

Consumption and Redefinition of Ethics in Kazuo Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun

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ABSTRACT

Today's culture is predominantly motivated by the urge to produce and consume. Consumption is becoming a defining characteristic in contemporary life. Kazuo Ishiguro is a well-known literary figure whose works explore memory, knowledge, and complex human relationship. This study investigates the intersection of consumption, artificial intelligence, and human relationships in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021). Donna Haraway's influential theory *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) is employed in the study as its conceptual framework. The study examines the commodification of artificial beings, particularly Artificial Friends like Klara, and the ethical implications of blurring human-machine boundaries. It uses Haraway cyborg metaphor to understand Klara's experiences and the role of technology and consumer culture in shaping human experiences. The narrative serves as a reflection on the implications of technological consumption and the potential for artificial intelligence (AI) to redefine human identity and social dynamics.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Consumption, cyborg, Haraway, Ishiguro.

الاستهلاك وإعادة تعريف الأخلاق في رواية "كلارا والشمس" لكازو إيشيجورو

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الملخص

إن الدافع وراء ثقافة اليوم هو في الغالب الرغبة في الإنتاج والاستهلاك. أصبح الاستهلاك سمة مميزة في الحياة المعاصرة. كازو إيشيجورو شخصية أدبية معروفة تستكشف أعماله الذاكرة والمعرفة والعلاقات الإنسانية المعقدة. تبحث هذه الدراسة في تقاطع الاستهلاك والذكاء الاصطناعي والعلاقات الإنسانية في رواية كازو إيشيجورو كلارا والشمس (٢٠٢١). تم استخدام نظرية دونا هارواي المؤثرة "بيان سايبورغ" (١٩٨٥). في الدراسة كإطار مفاهيمي لها. تبحث الدراسة في تسليع الكائنات الاصطناعية، وخاصة الأصدقاء الاصطناعيين مثل كلارا، والآثار الأخلاقية لعدم وضوح الحدود بين الإنسان والآلة. يستخدم استعارة هارواي للسايبورغ لفهم تجارب كلارا ودور التكنولوجيا وثقافة المستهلك في تشكيل التجارب البشرية. يعمل السرد بمثابة انعكاس للآثار المترتبة على الاستهلاك التكنولوجي وإمكانية الذكاء الاصطناعي لإعادة تعريف الهوية البشرية والديناميات الاجتماعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الذكاء الاصطناعي، الاستهلاك، السايبورغ، هارواي، إيشيجورو.

Introduction

From a broad economic standpoint, consumerism, a concept that emerged in the twentieth century, posits that the economy benefits from the excessive consumption of goods. According to the concept, companies should focus on producing and offering goods and services that cater to consumers' most desired preferences. Furthermore, from an economic perspective, consumerism indicates and focuses on the supremacy of interests of the consumers in business transactions. It is a system of beliefs that puts importance on the excessive consumption of material possessions and services. In a wider context, consumerism can be termed as the preoccupation of the public with acquiring goods and services, particularly those that may be beyond their financial means.

By definition, consumption in postmodern theory is not only making purchases of services and things. It is a phenomenon that culturally influences identity, societal structures, relationships, and economic transactions. Consumerism frequently includes the idea that people participate actively in producing and consuming cultural meanings and symbols in addition to purchasing goods. In effect,

consumption shifts to a means for self-expression and identity creation. Hence, in a postmodern context, the concept of the consumed refers not only to physical products but also to images, ideas and cultural artifacts. Individuals not only consume material goods but also a variety of cultural products, including information, media and art. The idea of the consumed extends to how individuals embody and internalize cultural influences. Identity is seen as a malleable and fluid construct formulated by the regular consumption of diverse cultural elements.

