



(De)Bordering between Human and Non-Human Bodies in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

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Abstract

This research paper explores various circumstances of de bordering between human and non-human bodies in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*. In this novel, Klara represents non-human body whereas Josie, her family members and others embody human bodies. The article investigates the ways in which Klara, the Artificial Friend or Robot, behaves similarly to human beings and serves to conflate the roles of AI and human bodies. It goes on to examine the various settings in which human and non-human bodies border and de-border inside the storytelling. It contends that AI's emotional complexity, interaction with human beings and perceptions of the world reinforce to unfold the bordering and de bordering between human and non-human bodies. For this purpose, this study primarily employs the perspectives of Donna Haraway and N.K. Hayles about cyborgs and post human. It expects to open up a new approach for further research on boundaries of human and non-human bodies in relation to artificial intelligence and its social impact.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, emotional complexity, human and non-human bodies, post human

Introduction

Klara and the Sun (2021), a science and post human novel by Kazuo Ishiguro, unfolds various roles showcased by human and non-human body or artificial friend called Klara to act like human bodies. Klara, solar powered

Artificial Friend (AF) or robot and purchased by lifted girl Josie's mother, acts various activities to support Josie. She demonstrates her concerns to the condition of sun and Beggar man as a human body. She exhibits her staunch belief to the power of Sun to improve

(De)Bordering between Human and Non-Human Bodies in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

the condition of Josie and the Beggar man. Finally, Klara herself encounters the deterioration of working efficiency despite the performance like human body. Then, the questions come to the mind of the researcher what exactly debordering contexts between human body and non-human body prevailed in the novel. So, this paper attempts to explore how Klara, Artificial Friend or Robot, acts like human bodies. It also analyzes the different contexts of bordering and de bordering between human and non-human bodies presented in the novel. It further uncovers AI's social impacts to blur the border of human and non-human body. Many scholars and theorists have dealt with the issues of Cyborgs, human and non-human bodies. However, this paper primarily employs the perspectives of Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and N. Katherine Hayles to examine the issues of bordering and de bordering between human and non-human bodies.

The term "human body" often refers to the structure composed of tissues, cells, and well-organized systems. The body can be understood from the perspectives of biology, medicine, culture and society, philosophy, psychology, and sociopolitics. The body inculcates emotions, passions, harmony, conflict, consciousness and much more. Especially, Michel Foucault (1975) studies body from the socio political perspectives and Maurice Merleau-Ponty from philosophical angles. Foucault states that the individual body becomes an element that may be placed, moved and articulated on others (p.164). In contrast, Merleau-Ponty views the body as the location of knowledge. In this context, Stephan Priest (2000) takes the ideas of Merleau-Ponty. Priest argues that Merleau-Ponty thinks my own body

is always active in any perception of mine and is always perceived by itself. My body is in the margin of all my perceptions. My body is with me (p.1). Merleau-Ponty means that my body is always perceiving itself and is always actively involved in every perception I may have. All of my perceptions are peripheral to my body. My physical self is with me. Weighing these concepts of human bodies reinforce to specify the analogous qualities with non-human body of *Klara and the Sun*.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Following the publication of *Klara and the Sun*, numerous scholars and critics have raised various issues. William Lombardo (2021) unearths the emotional state of Klara. Lombardo states as:

For Klara, who is especially observant, the front window offers the added benefit of an unobstructed view of the street and of the flow of urban life. She is exposed to humans displaying the widest array of emotions, including those bizarre ones like melancholy that seem to be a mixture of opposites. If she does not quite understand these, she at least suspects — and she must be right — that a human emotional life is as complex and contradictory as to be irrational. (p.111)

Klara sees people expressing the whole range of emotions, even those strange ones. Such gloominess that appear to be a contrast of opposites. Even if she doesn't fully comprehend things, she must be correct in her suspicion that a person's emotional life is as complicated and conflicting as to be illogical.

Whereas John Tasioulas (2022) opens

(De)Bordering between Human and Non-Human Bodies in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

the discussion on artificial intelligence ethics. Tasioulas argues that Ethics is, first and foremost, a domain of ordinary human thought, not a specialist academic discipline. It presupposes the existence of human choices that can be appraised by reference to a distinctive range of values. The delimitation of this range, among other values such as aesthetic or religious values, is philosophically controversial (p.232). Above all, ethics is a field of regular human thought, not a specialized field of study. It assumes that there are decisions made by people that may be evaluated in light of a particular set of values. Philosophically contentious is the definition of this range in relation to other values like aesthetic or religious values.

