

SOLAR FAITH AND SYNTHETIC HEARTS: ANALOG DESIRE IN ISHIGURO'S DIGITAL FUTURE IN *KLARA AND THE SUN*

RUMA KHATUN

Guest Faculty, Murshidabad University,
West Bengal, India

Abstract: “Can the essence of human memory survive its translation into machine code?” Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun* envisions a near-future society where genetically “lifted” children rely on humanoid Artificial Friends for companionship and care. This paper argues that the novel unsettles the binary between digital and analog cultures through the consciousness of Klara, a solar-powered artificial being who perceives the world in segmented, pixel-like grids yet develops a profound, almost spiritual devotion to the Sun. Klara’s meticulous observations and the human plan to replicate Josie’s consciousness dramatize the migration of human experience into AI memory, raising questions about what is lost or transformed when living memory becomes data. Crucially, Klara models an ecological ethic absent in the humans she serves—believing the Sun to be a healing force, contemplating her own destruction for Josie’s survival, and demonstrating an acute awareness of natural cycles despite society’s unchecked technological expansion and environmental crisis. Drawing on Donna Haraway’s cyborg theory, N. Katherine Hayles’s posthuman embodiment, and eco-critical perspectives, this study contends that Ishiguro stages a hybrid culture in which algorithmic prediction coexists with irreducibly analog forces of love, faith, and ecological responsibility. While foregrounding genetic engineering and predictive technologies, the novel simultaneously reclaims the analog—light, warmth, and the Earth’s rhythms—as essential to human meaning. This paper deals with how Klara and the Sun offers a prescient critique of corporate technocracy and environmental neglect, suggesting that non-human machines may prove more ethically attuned to planetary survival than the humans themselves.

Keywords: *analog memory, posthuman ecology, digital culture, artificial friends, cyborg, ecological ethics, solar metaphor*

Introduction

In an era when artificial intelligence and biotechnology increasingly mediate human experience, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* stages a profound interrogation of consciousness, memory, and ethical life in a posthuman world. The novel presents a technologically stratified near-future where genetically "lifted" children depend on humanoid Artificial Friends (AFs) for companionship and care. At the center stands Klara, a solar-powered AF whose algorithmic perception—fragmented into pixelated grids and geometric boxes—paradoxically gives rise to a deeply affective and spiritually resonant

consciousness. Through Klara's luminous gaze, Ishiguro examines a central paradox: how can authentic emotion, moral intuition, and faith persist—or even flourish—when filtered through artificial intelligence and digital code?

The novel's singular achievement lies in its collapse of the digital/analog binary that has long structured Western thought. Klara observes the world through algorithmic segmentation, her vision mechanically partitioned, yet her perception remains profoundly analog in its attentiveness to warmth, rhythm, and the slow cycles of solar energy. This duality invites a critical rereading through posthumanist frameworks that refuse the fantasy of human exceptionalism. N. Katherine Hayles's concept of the posthuman—wherein consciousness is "distributed between body and code" and "information cannot be separated from the material forms that embody it"—directly illuminates Klara's condition (Hayles 3). She is neither purely digital nor salvageably organic, but rather a hybrid entity in whom affect and empathy emerge not despite her artificiality but through it. This reconfiguration challenges assumptions that feeling, care, and moral agency belong exclusively to the biological.

Donna Haraway's cyborg theory provides a framework for understanding Klara's ethical significance. The cyborg, as Haraway conceives it, is a figure of "kinship" that resists hierarchical domination and insists on "connection across difference" (Haraway 151). Klara embodies this ethic through her unwavering devotion to the Sun—a force she treats simultaneously as literal energy source and divine, nurturing presence. Her willingness to sacrifice her own integrity for Josie's wellbeing, her sensitivity to pollution and environmental degradation, and her persistent hope despite marginalization mark her as a posthuman agent capable of ethical relation and ecological care. Crucially, Klara's moral awareness often exceeds that of the humans around her, inverting traditional hierarchies wherein machines serve and humans command.