The presence of materialism, commercialization, and class consciousness characterize consumer culture. According to Marry Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1979), as a part of materialistic culture, the idea of consumerism helps to enhance and maintain social and economic hierarchies, forms of oppression within capitalist countries and class distinctions. Consumer objects and brands surmise indicators of social prerogative, perpetuating the existing system and social classism within these particular societies. Consequently, this phenomenon engenders artificial and materialistic interactions. A prominent figure within the Frankfurt School, Adorno (1944) agrees with the concept that consumerism exercises a corrupting effect on society. He argues that this phenomenon is characterized by the generation of the erosion of logical reasoning and critical thinking capacities of false demands, the commercialization of personal identity, the commodification of artistic expression and the predominance of materialistic ideologies.

Involving the creation of genetically identical organisms cloning challenges the concept of a unique and authentic identity. The clone, as a "consumed" entity, embodies the postmodern idea that identity is not fixed but can be replicated and manipulated. Cybernetic (Cybern) organisms represent a fusion of human and machine elements. The "consumed" in this context includes the integration of technological

components into the human body, blurring the lines between the organic and cyborg.

Literature Review

Looking into past research makes it easier to spot gaps or uncharted territory in the present corpus of knowledge. This might highlight the possible benefits of our study and provide a reason for it. This lays the groundwork for the theoretical model. By reviewing the methods utilized by those scholars, researchers might build upon or propose new interpretations of previous work on the concept of consumption.

In their article titled "Hope, Faith, Love, Human and Humanoid: A Study of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*," (2021). Bavetra Swaminathan and R. Ravi assert that the novel *Klara and the Sun* delves into an investigation of the significance of Hope, Faith, and Love in the lives of human beings. The novel centers around Klara, an artificial friend and humanoid robot, as she embarks on this exploration in order to find answers to pressing questions. This signifies an elevated degree of his dedication to the pursuit of comprehending human people by exploring their memories and emotions. One may question whether imperfect human beings are capable of creating a sentient computer that possesses flawless abilities in observation, companionship, caregiving, and perceiving Klara's exceptional qualities. This essay aims to analyze the impact of Hope, Faith, and Love on human existence from the perspective of a humanoid.

In their (2021) study titled "Death and Power: Biopolitics in *Klara and the Sun*," Hang Zhou and Yanling Yang examined Kazuo Ishiguro's second novel, "*Klara and the Sun*." The study portrays the plight of AFs, who are both depressed and manipulated by humans for their benefit. Ishiguro's novel highlights humanity's concern for others. The study suggests that Kazuo Ishiguro's use of gentle and calming language

serves as an enduring cautionary message about the impact of contemporary technology on human relationships.

Om Prakash Sahu and Manali Karmakar discuss the themes of disposable culture, posthuman impact, and artificial humans in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021). The paper employs critical perspectives from disposability theory, posthuman affect, and immaterial bodies to highlights the intangible nature of emotional connections that arise from the interaction between humans and inanimate beings. It explores how the novel contemplates the impact of the increasing presence of empathetic humanoids in our technologically advanced society. On one hand, this evolution challenges our conventional understanding of cognitive and emotional classifications. On the other hand, it also creates a sense of eerie unfamiliarity as we increasingly depend on hyperreal objects for comfort and companionship. The study suggests that the book might be seen as a reflection on the developing discussion in the cognitive and emotional computing field, which aims to transform human society's inner experiences and social relationships.

The third study conducted on this novel, titled "Through New Eyes: Artificial Intelligence, Technological Unemployment, and Transhumanism in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*," was carried out by Santiago Mejia and Dominique Nikolaidis in (2022). This study explores how Kazuo Ishiguro compels readers to confront their anxieties regarding the future of emerging technologies and grapple with profound inquiries about the essence of dignity, existence, and humanity. According to them, the story also offers intricate characters and a speculative future, allowing readers to immerse themselves in new experiences, explore unfamiliar realms, and gain alternative perspectives. Simultaneously, the novel's setting provides us with an eerie detachment from our reality, enabling us to easily criticize the

moral flaws of the characters, which we eventually realize are also present inside ourselves.