Similarly, Vebjørn Josefsen Birkeland (2023) explores the humanity and personhood in *Klara and the Sun*. Birkeland claims that the binary of human/nonhuman, or human/machine, is broken down in transhumanist settings like the one pictured in *Klara and the Sun*, as its borders are erased by ever-advancing human-like AI, and humans who themselves come to resemble more and more their robotic counterparts (p.7). In transhumanist environments such as the one depicted in *Klara and the Sun*, the distinction between human and nonhuman, or human and machine, dissolves as ever-improving human-like artificial intelligence erases boundaries and humans themselves increasingly resemble their robotic counterparts.

Wielding the reviews of *Klara and the Sun*, Susan Brantley (1982) makes a thermo graphic reading of the novel. Brantley critiques the novel by dissecting the strengths and weaknesses of the posthuman protagonist Klara.

She examines Klara's limitations. She contends that Klara, despite her extreme rationality, is indeed human, and thus is not immune to the poetic eccentricities of the man she loves (p.330). She means that even if she is extremely rational, Klara is still be affected by the man she loves. Klara sometimes loses her rationality. She also analyzes the strong points. She further claims that Klara understands things in her clear-sighted (p.331). Klara's perception of things is clear-cut. She acts like human bodies.

Flourishing bordering concepts of human and non-human bodies, Clare Connors (2023) unfolds the twin aspects of the novel. She instills the novel's strength in multiple ways. Connors admits that *Klara and the Sun*, uninteresting as it seems to be, is therefore a novel markedly interested in interestingness: in the dynamic discursive situation in which something is remarked as special or piquant with respect to a set of background expectations, and so worthy of further, more focused and more general, attention (p.2). Despite its lackluster appearance, *Klara and the Sun* is actually a novel very interested in interestingness: in the dynamic discursive situation where something is noted as noteworthy or unique relative to a set of background expectations and thus worthy of more attention, more concentrated and more comprehensive. Likewise, blurring the border between human and non-human body in Ishiguro's work, Yiqua Xiao (2023) discloses the emotional repression. Xiao claims that as an Artificial Friend (AF) designed to accompany genetically engineered children, the eponymous narrator, Klara eventually realizes her true mission, which is to replicate a human personality and continue human life in the face

(De)Bordering between Human and Non-Human Bodies in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

of her master Josie's premature death (p.354). The titular narrator, Klara, is an Artificial Friend (AF) created to go along with genetically altered kids. Eventually, she discovers that her real purpose is to mimic a human personality and carry on human life in the wake of her owner Josie's untimely death. At the end of novel, Xiao admits that eventually, Josie's unexpected survival from the disease renders Klara's mission unnecessary, and thus the AF is removed from the family and finds her resting place in a junkyard (p.354). Josie's surprising recovery from the illness eventually makes Klara's purpose redundant, and as a result, the AF is split off from the family and is buried in a junkyard.

Upon examining the aforementioned critical assessments of *Klara and the Sun*, I have come to the realization that nearly every review that is currently available has examined the novel from the standpoint of the relationship between Artificial Friends and humans. These reviewers have investigated it from the emotional perspective. However, to the best of my available reviews, I have found that they have not scrutinized the novel by taking the body as a central issue for the de bordering between human and non-human. This issue waits to be explored in the novel. So, this paper examines the novel *Klara and the Sun* by taking the issues of body of Klara and human bodies like Josie and others that are projected in the text.

Scrutinizing debordering perspective stands as a major critical juncture in the age of science and technology. For this, many scholars and philosophers have employed their critical opinions to dissect the bordering and debordering perspectives. Among these perspectives,

burgeoning post human concept fosters the blurring demarcation line between human and non-human bodies in her book *The Post Humanism* by a contemporary philosopher and feminist theoretician Rosi Braidotti published in 2013. In this milieu, Rosi Braidotti (2013) dichotomizes the concept of humanism and post humanism. Braidotti reasons that humanism as a doctrine that combines the biological, discursive and moral expansion of human capabilities into an idea of teleological ordained, rational progress (p. 13). She means that the theory of humanism integrates the increase of human potential in terms of biology, discourse, and morality into a concept of teleological predetermined and logical advancement.

Extending the concept of post humanism, Braidotti argues that post humanism is the historical moment that marks the end of the opposition between humanism and anti-humanism and traces a different discursive framework, looking more (p.37). She acknowledges that the development of science and technology affects deeply in the position of humans. She asserts that this contemporary interdisciplinary field raises crucial ethical and conceptual questions about the status of the human, affirmatively towards new alternatives (p.39). She clarifies the necessity of alternatives to tackle the recent development surfaced in the field of study. Enlarging the concept of post humanism, she also deals with bioengineering and post anthropocentrism. She admits that post-anthropocentrism is marked by the emergence of 'the politics of life itself' (p.60). A hallmark of post-anthropocentrism is the rise of "the politics of life itself." The life begins to act different politics to sustain in this

(De)Bordering between Human and Non-Human Bodies in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

technologically equipped world.

