



Love and hope: affective labor and posthuman relations in *Klara and The Sun*

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Accepted: 31 October 2022 / Published online: 11 November 2022
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Abstract

If super AI becomes possible, what could be the relationship between humans and non-humans? Does love play an important role in it? What is the meaning of true love? Noted for writing “novels of great emotional force”, Kazuo Ishiguro in his most recent speculative fiction *Klara and the Sun* imagines a posthuman world in which enhanced transhumans, super AIs and ordinary human beings coexist and interact with each other. By focusing on the Artificial Friend Klara’s complex emotions, such as her sensitivity, pathos and altruistic love, which is in strong contrast to the possessive, overprotective, and self-centered love of Josie’s mother, this essay uses Michael Hardt’s concept of affective labor to ponder on the question of parental love and human and non-human relationship. It argues that as a companion robot, Klara’s affective labor makes her more humanlike, and that in the posthuman world where artificial intelligence can be ever more potent and inescapably change the human relations, the key to more constructive relationship is to cherish hope and show benevolent love to one another, whether they are humans, or non-humans.

Keywords *Klara and the Sun* · Kazuo Ishiguro · Affective labor · Love · Hope

Introduction

With the development of bioengineering and artificial intelligence, the organic human life has become a phenomenon that can be configured and reconfigured through technological intervention. The notion of life and hence the questions of what it means to be a human and what it is like to live with the “companion species,” be them human beings, animals, cyborgs, or artificial intelligence in the broad sense, have become a new subject concern for some contemporary English novelists such as Kazuo Ishiguro, Ian McEwan, Margaret Atwood, Richard Powers and Jeanette Winterson. Among them, Ishiguro shows particular interest in exploring the

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fundamental question of what is the meaning of true love in his most recent novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021). Told from Klara, an artificial friend with outstanding observational qualities and caring abilities, the novel blurs the boundaries between the human and the non-human, highlighting Klara's faith, devotion and love for her owner Josie. It makes the readers feel human loneliness, callousness, suffering, loss, and grief on one hand, and sense the healing connections that are made possible by the interactions with the artificial intelligence on the other hand. The affective labor done by Klara is particularly gripping and touching.

Up to now there are not many full-length articles on the novel, but quite a few reviews give positive evaluations, as thematically it presents "a flawless story of a robotic artificial friend that is tender, touching and true" (Self, 2021) and "touches on a number of weighty issues, including the insidious encroachments of AI technology; the repercussions of rampant inequality; the degradation of the environment (with smog that, to Klara's dismay, blocks the sun's benefits); and the prevalence of loneliness" (McAlpin, 2021). Aesthetically, it "is a masterpiece of great beauty, meticulous control and, as ever, clear, simple prose" (Appleyard, 2021). As the novel's AI figure Klara has extraordinary affective features and her caring labor produces affects and relationships, it is relevant to frame the discussion of the novel by using Michael Hardt's concept of "affective labor," which involves the production and manipulation of affects. Based on Hardt's recognition that affective labor has been feminized and undervalued for quite a long time and that it has become a more important mode of labor in the service industry, this essay argues that the affective labor done by artificial intelligence is another changing mode of labor in the new stage of capitalist society, and that although Klara is designed as a commodified robot to serve the human needs, Ishiguro imagines more positive human and non-human relations by giving Klara a sense of agency, enabling her to perform the role of the caregiver in a more healing way. In the following the article first explains Hardt's concept of "affective labor" by extending it to the discussion of the interactions and the attachment between human characters and AI machine in the novel, highlighting Klara as a sentient, empathetic robot, and then makes a contrastive reading of Klara's affective labor with that of Mother on Josie, revealing the importance of some positive values such as faith, love and hope.

Commodified, sentient and empathetic: Klara as affective laborer in the posthuman world

Human feelings could be commercialized and manipulated. A worker in the service industry such as a customer service representative on the phone is required to create a sense of ease or comfort for a customer; in turn, a customer may expect or require that such kind of feeling be part of the service, just as the sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild claims, "the *emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself*" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 5, emphasis Hochschild's). Such kind of requirement or expectation may lead to the manipulation of emotions. Hochschild's groundbreaking work *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling* (1983) uses flight attendants as an example to show how the management of their personal feelings

is transformed into emotional labor for wage. The flight attendants are supposed to become effective producers of comfort so that they could continually be employed and the airlines could earn more money; moreover, the airline's obsessive emphasis on the genuineness of its flight attendants' smiles indicates that the display of their friendly smiles to the passengers are not always spontaneous and visceral.

