comprehensively demonstrated the rich values of this novel. However, there is room for further exploration of the work. Future research can be conducted from more diverse perspectives, such as conducting comparative studies with other science fiction works, so as to delve deeper into its potential meanings and provide more valuable references for understanding contemporary literature and social development.

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