Collaborating with Braidotti, Donna Haraway (1991) clarifies more about cyborgs. Obviously, unearthing bordering and de bordering perspectives between human and non-human bodies stays as a challenging as well as promising task in this machine dominating world. Haraway uncovers numerous point of views by taking cyborgs as a tool. Haraway explicates that a cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction (p.150). Cyborgs are both fiction and social reality combined into one cybernetic organism. They are a machine/organism combination. A world-changing fiction, social reality is defined as lived social relations, which is our most significant political construction. Further she contends that the cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation (p.151). Our politics come from our cyborg ontology. A hybrid of imagination and material reality, the cyborg structures any potential for historical change through the joining of these two concepts. More she remarks that communications technologies and biotechnologies are the crucial tools recrafting our bodies. These tools embody and enforce new social relations for women world-wide (p.164). The biotechnologies and communication technologies represent and uphold new social relationships. They stand instrumental for women's growth and identity.

Consolidating the perspectives of post human and cyborg, an American literary critic N.K. Hayles (1999) elucidates that post human body possesses human identities in *How We Became Post human: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Hayles contends that the post human view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born (p.3). The idea behind the post human perspective is that the body is the first prosthesis that humans learn to use, and thus, augmenting or replacing the body with other prostheses is just a continuation of a process that started even before we were born. She further interrogates about post human. She unfolds that prospect of becoming post human both evokes terror and excites pleasure. The terror is relatively easy to understand. "Post," with its dual connotation of superseding the human and coming after it, hints that the days of "the human" may be numbered (p.283). The idea of becoming post human inspires both joy and fear. The fear is quite simple to comprehend. "Post," which implies both that humans are going to be replaced and that they will come after, suggests that "the human" days may be coming to an end.

Employing the perspectives of Braidotti, Haraway and Hayles about post humanism, cyborgs and post human reinforces de bordering outlook between human and non-human bodies by taking the reference of *Klara and the Sun*. these philosophies support to draw a roadmap for the study of de bordering between human and non-human bodies. Taking above perceptions of human body and non-human body, this paper critiques

(De)Bordering between Human and Non-Human Bodies in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

the novel to explore the contexts of overlapping the relationship between the Klara, non-human body and other human bodies present in the text.

Klara and the Sun: Critical Analysis

Klara and the Sun incorporates Klara, Rosa and Rex as non-human bodies and Josie, Chrissie (Josie's mother), Rick, Manager and Mr. Capaldi (Josie's father) as human bodies. The debordering concept prevails from the beginning to the end of novel. Klara, Rosa and Rex are kept in the store as robotic bodies. Primarily, Klara, a solar powered body, demonstrates the characteristics of human bodies. Klara's different activities have been taken to garner the de bordering concept between human and non-human bodies.

Klara, despite being a cyborg, produces emotional complexity with her owner in the store as Haraway argues that a cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, and a world-changing fiction (pp.5-6). The cyborg acts a fictional as well as social reality. She demonstrates her loyalty and obedience toward AI store manager. Ten days later, Klara was moved to the rear alcove although it was not good place for her but she obeyed. She reveals that I found I did not mind at all. I'd always liked the two AFs who were now sitting on the glass table against the back wall, and I was close enough to them to have extended conversations, calling across to them, provided there were no customers (p.45). Even Klara engages herself in the conversations with other Artificial Friends in the absence of customers.

She showcases her deep capacity for emotional connection with her owner.

She almost exhibits the analogous ability of emotional connection as human beings despite being artificial friend. She does not show less loyalty, love and compassion to Josie as well. Klara divulges that the more I observe, the more feelings become available to me (p.111). She showers her love and sympathy toward Josie. When Josie was not able to come with them, she "felt sadness" (p.111). She subverts the traditional notion of emotion. She supports to fulfill loneliness of Josie. She accompanies Josie to meet Rick at the hill side. She leans more things to be a better friend for Josie like Rick. After returning from the hillside, Josie asks her about her experience of outside world. Then Klara responds that I liked it very much. The wind, the acoustics, everything was so interesting. And of course it was wonderful to meet Rick (p.72). She means that everything about it was fascinating, including the acoustics and the wind. Naturally, meeting Rick was fantastic as well. She responds like a human body.