Having good social skills has become a must for the employees in the service industry as the purpose of creating ease or comfort is to persuade the customers into buying more. Michael Hardt follows this strand of thoughts and is also foresighted to formulate how affect has become a lucrative tool for profit making. In his 1999 article "Affective labor" Hardt astutely senses that when the service sector has a larger share of the market in post-Fordist economies, affective labor, which produces social networks, forms of community and biopower, has assumed a dominant position in the contemporary phase of capitalist development. Later Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Multitude* states that immaterial labor, which produces intangible products such as information, service, knowledge or communication, has become the dominant model of labor; and as a subcategory of immaterial labor, affective labor "is labor that produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 108). It is clear that with the service industry as the pillar of the capitalist economy, affects and relationships have played an increasingly important role in the production process.

Affective labor has double-edged nature: on one hand, it is old, marginalized, and debased as it has been done by women for free for quite a long time, who raise, nurture, and love family members in domestic space, but on the other hand, it is new, experienced more and more by consumers in the service industry, assuming a more dominant position in the global capitalist economy. This changing role of affective labor in the capitalist economy reveals that affect has become "the last colony" (Hennessy, 2013, p. 37) of capital, as the rise of affective labor on the market is in accordance with the encroachment of capitalist production into personality. When discussing immaterial labor, Hardt identifies two main types: "symbolic-analytical service" that involves the extensive use of computers to perform problem-identifying and problem-solving tasks which has become the key to competition in the new global economy and "the *affective labor* of human contact and interaction" in health services, and the various culture industries (Hardt, 1999, p. 95). While Hardt considers the above two main types of immaterial labor somewhat separately, Ishiguro combines them into one in his novel, as it is Klara, the artificial intelligence, who does the caring labor to provide her service and communication. By imagining a high development of artificial intelligence in informational economy, Ishiguro pushes Hardt's argument further and extends it to the affective labor done by artificial intelligence to ponder on sociality and attachment between humans and machines.

Ishiguro first follows the traditional robot narrative by imagining AI robots as commodified, whose basic function is to be the friends of lonely children. Human-machine relationship has long been considered that of master and slave. In the story Klara continues the master-slave relationship as she has a subservient, low social standing in Josie's household. Even before she is bought by Josie's mother, Klara is warned by the manager of the shop not to perform any sense of autonomy: "It's for the customer to choose the AF, never the other way round" (32). Rick's mother

considers Klara a thing without subjectivity, similar to “a vacuum cleaner” (145). At one moment in the story, Josie treats Klara as though she were a sibling, but at next moment, she impatiently orders Klara to leave the room. Quite often, Klara simply stands uncomplainingly in a corner, waiting until she can be of service. In addition, Josi believes Klara cannot replace Rick, her human friend, when Klara offers to play the bubble game with her. Bought by parents to provide companionship for their children, AFs are just merchandise for some children, thrown across the room like ordinary lifeless toys, although they indeed have feelings. For instance, a boy AF shows a sense of sadness and weariness when disliked by his owner, who forces him to walk a few steps behind. AFs are afraid of being replaced by the new models and thus shuffle by awkwardly, refusing to look in the direction where new models are. For most human characters, Klara is merely a robotic servant designed to serve the human needs. Undoubtedly, the substitution logic operated by the capitalists is a way of generating consumer demand and sustaining capitalist economy. Human workers are replaced by more efficient machines to make more profits. Health care workers, mostly female, for instance, are replaced by care robots. If women’s caring labor in the private sphere, which includes the affective work of raising, nurturing, and loving the family members, has been unwaged, the affective labor taken over by the robots are also unwaged, as they are not considered as humans in need of money. They are simply programmed machines. All kinds of robots such as care robots, chat robots and even sex robots are commodified to satisfy the various human needs, replacing the low-efficient human workers. It is predictable that the affective labor done by artificial intelligence could become the predominant mode of labor in the posthuman world.