In their paper titled "Role of 'Artificial' Hope at the Failure of Medical Science: A Study of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*," Divya Shikhar and Kasturi Sinha Ray in (2022), discuss the concept of genetically "uplifted" children in the fictional urban neighborhood of Klara and the Sun, situated in a fabricated city in the United States (a market for French goods). These children are accompanied by AI-enabled Artificial Companions (AFs). An ostracized insurgent group that deviates from the established societal framework. Ishiguro presents a speculative portrayal of a future society in which automated technology and artificial intelligence play a dominant role, common themes in science fiction in the contemporary society. An intriguing analysis will be undertaken to comprehend the underlying motivations behind such behavior in individuals and why Ishiguro presents this possibility. Ishiguro works with a human-like point-of-view named Klara, following his exploration of the human mind and memory.

With the help of Kazuo Ishiguro's (2021) novel, *Klara and the Sun*, the research titled *The Morality of Artificial Friends in Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun* in (2022), Jakob Stenseke delves into two primary concerns: first, the machine issue, which asks if and to what degree artificial things may possess moral standing, and second, the AMA question, which asks about moral agency. This study compares and contrasts two key viewpoints on machine morality in the novel: one "from within," which encompasses the traditional or "metaphysical" understanding of moral agency, and the other "from outside," which includes behaviorism, functionalism, and the social-relational viewpoint. While the narrative does show both sides of the argument, it does so by contrasting the theoretical precarity of one with the social and practical constraints of the other. In other words, the moral standing and agency

of the Artificial Friend Klara depend on the opinions of others around her, including their ideas on the nature of consciousness and personality, and not on any inherent metaphysical attributes of Klara.

In (2023), Misra and Jahnavi conducted a research titled "Unrequited Labour of Care in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*." The study examines the themes of care and self-identity from both humanism and post-humanist viewpoints, as shown in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun*. The research also examines how Klara meticulously constructs her identity and comprehension of her role within the surroundings in the novel, only to ultimately relinquish it while fulfilling her unbalanced responsibility of care forced on her by the system. Therefore, this study investigates how caring is exploited in a callous economy, resulting in the cared-for individual receiving authentic love and care. At the same time, the caretaker is utilized and discarded, experiencing a degrading sense of being easily replaced and highly valued for their contribution.

In (2023), A.k. Ajeesh and S. Rukmini authored a study titled "Posthuman Perception of Artificial Intelligence in Science Fiction: An Exploration of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* " The study examines the concept of AI as a compassionate computer that can provide care and aid in recovering a sick little child. Ishiguro aims to redefine the idea of AI by depicting it as a sentient being who can feel empathy and think. This portrayal undermines the traditional view of AI as an emotionless machine, promoting a posthuman perspective. The study also aims to analyze the influence of science fiction on society and culture. The study indicates a favorable change in how AI is seen, and there is significant potential for multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research.

Despite being analyzed from several perspectives, this novel has not been examined through the lens of consumption or Donna Haraway's cyborg theory.

Theoretical framework

The current study utilizes Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) in exploring Ishiguro's novel. Such theory examines power relation to technology, gender, class, and the role of the cyborg, this transgressive creature in restoring health and life to humans through the age of globalization and technology. So human beings lose their identity and are treated as objects and commodities. Donna Jeanne Haraway is a professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She released an article in 1985 called "Manifesto for Cyborg: Science Technology, and Socialist Feminism". Despite its challenging and intricate nature, Haraway's writing quickly gained her fame. Since its release, her name has become increasingly prominent in conversations regarding the impact of science and technology in modern culture, particularly within feminist communities. Her cyborg concept which is a hybrid of machine and organism introduces the possibility of a novel ontology based on the emergence of cultural practices with those of the natural world. The cyborg is more of a duality than a dichotomy; the blurring of boundaries between categories is seen as valuable. The cyborg arises from the merging of the boundaries that were once necessary to separate civilization and nature which turned out to be nothing but an "illusion" (Haraway, 1985, p. 6).