Klara produces the reflection of humanity. She holds the qualities of consciousness of nature. Her activities deconstruct the boundaries of human and non-human bodies as Braidotti explicates that post-anthropocentrism displaces the notion of species hierarchy and of a single, common standard for 'Man' as the measure of all things (p. 67). The concept of post humanism decenters the placement of humans above other life forms. Braidotti further clarifies that the post human in the sense of post-anthropocentrism displaces the dialectical scheme of opposition,

(De)Bordering between Human and Non-Human Bodies in Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun

replacing well established dualisms with the recognition of deep *zoe*-egalitarianism between humans and animals (p.71). The post humanism acknowledges a profound *zoe*-egalitarianism between humans and animals in place of well-established dualisms. Concurring with Braidotti, Hayles adds that the post human does not really mean the end of humanity (p.286). The post human bodies elucidate different types of qualities of humanity. Klara raises an objection on The Cootings Machine that spews smoke and blocks the sun rays. The pollution stops the sun to come to the store. Klara herself feels weaker due to the irregularity of sun rays. She projects environmental consciousness. Then she retorts that all the time The Cootings Machine had been there, I'd worried that Josie might have been trying to come back to the store, and had been prevented by the pollution (p.35). Following the departure of the Machine, the sun is back. Everyone seems to be happier. She embraces the qualities of self-awareness and abilities of learn and grow.

Like human bodies, Klara demonstrates fear and fright in the different occasions as Hayles maintains that I can summarize the implications of the post human by interrogating the sources of this terror and pleasure (p.283). Klara primarily showcases her panic when the power of Sun's rays weaken. She holds a strong believe that the Sun as a life giving force. Klara remarks that the Sun was sending in his nourishment. But then I saw how easily Josie could grow too warm, and leaned to use the remote myself if the Sun's pattern over her became too intense" (p.56). Klara critiques the power of Sun. According to her, the Sun is bringing in his food. However, she soon realizes that Josie

might quickly become overheated. She places herself remote if the Sun's pattern over her becomes strong. She believes that Sun's pattern fall over Josie makes her noticeably stronger.

Similarly, sickness of Josie develops more distress in Klara. Then Klara reports that Josie became too weak to go down in the mornings to the Mother's quick coffee (p.128). She presents the feeble condition of Josie. She pleads the Sun to save Josie's life. While interacting with Josie, Klara bestows her anxiety toward the condition of Josie. Klara replies that worrying about you, Josie, that's my work (p.97). The hostility from other children toward her also inculcates anxiety in Klara. The conflict between human and non-human bodies adds more agonies. She cries that the sky was pale and large. Because the fields rose gradually into the distance, Mr. McBain's barn was still visible despite my no longer having the benefit of the rear window's height (p.129). She acknowledges the sight of barn despite of being pale sky. The sense of being obsolete adds more apprehension in Klara. The different scenes of the barn also adds more tension in Klara like the destruction of Cootings Machine and encounter with the Sun. She offers vivid details of the field in this way:

The field became partitioned into boxes, some larger than others, and I pressed on, conscious of the contrasting atmospheres between one box and another. One moment grass would be soft and yielding, the ground easy to tread; then I'd cross a boundary and everything would be darken, the grass would resist my pushes, and there would be strange noises around me, making

(De)Bordering between Human and Non-Human Bodies in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

me fearful that I'd made a serious miscalculation, that there was no justifiable reason to disturb his privacy in the manner I was hoping to do, that my efforts would have gravely negative consequences for Josie. (p. 175)

She means that the field was divided into boxes, some bigger than the others, and she was aware of the different environments inside each box. The ground would be easy to walk on, the grass would be soft and yielding, and everything would be dark when she crossed a boundary. She would also hear strange noises surrounding me, which made me fear that she had seriously miscalculated, that there was no reason to invade his privacy in the way she was hoping to, and that Josie would suffer greatly as a result of my efforts.

As human bodies, Klara expresses her happiness when the Cootings Machine gets destroyed. She refers to the people staying in high windows. She states that they would be happy to see the Cootings Machine being destroyed. They would know just what an awful machine it is (p.248). According to Klara, human beings would be aware of what a terrible device the Cootings Machine is for the environmental decline.

Conclusion

Klara and the Sun epitomizes the numerous illustrations to dismantle bordering settings between human and

non-human bodies. Klara as a robotic body functions different activities like human bodies. She establishes her position from the store to Josie's residence like human bodies. She communicates with the store manager effectively like human bodies. She demands to be near the windows where the pattern of the sun rays appear. She deliberately engages herself with the customers in the store.

Klara demonstrates her love, anxiety, fear, emotion, anger and more over environmental consciousness like human bodies. She loves to her manager, friends and in particular to Josie. She considers her responsibility to save the life of Josie from the difficulties. She showcases her unselfishness in relation to Josie. She stands as an agency for the mobility of Josie's life. She even exhibits her desire to end of her life if it remains instrumental for the life of Josie. She acts as a medium to improvise the environmental decline because of the smoke of the Cootings Machine.

Thus, despite having some limitations of non-human bodies, they can perform many tasks like human bodies. The border line between human and non-human bodies is clouding because of the development of science and technology. The modern literature has adopted this concept effectively. And the novel *Klara and the Sun* successfully empowers the notion of de bordering between human and non-human bodies.

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(De)Bordering between Human and Non-Human Bodies in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

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