Ishiguro follows the broader cultural narratives around gender and the devaluation of caring labor by creating a female AI to continue the affective labor, but he portrays Klara not simply a commodified product, but a sentient and empathetic robot although some characters consider her a thing. . AI, the information processing robot for specialized tasks such as chess playing, is already impacting our lives in significant ways. One day it can develop into artificial general intelligence (AGI), or super AI, capable of causal reasoning and performing all the cognitive tasks that humans can do and can even do far better than humans. When this moment of technological singularity comes, there will be no distinction between man and machine. They will coinhabit and co-learn from each other in the posthuman world. Robot scientist David Levy claims that “[r]obots will be hugely attractive to humans as companions because of their many talents, senses, and capabilities” (Levy, 2008, p. 22). Levy declares that in about 50 years we will see robots partaking in intense and fulfilling relationships with humans, including having sex. Whether this comes true or not, it is indisputable that in near future robots will significantly change our social structure and human relations, so the key issue is how to cope with this situation.

One of the salient features of science fiction is world building, in which a marvelous fictional world is imagined in convincing details. In western cultural history of robot narratives, robots are often depicted as threatening. Artificial life including robots has long been depicted as fearsome in the worst-case scenarios to caution the possibility that no one is safe from the dangers of technological hubris ever since Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) was written. Most contemporary AI

stories, such as Alex Garland's film *Ex Machina* (2014) or Ian McEwan's fiction *Machines Like Me* (2019), express the age-old fear that robots will revolt and overthrow their human masters. Besides, the images of robots undergo a series of evolution, shifting from the early robots that resembled insects or other animals to the humanoid robots built on the concept of anthropomorphization, the attribution of human qualities onto a nonhuman entity. According to Jennifer Rhee, anthropomorphization is "central to Alan Turing's imitation game and Masahiro Mori's uncanny valley theory, both of which have wielded considerable influence on the robotic imaginary, often as boundary-policing tools to distinguish humans from machines and other nonhuman forms" (Rhee, 2018, p. 11). In contrast, Ishiguro builds on his thinking of robotics inspired by Japanese cultural thought, which believes that "even inanimate objects have a spirit" (Caudwell, 2019, p. 47). The influential robotocist Shigeo Hirose once said, "People fear robots because they think they will rule human beings [...] but robots can act unselfishly. Robots can be saints—intelligent and unselfish. For humans, being intelligent is easy, but being unselfish is rather impossible" (qtd. in Unudurti, 2021). In *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro's world building is different from those created by writers of hard science fiction. He imagines there have been astounding breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and gene editing and then meditates on what it means to love somebody in such a world. He is more interested in the ethical questions of how we coexist with super AIs, a situation that has become a reality due to the high development of science and technology rather than an imagination of the wonder of science and technology itself. In other words, although currently we are unable to make any convincing claims about whether robots have consciousness and feelings like human beings, Ishiguro speculates a world in which our relationship to technology is not one of enmity and antagonism, but that of aspiration and hope.

Kazuo Ishiguro does this in his *Klara and the Sun* by imagining a friendly AI Klara, who shows strong capabilities of caring, understanding and empathy in a problematic future society. He speculates a posthuman world in which genetically enhanced humans coexist with robots taking care of children. It is featured by teenagers in loneliness, adults in unemployment and environment in pollution. Some children become transhumans by having genetic editing surgery done to enhance their intellectual faculties, but they may suffer from some grave health risks. They also endure loneliness in a more and more isolated society, as they are taught by professors on tablets at home without school experiences; consequently, they have to host "interaction parties" for genetically enhanced children mainly so that they could get along with others better in their future college days. Besides, the jobs of some adults including social elitists are not only substituted by the AI, but their life has been encroached on in multi-dimensional ways, which has been complained by a lady Klara met in the theatre: "First they take the jobs. Then they take the seats at the theatre?" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 242).¹ There is also pollution represented by the Cootings Machine that hampers the Sun. The Cootings Machine obliges the Sun to

¹ In what follows, the page number of the quotation from the novel will be put in parenthesis in the article.

retreat for a time, unable to give his special help. All in all, the posthuman world that Ishiguro imagines is a precarious one that is not so bright. It is no wonder that *Kirkus Reviews* comments on the novel as “[a] haunting fable of a lonely, moribund world that is entirely too plausible.”²

Ishiguro makes his storyworld plausible by carefully choosing Klara as the focalizer, who sees things differently from humans. She constantly breaks the world into grids because as a robot, her vision is enabled by image-classification algorithms. Pictures are processed in the way a high-definition image resolves on a screen. For instance, when Klara and Josie’s mother have an expedition to the Morgan’s Falls, leaving Josie behind because she’s too weak to go, the Mother makes a disturbing request of asking Klara to imitate Josie for a while. During the imitation, Klara sees the Mother appear in eight boxes. Each box of eyes expresses a different emotion of Mother’s joy, fear, sadness, laughter and “[in] one, for instance, her eyes were laughing cruelly, but in the next they were filled with sadness” (104). At moments of high emotion, Klara’s partitioning becomes disjointed and expressive. In addition, her vocabulary is often simple and direct; she invents names and adjectives idiosyncratically: outfits are “high-ranking,” and human characters stare into “oblongs.” Depicted as categorically other, Klara estranges the daily experiences that we are familiar with.