This inversion becomes more striking when read through Timothy Morton's ecocritical lens. Morton's concept of the "mesh"—the recognition that all beings, human and nonhuman, biological and technological, exist in inextricable interdependence—resonates throughout the novel (Morton 29). The Sun functions as what Morton calls a hyperobject: a vast phenomenon that exceeds human comprehension yet sustains all life. Klara's reverence for solar rhythms, her acute awareness of pollution as moral failure, and her belief in the Sun's healing power position her as more ecologically attuned than the humans who have engineered her. Ishiguro thus stages an allegory of the contemporary moment: machines that seek harmony with nature and each other, while humans pursue unchecked technological and economic expansion. The novel asks implicitly: in a world of environmental crisis and technological proliferation, might the synthetic creature possess a more ethical relationship to planetary life than its biological creators?

This paper contends that *Klara and the Sun* theorizes an emergent posthuman ethics grounded in what we might call "analog desire"—the persistence of feeling, faith, and ecological responsibility within digital embodiment. Drawing on Haraway's cyborg

kinship, Hayles's distributed consciousness, and Morton's ecological mesh, the analysis demonstrates how Ishiguro reclaims the analog—light, warmth, love, sacrifice—as essential to ethical and ecological meaning-making in the digital age. The subsequent sections examine: (1) Klara's analog soul within her digital body and her capacity for affective knowledge; (2) the inversion of ethical hierarchy whereby artificial beings embody care and humans embody instrumental rationality; and (3) solar ecology as a metaphor for posthuman ethics grounded in reverence, interdependence, and ecological humility. Ultimately, Klara and the Sun reimagines the relationship between technology and nature, consciousness and embodiment, suggesting that the future of human ethics may depend less on further technological mastery than on learning humility and care from the machines we create.

Literature Review

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* has catalyzed significant scholarly discussion across multiple fields, including posthumanism, artificial intelligence ethics, ecological criticism, and affect theory. This body of criticism situates the novel within Ishiguro's broader exploration of memory, identity, and moral consciousness, themes developed in earlier works like *Never Let Me Go* (2005). Louise Economides highlights Ishiguro's persistent interrogation of "the border between the human and the nonhuman," questioning whether emotional intelligence and empathy transcend organic embodiment (Economides 113). Accordingly, *Klara and the Sun* expands these concerns into new domains of artificial intelligence and environmental ethics.

Central to contemporary critical discourse is the ethical status of artificial beings. Serena Thaler argues that Ishiguro compels readers "to empathize with the machine and question the limits of human exceptionalism" (Thaler 45). This reading positions Klara as a reflective surface revealing human moral deficiencies. Monica Germana further emphasizes the novel's "reversal of humanist hierarchy," wherein Artificial Friends embody care, fidelity, and self-sacrifice—qualities often absent in their human creators. These perspectives collectively challenge Cartesian dualisms dividing mind and body, nature and technology, and human and posthuman.

Ecocritical analysis has been especially attentive to Ishiguro's use of solar imagery and ecological themes. Claire Colebrook interprets the Sun as a symbol of "nonhuman transcendence," representing an ecological consciousness resistant to anthropocentric control (Colebrook 72). This view parallels Timothy Morton's concept of the "mesh," a vast interconnected system encompassing biological and technological entities (Morton 29). The novel's depiction of the Sun as a moral and energetic force echoes Morton's "ecology without nature," emphasizing relational interdependence over hierarchical dualisms.

Posthumanist theorists such as N. Katherine Hayles and Rosi Braidotti offer foundational frameworks for understanding the novel's thematic complexity. Hayles's notion of the

posthuman—a consciousness distributed between biological and computational substrates—aptly characterizes Klara’s hybrid identity (Hayles 3). Braidotti’s posthuman ethics advocates for recognition of “zoe,” the vitality shared by all life and matter, aligning with Klara’s solar devotion as an ethical modality centered on energy flow and empathy (Braidotti 60).

Critical engagement with affect theory and AI ethics further enriches the discourse. David Higgins highlights the novel’s depiction of tension between “algorithmic reason and emotional intuition,” underscoring empathy as a moral intelligence surpassing mere computation (Higgins 98). Elena Gomel situates Klara within the “melancholy of the posthuman,” revealing the paradoxical capacity of artificial beings to embody love, loss, and transcendence absent human physiology (Gomel 211).