According to Haraway, hybrid is not naturally occurring; it is artificially produced and considered a possession. Its dignity and rights are nonexistent, with a debate over its possession of reason or conscience. Haraway introduces the cyborg concept by identifying "three crucial boundary breakdowns" that make her analysis possible (Haraway, 1991, pp.152–153). So, she discusses three main points: the blurring boundary between animal–human organisms and machines, and physical and non–physical entities. (Tsitas, 2013, p. 33).

Haraway's exploration of the concept of human-machine interaction has been a focal point in discussions regarding the impact of science and information technology. Cyberculture significantly influences these discussions, deriving inspiration mostly from virtual reality technologies. In addition, cyberculture is considered to be advanced compared to contemporary technology (Schroeder, 1994, p. 519).

It is believed that its innovative approach to the connection between politics, technology, and art reflects significant developments in the cultural sectors related to information and communication technologies. She bravely goes into the murky depths of science and technology. She demands a fresh perspective on machines and the natural world, one that actively involves people rather than merely observing them (Pohl, 2018, p. 10). Haraway's work remains a manifesto for the 21st century, highlighting the potential and weakness of the human-machine hybrid world. Haraway states "Liberation rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression and of possibility" (Haraway, 1991, p. 149).

In her exploration of the cyborg, Haraway lays the groundwork for an identity that rejects dichotomy. The term "cyborg" is appropriate for Haraway's use because it denotes a hybrid being that combines human and technological elements. Because "communications technologies and biotechnologies are the crucial tools enabling the recrafting of bodies which is according to her the technical aspect is significant (Cutting, 2019, p 49). Also, the fact that both cyborg and postmodern theory came at the same time and were driven by shared concerns helps to explain why they are so in sync with one another. One of these shared concerns is the idea that the human identity and the relationship with the world are being affected by an increasingly technologized environment. Another important characteristic shared by these fictional forms and one that has been seen as representative of postmodern culture is the rather

grim outlook on the future seeing people as mere consumed identities along with the belief that these people will need to change in order to stay alive, a concept that has been associated with the consumption terms. This study sheds light on how literature engages with and reflects upon contemporary philosophical and ethical questions surrounding technology and the human condition. So, Haraway ends her influential work by saying "we are all cyborgs" (Haraway, 2016, p. 16).

Discussion

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021) is the first novel published after he wins the Nobel Prize (2017). It is regarded as a science fiction (Sci-Fi). Ishiguro is a versatile novelist who does not confine himself to a single genre. He does not have a certain preference for a genre, but he enjoys experimenting with the norms of other genres. The story takes place in a dystopian future and focuses on Klara, an artificial friend (AF), who is a highly advanced and self-aware artificial intelligence model. The book is narrated by Klara herself, whose distinctive viewpoints engender both a sense of connection and an awareness of the inherent unreliability of this manufactured narrator. AFs are humanoids whose purpose is to serve as companions to children. Klara, the protagonist of the tale a unique solar-powered android designed for the purpose of aiding in child-rearing. She commences her existence in a retail establishment overseen by a human lady whom she refers to as a manager. In the world of *Klara and the Sun*, the majority of wealthy families pay for their children to be "lifted", a genetic engineering producer that improves academic performance. Without undergoing this treatment, individuals have limited prospects in school and career advancement. Josie is the subject of genetic engineering and is showing signs of an inexplicable illness that can be fatal. The narrative continues with Klara, a humanoid being bought by Josie's mother for her daughter, whose health is slowly

declined. Josie's condition gradually worsens, and Klara is to "continue Josie"(250) when she passes away. As such, Klara is discussed through consumption, the concept of blurring boundaries between human –and machine, and the concept of Situated Knowledges.