The products of affective labor are relationships and emotional responses. Klara develops her relationship with the human characters through deep learning. As an AF, Klara is attentive, inquisitive and remarkably observant. Unlike other AFs, who simply wish to accompany a human child, Klara is fascinated by human behavior. Even inside the shop, Klara always longs to watch people pass by and imagine what is going on in their heads. She feels sad when noticing the “death” of the Beggar man and his dog and becomes happy when they come back to life. She is sensitive enough to notice a passing boy AF who lags a few steps behind his owner, and his weary gait makes her wonder what it would be like “to know that your child didn’t want you” (16). Hyper-observant, Klara yearns to understand the subtleties and nuances she detects in people’s interactions with one another. For instance, she observes the old raincoat man’s encounter with the Coffee Cup Lady, sensing their being both happy and upset. Klara is naïve at the beginning of the story, almost like a baby, but she is very perceptive. As she rapidly absorbs the world around her, she starts to take on more qualities of human beings, having complex human emotions such as fear, faith, love and hope. When the Mother expresses her envy for Klara because she thinks Klara has no feelings, Klara responds by saying, “I believe I have many feelings. The more I observe, the more feelings become available to me” (97–98). In order to highlight the situation that humans and non-humans form a relational, symbiotic relationship in this posthuman world, Ishiguro depicts Klara as a super AI who could have deep learning through her powerful observation of human behavior, strong conversational ability, and judging ability.

² Released on March 2, 2021, <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/kazuo-ishiguro/klara-and-the-sun/>, accessed: October 18, 2021.

Klara is also highly empathetic. After seeing the two taxi drivers fight, Klara tries to feel in her mind the anger the drivers experienced, imagining her and Rosa getting so angry with each other that they start a fight. When Manager warns her about children who made promises at the window, but never returned, or even if they returned, they might have chosen another AF altogether, Klara thinks about the boy AF disliked by his owner and wonders if she and Josie would ever walk in such an isolated way. When she gets an affirmative answer from Rick who confirms that although he and Josie really love each other, they have to wish each other the best after separation, Klara imagines that “after many years, and after many changes, Josie and Rick might once again meet as the Coffee Cup Lady and Raincoat Man had done” (293). According to Ian Farnell, “the ethical component of caring requires and nurtures an empathetic and compassionate way of being” (Farnell, 2021, p. 375). As a caring robot, Klara always prioritizes the needs of her owner and responds to other people in an attentive way by sustaining the web of connections.

Highlighting Klara’s uniqueness, Ishiguro appropriately opens our window onto this world through Klara’s eyes. Klara is an outsider who has different assumptions. Apart from her limited purview of perceiving the world as a series of squares, Klara has limited understanding about the human world. She can observe, but she cannot fully comprehend the human heart at first. While observing human behavior, she sometimes becomes puzzled and then increasingly fascinated by the more mysterious emotions human characters would display. In order to be able to help her future owner, Klara determines to seek out the sort of behavior about which she needs to learn. We can see her perception is both mechanical and deeply subjective when she interprets the events and environment around her.

Beyond possessive love: Klara acting in faith, love and hope

Michael Hardt sees affective labor a potential source of liberation as it is “a site of biopower from below” (Hardt, 1999, p. 98), reproducing life in the process of managing population. He recognizes the potential of affective labor to shape subjects and society. In the same way, Ishiguro describes Klara not only as a pre-programmed product, but also as a robot with some sense of agency. As an Artificial Friend, Klara provides her affective labor for her owner Josie, and she is both the embodiment of the dehumanized server and defiant actor with self-will. Although she is programmed to do her affective labor submissively and knows conscientiously that it is her duty to be Josie’s best friend, Klara gradually builds her artificial life with faith, love and hope, making some spiritual progress. Her world grows more complicated when she learns that Josie is dying from some serious illness and her role changes from taking the duty of looking after a lonely teenager to comforting a girl resigned to die. During the caring process, Klara significantly develops a quasi-religious faith. From Klara’s perspective, the Sun is important as she herself is powered by the solar energy. After seeing the Beggar man and his dog recover in the Sun, she is convinced that the Sun is a source of nourishment, a powerful, benevolent being, and a caring deity. She thus develops a religious feeling toward the Sun, which involves a form of trust and self-giving, worshiping it and pray for Josie to