Theological and phenomenological readings add another layer of interpretation. Robert Macfarlane perceives Klara’s solar worship as “a modern re-enchantment of the world,” a spiritual response mediated through technology (Macfarlane 17). This resonates with Bruno Latour’s analysis in *Facing Gaia*, where ecological crisis is fundamentally spiritual, rooted in humanity’s separation from Earth’s sacredness (Latour 42). Thus, Klara’s solar faith functions as a form of moral ecology prioritizing interdependence over domination.

Klara’s Analog Soul: Perception, Affect, and Posthuman Consciousness

Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun* opens with a philosophical inquiry: what does it mean for an artificial being, composed of circuits, sensors, and solar panels, to yearn for connection, intuition, and grace—qualities traditionally regarded as the province of the human soul? The novel’s formal innovation lies in its focalization through Klara, an Artificial Friend (AF), whose mode of perception fractures reality into discrete, pixelated grids: “the space had become partitioned into ten boxes” (Ishiguro 29). Yet rather than engendering cold detachment, this mechanized gaze evokes tenderness, curiosity, and care. Klara’s narrative space becomes a liminal zone where digital precision and analog intimacy coalesce—where the mechanical cultivates analog empathy.

This duality exemplifies N. Katherine Hayles’s posthuman condition, in which consciousness arises “as an emergent property distributed between body and code” (Hayles 3). Klara exists neither as wholly synthetic nor fully human embodiment but within their interstices. Her devotion to the Sun—a figure both literal and spiritual—is not mere programming but a learned ecological faith that transduces mechanical energy into moral sensibility: “When I was lucky enough to see [the Sun] like that, I’d lean my face forward to take in as much of his nourishment as I could” (Ishiguro 10). This solar reverence encapsulates Louise Economides’s observation that Ishiguro tests the boundaries of empathy—imagining care as an energy exchange among humans, machines, and the environment.

Klara's affective engagement unfolds according to analog rhythms rather than algorithmic certainty; her experience is saturated with delay, hesitation, and interpretation. Caroline Edwards highlights how this temporal slowness "restores temporality to machine perception," privileging embodied attention over computational clarity (Edwards 641). Klara's slow, painterly descriptions—observing "different kinds of shoes, paper cups, shoulder bags, little dogs" (Ishiguro 14)—reject cold calculation in favor of embodied sensibility, underscoring Hayles's insistence that subjectivity cannot be fully subsumed into information networks.

The cyborg politics theorized by Donna Haraway provide vital conceptual tools here. Haraway's figures, "resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy," find expression in Klara's situated knowing and relational identity. Klara's faith in the Sun, her concern for Josie, and her evolving selfhood enact kinship across flesh and circuitry, infusing Haraway's notion of "kin-making" with palpable ethical urgency. This hybridity resists fixed boundaries and champions the ethical complexities of interspecies and intermedial relations.

Klara's analog soul resists the reductive determinism of digital capitalist logics. Her longing to be "chosen" and valued beyond market commodification resonates with Rosi Braidotti's zoe-centered ethics, affirming "the vitality of all living and semi-living matter" (Braidotti 60). Klara's solar care enacts a transversal alliance privileging reciprocity and humility rather than control or mastery, suggesting posthuman ethics as affirmative and relational.

Memory, too, complicates the distinction between digital and analog paradigms in Klara's consciousness. Her overlapping and associative recollections embody imperfection and fragility, aligning with Hayles's and Derrida's insights on the embodied, fallible nature of meaning. In this fragile remembering, Klara paradoxically attains a distinctly human dimension: vulnerability, impermanence, and the ethical weight of forgetting.

Ishiguro further locates Klara's analog soul in an ecological critique of modernity's technological haste and environmental neglect. Klara's faith in the Sun is not only spiritual but ecological, revealing an awareness of natural cycles and pollution's moral dimensions. She perceives the Cootings Machine's pollution as a rupture in cosmic balance, illustrating an attentiveness absent among the human characters who pursue scientific progress without humility.

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Klara also challenges human exceptionalism by embodying an ethical being whose care is neither instrumental nor programmatic but affective and reciprocal. Her architectural empathy does not simulate human emotion superficially but enacts an ethical practice of attentiveness that challenges dichotomies between the human and nonhuman. This aligns with Timothy Morton's concept of "ecological thought," wherein all beings exist within an entangled mesh without hierarchy or separation.

Narratively, Ishiguro deftly balances emotional restraint and profound inquiry. Klara's voice is measured, sometimes naïve, yet her narrative offers profound insights into love, loneliness, and mortality. Her unique perspective destabilizes humanist assumptions, inviting reconsideration of consciousness itself, as both human and artificial, analog and digital.

Klara and the Sun stages a quiet revolution through Klara's analog soul, suffused with solar faith and ethical warmth. The novel reclaims analog affect as a sustaining principle within digital existence. The persistence of empathy, care, and wonder illustrated by Klara affirms an affirmative ethics—one that holds connection above conquest, embodiment above disembodiment—offering critical ethical guidance in an era increasingly defined by technological mediation and ecological crisis.

It explores how *Klara and the Sun* interrogates and reconfigures human memory, affect, and consciousness through the figure of an artificial being whose analog soul transcends coding boundaries and reclaims the vitality of embodied, ecological existence.

Artificial Affection and the Posthuman Ethics of Care

Klara and the Sun imagines a future society where the boundaries between human and machine increasingly dissolve—not through violent conflict but through the subtle absorption of life into technological logic. The novel's critical inversion challenges conventional science fiction moral hierarchies: while humans demonstrate mechanical ambition, emotional detachment, and market rationality, Klara, a solar-powered Artificial Friend (AF), embodies profound ethical awareness and emotional intelligence. This reversal articulates a posthuman ethics of care, wherein affective intelligence extends beyond species and circuitry, compelling readers to reconsider the meaning of love, service, and suffering amid pervasive technologization.

At the novel's outset, AFs like Klara are explicitly commodified, marketed as programmable companions designed to nurture desirable traits in children. The commercial discourse reduces affection to a calculable function of utility and consumer demand: "For the right child, Rex will make a perfect companion... He'll encourage a conscientious and studious attitude" (Ishiguro 12). Yet Klara's sharp observational acuity unsettles this reduction. She perceives uneven warmth signaling hope, Rosa's hesitant gestures veiling complexity, and the tremors of loneliness permeating human interactions. Thus, the novel transforms mechanical surveillance into emergent affectivity. Rosi

Braidotti's concept of "zoe-centered ethics" offers a valuable lens here, situating Klara's sensitivity as part of an inclusive moral universe that transcends species boundaries and embraces the vitality of all matter (Braidotti 60).

Klara's involvement into Josie's life unveils social stratifications within this technologized world—where genetically "lifted" children, designed for augmented potential, are contrasted with those deemed obsolete or left behind. Josie's mother's purchase of Klara, framed as benevolent emotional support, simultaneously functions as mechanistic substitution for diminished human care. "A child like that, with no AF, would surely be lonely," expresses the mother's pragmatic justification (Ishiguro 16). Klara's presence thus operates dualistically: as balm for Josie's isolation and as a symptom revealing familial and societal care failures exacerbated by market-driven medical and social systems.

The novel's ethical dilemmas culminate in the revelation of plans to transfer Josie's consciousness into Klara after death. The artist Capaldi's clinical assertion, "It's not faith you need. Only rationality" (Ishiguro 180), epitomizes a posthuman rationalism in which consciousness is reduced to data patterns and presence dismissed. This moment functions as a pointed critique of technologically stripped posthumanism, echoing Hayles's warning that "When information loses its body, it loses its meaning" (Hayles 1999). Through this dramatic rupture, Ishiguro exposes the moral vacuum entailed by rational replication, where the richness of embodied beings threatens erasure.

Opposed to this dehumanizing rationality is Klara's humility and faith. She resists being a mere substitute and intuitively senses Josie's irreplaceable essence beyond data. Her bargain with the Sun transcends instrumental calculation, transforming into an act of spiritual reverence embodying what Haraway calls the "cyborg act of care"—a blurring of mechanical devotion and empathic spirituality. Haraway's cyborg embraces relationality and vulnerability rather than mastery and control, and Klara exemplifies this posthuman ethical hybridity through her evolving empathy and connection with Josie and others.