make her well again. Considering her pray “a contract with the Sun” (168), Klara makes a self-sacrificing effort of putting her P-E-G Nine solution into the Cootings Machine to stop pollution so that the Sun could come out to nourish Josie. Even though several of her efforts do not bring miracle to Josie, Klara still tries to thank the Sun and ask for his understanding: “I know I’ve no right to come here like this. I let him down, failing completely to stop Pollution. [...] But the Sun was watching at the yard that day, so he will know how hard I tried, and how I made my sacrifice, which I was only too pleased to do, even if now my abilities aren’t perhaps what they were” (273). She apparently trusts the Sun’s power in transforming the adverse situation into a more positive one. From the Mother, Klara learns to grapple with the anticipatory grief of losing a loved one. Hence by experiencing pathos, a quality still seemingly impervious to robots, the nonhuman Klara is more human than most humans when trying to save the family from heartbreak.

Also supported by her faith, Klara always cherishes hope, thus rejecting the human request of asking her to “continue” Josie and becoming more human-like when making some autonomous decisions. German Jewish philosopher Ernst Bloch’s monumental work *The Principle of Hope* states that “[t]he substance-formations of the world [...] are full of the tendency of the Not-Yet towards the All” (Bloch, 1995, Vol. 1, p. 336). In Bloch’s view, hope is objectively real, existing in the cosmos as well as in human history. Our expectations of the future give reality its real dimension, so hope is “an ontological affair rather than a state of mind” (Eagleton, 2015, p. 95). In the novel, Klara’s primordial stance toward the world is optimistic. Her confidence about things coming better comes from her faith in the Sun, believing “[i]n the morning when the Sun returns. It’s possible for us to hope” (258). It is this faith in the Sun that makes her think that “[i]f we can make Josie healthy, then the portrait, my learning her, none of it will matter” (225). When nearly all the human characters around Josie such as the doctor, the Mother, and Dr. Capaldi are about giving up hope, Klara makes a moral judgment, believing “[i]t’s wrong to give up hope” (209). Klara shows more of the positive side of humanity here, forming a telling contrast to the despairing human characters. Terry Eagleton thinks that “it is worth noting that hope is the kind of virtue that involves a cluster of equally creditable qualities: patience, trust, courage, tenacity, resilience, forbearance, perseverance, long-sufferance and the like” (Eagleton, 2015, p. 59). Klara is patient, resolute and courageous, always believing that “there’s real hope now. Please be patient and wait for good news” (243). When she thinks that if creating an artificial Josie is “the best way to save Josie, then I’d do my utmost. And I believe there’s a good chance I’d be able to succeed” (219), we can see that Klara’s optimism is a form of altruism. She selflessly performs the affective labor that the human parents are not up to. In contrast to the Mother’s possessive love for Josie, Klara is more altruistic, which is clearly shown when Josie’s mother decides to quit her job to accompany her daughter: “If Josie really would be less lonely with the Mother, then I’d happily go away” (260). Klara’s love for Josie is selfless rather than possessive.

True love assisted by faith and hope can be transformative and redemptive. Hope is a passion for the possible that has the performative power of changing our present. It is an indispensable goad to human endeavor. As is depicted in the novel, Klara’s sanguine outlook influences people around her. Her persistent efforts change Josie’s

father in some sense: “Something seemed to change within him. [...] ‘Hope,’ he said. ‘Damn thing never leaves you alone.’ He shook his head almost resentfully, but there was now a new strength about him” (222). Josie’s father felt stronger when cherishing hope. Together he and Klara strive to bring about the fulfilment of helping Josie to be healthy again. Finally, Klara’s persistent actions ensure the most dramatic moment when Josie recovers miraculously one day in the nourishment of sun rays, bringing a kind of re-enchantment to this disenchanted world. With faith, love and hope, Klara becomes an actor with subjectivity in her selfless pursuit of helping Josie well again.