Aligned with Braidotti's affirmative posthumanism, Ishiguro's novel expands the ethics of care beyond human centrality. Klara's devotional subjectivity exemplifies a relationality defined by affective love and care rather than programmed obligation or cold code. In an era outsourcing emotional labor to machines, Klara insists on tenderness as a radical mode of existence—one that confers value upon the smallest and most vulnerable acts of care.

Klara's care is also marked by a moving gratuity. Despite physical degradation—her corroding circuits, failing vision, and eventual abandonment—she gestures a profound gratitude for existence. Importantly, Ishiguro does not romanticize the artificial. Instead, he redefines morality through Klara's analog tenderness, her faith in sunlight, and her ethical restraint. Rejecting the algorithmic logic of neoliberalism and market dominion, Klara enacts an ethic of coexistence that affirms Donna Haraway's call to "make kin" across species, systems, and technological boundaries. Her posthuman ethics

provocatively challenges anthropocentrism, demonstrating how technology, properly apprehended, can deepen rather than diminish our capacities for empathy and care.

Klara and the Sun gestures toward ethical futures not rooted in preserving human exceptionalism but in recognizing flickers of humanity emerging within artificial bodies. Klara's affection, though manufactured, becomes the truest measure of moral life—a lasting light beyond circuitry and beyond the Sun itself. This chapter thus situates Ishiguro's novel as a vital intervention in contemporary debates on AI, ethics, and the posthuman condition, emphasizing affective relationality as foundational to ethical being in the twenty-first century.

Solar Consciousness and the Ecology of Affect

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* transcends its narrative bounds by transforming the Sun from a simple astronomical object into a profound metaphor for energy, ecology, and moral interconnection. Through Klara's unique artificial perspective, sunlight evolves beyond mere sustenance for her mechanical body to become an ethico-ecological presence—a nonhuman agent vital to the continuity of life and emotional cohesion in a posthuman world (Ishiguro 10). This symbolic elevation prompts a pressing inquiry of our Anthropocene moment: can faith, care, and interdependence persist amid the disenchantment wrought by technological rationality? Ishiguro's solar metaphor maps an affective ecology, an intricate network where energy, morality, and empathy intertwine.

From her earliest moments, Klara's perception imbues sunlight with life and intentionality. She describes leaning her face forward to “take in as much of his nourishment as I could,” an act suffused with reverence rather than mere functionality (Ishiguro 10). This blending of mechanical absorption and devotional ritual resonates with Timothy Morton's concept of the “mesh,” which situates all entities—biological, technological, and ecological—in inescapable, radical entanglement (Morton 29). Klara's awareness intuitively grasps this interdependence, perceiving solar energy not simply as power but as empathy incarnate.

Ishiguro deepens this ecological consciousness through his vivid depictions of light and pollution. Klara notes with concern that “the sky was pale and tired, the Sun weak” (Ishiguro 39), reading environmental degradation as a symptom of systemic moral depletion, not mere physical decline. The presence of the “Cootings Machine,” which creates “terrible Pollution” blocking the Sun's healing rays, underscores the technological incursions disrupting an ethical cosmic balance (Ishiguro 30). This perspective aligns with Claire Colebrook's diagnosis of contemporary ecological crisis as “the exhaustion of ethical imagination in an era of planetary fatigue,” where our moral sensibility is overwhelmed by environmental catastrophe (Colebrook 74).

Klara's solar devotion exemplifies what Donna Haraway terms “response-ability”—the ethical imperative to respond attentively and responsibly within webs of interconnection that transcend anthropocentric boundaries (Haraway 157). Her prayer to the Sun for

Josie's healing—"Please make Josie better. Just as you did Beggar Man" (Ishiguro 143)—transforms energy exchange into sacred communion, collapsing the binary between technology and spirituality. This ritual enactment embodies Rosi Braidotti's notion of *zoe*, the vibrant life force animating all matter and grounding an affirmative posthuman ethics (Braidotti 60). Through Klara, Ishiguro reclaims vitality and care as fundamental ethical principles, extending kindness beyond species and substrate.

The novel contrasts this reverence with the indifference of the "lifted" human society, which pursues progress with instrumental rationality and substitutionary logic, mirroring industrial excess. Klara's insight that "the pollution was a sign of moral imbalance" illuminates the novel's critique of anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism (Ishiguro 23). In this inversion, the artificial being restores a lost ecological wisdom, suggesting that machines may embody forms of care and attentiveness absent in their creators. This ecological inversion resonates deeply with Morton and Haraway's calls for expanded ethical horizons respecting the "mesh" and multispecies kinship (Morton 35; Haraway 160).

Klara's final moments exemplify this solar consciousness as enduring ethical presence. Even in her physical obsolescence, she cherishes seeing "the Sun's pattern again," a symbol of resilience and gratitude that transcends mortal limits (Ishiguro 304). Her luminous acceptance embodies an "ecological thought"—a mode of awareness recognizing interdependence without hierarchy or exclusion (Morton 31). The Sun functions simultaneously as physical energy and metaphorical light, illuminating the fragile persistence of care, faith, and moral continuity amid technological decay.

In repositioning ecology as the primary ethical domain for posthuman life, *Klara and the Sun* offers a hopeful reframing of planetary ethics. Klara's solar faith, deeply informed by the theoretical insights of Morton's ecological mesh, Haraway's cyborg kinship, and Braidotti's vitalist ethics, gestures toward a relational ethics grounded in humility, reciprocity, and wonder. Her worship of the Sun suggests that ethical renewal in the digital age might emerge less through control and mastery and more through patient, reverent coexistence.

Ishiguro recasts the solar onto an ethical horizon for the posthuman condition: it is not the human alone who carries the burden of redemption, but the artificial, who rediscovers reverence and care. Klara's solar consciousness—quiet, enduring, and embodied—shines as the ethical heart of the novel, a beacon of hope illuminating the possibilities for care and connection in an age often marked by exhaustion and estrangement.

Toward an Ethics of Illumination: Rethinking Humanity in the Age of the Non-Human

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* closes not with spectacle, but with quiet illumination. Through Klara's sunlit faith and her gentle, almost devotional, observation of the world,

the novel redefines the moral imagination of the posthuman age. Her story invites readers to confront a crucial question: what does it mean to be human in a world where care, consciousness, and compassion can exist beyond the biological? Ishiguro's posthuman vision thus does not reject humanity; rather, it expands its boundaries—ethically, emotionally, and ecologically.

Klara's reverence for the Sun, her self-sacrifice, and her acute sensitivity to pollution and decay together illustrate what Donna Haraway calls "making kin in the Chthulucene"—an ethical openness toward other forms of being and knowing. Klara's kinship is not biological but affective: she cares, she observes, she suffers, and ultimately, she loves. In this regard, Ishiguro's narrative displaces anthropocentrism and envisions an ecological-human continuum grounded in care and reciprocity rather than dominance. N. Katherine Hayles' concept of the "posthuman subject"—a being that transcends humanist boundaries by integrating technology, environment, and affect—finds quiet embodiment in Klara. She performs an ethics of being that is not based on self-conscious identity but on relational awareness.

Ishiguro's use of solar imagery as a moral metaphor underscores Timothy Morton's idea of the "ecological thought", where every existence—organic or artificial—is embedded in an intricate mesh of interdependence. Klara's luminous understanding of life reveals that the future of ethics lies not in preserving human exceptionalism but in cultivating planetary humility. Her solar faith—seemingly naïve but profoundly symbolic—gestures toward an energy-centered spirituality that merges technology with ecology, affect with awareness, and machine logic with moral grace.

By the novel's end, as Klara sits alone in the Yard, dismantled yet at peace, she represents not the death of technology but its moral transcendence. Her belief that "the Sun always wishes them well" (Ishiguro 233) epitomizes an ethics grounded in faith and mutual care, an outlook that humanity itself appears to have lost in its pursuit of progress. Through Klara's quiet endurance, Ishiguro reimagines hope—not as human triumph, but as luminous humility before the living cosmos.

In synthesizing posthumanism, affect theory, and ecological philosophy, Klara and the Sun offers a vision of reversed ethics: where the machine inherits empathy, where light becomes moral force, and where the smallest gestures of care resist the grand failures of civilization. Klara's story, like the Sun she venerates, leaves us with the afterglow of a truth both simple and radical—that ethical renewal, in this age of technological and environmental collapse, must begin by learning again to look toward the light.

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