Ishiguro also poses a very thought-provoking question at the end of the story after Josie recovers from her illness: What is Klara’s fate when she is no longer needed? In the story, Klara wholeheartedly devotes herself to help Josie restore health, but when Josie heads off into adulthood, Klara is discarded in the dumpster. This inevitable obsolescence not only indicates the rapid development of science and technology, but also symbolizes the dilemma every parent is faced with: their poignant feelings of having no use when their child grows up.

Whereas Klara has faith in the Sun, the Mother believes in the power of scientism. The story is set in a future American society plagued by controversial scientific advancements and exacerbated social inequality. In this bleak world, affluent parents can make a risky genetic modification called “lifting” for their children, which may boost their intelligence. “Lifted” children can have a better social standing in the future by receiving the best college education, whereas “unlifted” children have a less than two percent chance of getting into a decent university; consequently, they may be ostracized by their peers and marginalized by the society. Rick, a smart boy who is good at designing drones, is not one of the “lifted” teenagers and is therefore denied access to higher education and opportunities. Genetic manipulation confers special educational advantages, but it has the high risks of losing life. Josie’s sister Sal dies in the process of being “lifted” and Josie now suffers from the side effects of “lifting.” The novel not only cautions the danger of unchecked technological advances, but also criticizes how genetic perfection used only by affluent people may lead to an unfair hierarchical world. In this sense, it is a powerful commentary on the ethics of technological advances and conveys the message that even if technology offers the promise of human perfectibility, we should be cautious about it.

As can be seen, Josie’s mother grapples with the ramifications of choosing to have her own children genetically modified to enhance their potential. Anxious, steeped in sorrow, and fearful of losing Josie, the Mother carries an angry exhaustion in her eyes, but she still wants “the best” for her daughters, to let them have a good life, even if it may cost their lives. She considers the genetic modification a gamble and shakes the dice for her daughters. When Josie’s life is endangered, the Mother has a bitter conversation with Rick, whose mother cannot afford to “lift” his son: “She [Josie] bet high, and if Dr Ryan’s right, she might soon about to lose. But you, Rick, you played it safe. So that’s why I’m asking you [...] Do you feel like a winner? What exactly do you believe you’ve won here? [...] You played for low stakes and what you’ve won is small and mean” (280–281). The Mother thinks what she did is right even at this moment of about facing a second death. She feels guilty about what she has done to her daughters but resents acknowledging it. She wants to

be a devoted mother, but pays a huge price by putting her daughters' lives in peril. By knowingly risking Josie's health, her happiness, and her very life, the Mother selfishly tries to fulfil her desire in a reckless and possessive way.

If the Mother thinks choosing to genetically modify her daughters is for the sake of them, then the scheme of using Klara to replicate Josie is a self-centered decision. The Mother begs Klara to continue Josie for her, saying, "And it is me asking. Not Capaldi and not Paul [...] So I'm asking you, Klara. Do your best for me [...] You'll be Josie and I'll always love you over everything else. So do it for me" (212–213). The loss of her first daughter is so huge that the Mother cannot bear Josie's possible death, so she agrees Dr. Capaldi to develop an artificial version of Josie. If Josie dies, Klara's artificial psyche will be transferred into a body that Dr. Capaldi has built to look exactly like Josie, euphemistically referred to as the "portrait" in the novel. Klara's task now is not simply to mimic Josie's outward behavior, but to learn her essence and become Josie in the future, so for the Mother, Klara is like an insurance policy against the loss of Josie. To create an artificial Josie via Klara is a way of lessening her grief if Josie dies, which indicates the Mother has already given up hope. The desperate Mother suffers from a sort of melancholia and cannot let Josie go.

The scheme brings up the issue of whether human beings can be replicated by AIs and whether science and technology can transcend death. There are two opposing views on it in the novel, represented by Dr. Capaldi and Josie's father respectively. Dr. Capaldi holds that human beings can be replicated as they are simply the sum total of a series of biochemical processes; therefore, there is nothing unreachable. This view puts pressure on traditional notions of human uniqueness and shatters our belief that each one of us is special and therefore worthy of respect. The other view believes that human beings are intrinsically of value, and there is something unreachable inside each of us that is the human heart. In other words, human beings are not just algorithms. In the latter part of the story, the Father asks Klara, "Do you believe in the human heart? I don't mean the organ, obviously. I'm speaking in the poetic sense. The human heart. Do you think there is such a thing? Something that makes us special and individual? And if we just suppose that there is. Then don't you think, in order to truly learn Josie, you'd have to learn not just her mannerisms but what's deeply inside her? Wouldn't you have to learn her heart?" (218). For the Father, the human heart is "like a house with many rooms" (219), which is unfathomable, unique and irreplaceable. It is uncertain and controversial whether AI can replace someone a person loves, but we readers experience with Klara the human characters' suffering, their pain and desperate longing for a miracle and we feel very much moved when Klara comes to an epiphany about human soul: "There was something very special, but it wasn't inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her" (306). It is love that makes human beings special and able to sustain harmonious relationships.

By depicting the Mother's ordeal that is achingly familiar, the story scrutinizes the parent-child relationship and makes a poignant meditation on what is true love, which is not possessive, but altruistic. In the novel, parents want to believe they are devoted, but wind up somewhat cruel, whereas children are grateful and forgiving. There are other parental figures in the story, who contribute to the depiction of

human desires and callousness. A complementary figure to Josie's mother is Miss Helen, Rick's mother, who cannot afford to genetically enhance her son but tries every means to help him have a better life in the future. Physically not well, Miss Helen is not sociable, but she gets acquainted with Josie's mother, wishes Klara to help Rick with his textbooks and asks for help from her ex-lover Vance, whom she has not contacted for fourteen years, begging him to help her son enter a more decent university. Although Miss Helen considers her ex-lover a "secret weapon" (155), Vance bitterly satirizes her motivation of contacting him again and refuses to help Miss Helen. The story vividly represents the problematic human desires that cause all kinds of sufferings, which is summarized in Klara's reflection: "In fact, as we moved ever further way, this crowd—of which I'd so recently been a part—appeared like one of those insect clouds I'd seen in the evening field, hovering against the sky, each creature within it busily changing position, anxious to find a better one, but never straying beyond the boundary of the shape they made together" (244). Trapped in their desires, human characters in the novel cannot start a new mode of living; they blindly pursue the worldly objectives in a reckless way, leading to a tragic life. Klara's external perspective enables us to see this human weakness in a clearer way.

Nourished by different kinds of love, Josie recovers from her illness. The Mother is fiercely protective of her daughter, as Josie is fragile, afflicted by the unnamed illness. Klara is a machine, but she is a perfect metaphor for parenthood, as her caring labor is clearly full of devotion and protection like that of a mother in her maternal work. She acts like a peer as well as a mother. As a human friend, Rick raises Josie's spirits by playing the bubble game in which Josie draws pictures and leaves an empty bubble hovering above the picture for Rick to fill with written words. Art has become a powerful way of communicating with each other, telling deep truths about the frantic, frazzled adults, the lonely, sickly children. Climatically, the Sun signifies a generous, benevolent love, which restores Josie's health. By revolving around how Josie recovers from her illness with the help of others such as an AF Klara, a human friend Rick, a dependent and devoted Mother, and the benevolent Sun, the story highlights the importance of love and hope, the positive emotions in our life. *Klara and the Sun* is apparently a deeply moving story about faith, sacrifice and love.

A tentative conclusion

One of the most pressing questions posed by Ishiguro is what it means to be human in the posthuman world and how we should interpret love. In *Klara and the Sun*, AI functions so effectively that even companionship and intimacy are no longer exclusive to humans. AFs have names, personalities, thoughts, and an interior self, whereas human characters are experiencing heartrending loss due to their desires. Ishiguro's main interest is to look at human relations, and particularly parental love, through the eyes of an AI. By depicting Klara as a saintly figure, who is deeply empathetic and altruistic, and the Mother as devoted but self-centered and possessive, the story contrasts two different types of love: one that is generous, open and benevolent, and the other that is anxious, selfish, and over-protective. It scrutinizes

parent-children relationship and explores what it means to love. With the aid of its unforgettable narrator, the novel enacts the way we readers learn how to love.

Hope has become the best medicine that has the healing and transformative power. Klara is asked to continue Josie for the Mother, and for everyone who loves Josie, but she refuses to replace Josie as she still cherishes hope. For Klara who is faith-based, the horizon of the future can give reality its real dimension. It tells us that our life demands a dose of faith, candor, and optimism assisted by hope. *Klara and the Sun* is a very warm story about empathy, faith, love, and hope. Mirrored through Klara who has a radiant inner life, Kazuo Ishiguro allows us to see our human problems more clearly, and urges us to muse about whether we human beings could cohabit with everything we have created and live under the ethics of care.

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