In *Klara and the Sun*, Kazuo Ishiguro crafts a distinctive 20th century setting where technology is abused for the pursuit of happiness, health, and longevity. As a consumer good, Artificial Friends (AFs) like Klara that are driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI) are bought and sold to entertain and teach kids. It's not clear how moral it is to treat smart tools like goods in this way. Chrissie Arthur comes with her daughter Josie to pick up Klara after thoroughly investigating her. The Manager of the store has praised Klara for her skills:

Klara has so many unique qualities. We could
here all morning. But if I had to emphasize just one,
well, it would have to be her Appetite for observing and
learning. Her ability to absorb and Blend everything she
sees around her is quite amazing. As a result, she now
has the most sophisticated understanding of any AF in
this Store. B3s not expected (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 41).

In this quote, Klara's Artificial intelligence (AI) makes links between how Klara uses technology and her desire to understand people. In the same way that cyborg is both human and machine, Klara is the meeting point of artificial intelligence and emotional awareness. In addition, Klara distinguishes herself from others through her observational and learning skills. According to Donna Haraway, Klara is a hybrid figure that blurs the line between artificial and organism, which has unique qualities" So my cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusion, and dangerous possibilities, which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work"(Haraway, 1985, p.14).

According to Hatipler, Consumption is no longer for need but for desire and pleasure (38). Klara is an advanced AI robot programmed to be a companion and caretaker for lonely children. Klara's character highlights how AIs can be imbued with human traits like empathy, loyalty, and a desire for connection. Klara (AI) is consumed as a machine and caretaker for children's happiness " No. But...it's now my duty to be Josie's best friend. You're my AF. That's different" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 55). This quote highlights how Klara is an object of desire. This emphasizes how AFs are regarded as a product to be consumed, rather than as sentient individuals. Her existence is reduced to products that can be bought and sold. This indicates the postmodern trend of treating human emotions as commodities. Klara's emotional capacity makes her more human-like, blurring the line between human and human. Moreover, Haraway's manifesto explores the idea of the cyborg as a mix of flesh and wires, questioning the standard separations between humans and machines. This idea is similar to ideas in Ishiguro's book, where genetic engineering and artificial have changed the way people work together, interact with each other, and live together, creating a world where (AI) and modified humans live together, causing a social split.

Nature and culture are reworked; one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other. The relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination, are at issue in the cyborg world. Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it (Haraway, 1985, p. 9).

Bostrom in his book *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (2014) paints a picture of what will happen when the superintelligence machines gain success which allow them to integrate human life. Over

time, these machines, designed to augment human intellectual capacities, will exceed human minds in multiple domains. Bostrom emphasizes the potentially catastrophic consequences that can arise as a result of these machines. He further asserts that individuals must take preventive actions to protect themselves from such disorder. Human beings must establish regulations, create patterns, and formulate standards for the beneficial use of this machine to avoid such outcomes. The ever-present theme of consumption is presented early on in the novel, In the very first part, when Klara and Rosa observe the selection of Rex another (AF).

"Look!" Rosa whispered. 'She's going to choose him! She loves him. He's so lucky! "(Ishiguro,2021, p.10). This means she will select him like a thing. The word " choose " here is significant because it reflects the idea of exploiting and refers to something like an object only. Especially, the customer chooses and wants to buy him only for their desires not for something else. This shift can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution which epitomized the interplay between humanity and machinery, marking a shift towards mechanization. It heralded the ascendancy of the machine, as both man and technology became central to the fabric of industry. Herby, As Haraway states, These AFs constantly viewed as objects to be made and sold.

mother easily adapts to an artificial humanoid. When her sister Sal was hoisted, she died, and her parents created a doll for her. And, due to less or more technological improvement, the experiment failed" Well, Klara. Since you appear to know so much about it. Will you please reproduce for me Josie's walk? Will you do that for me? Right now? My daughter's walk?"(Ishiguro, 2021, p.41). This quote shows the mother treats Klara like an object that can simply mimic her daughter, rather than a unique individual. In this artificial world, Klara is not even considered a programmed computer, and she cannot be her daughter.

There is no value in human emotions. Ishiguro expresses this strongly with Klara. People are unwilling to socialize with their fellow humans. They always need machinery to complete their task. They do not even consider it an inanimate, human-programmed item that is readily destroyed. Following Josie's remarkable recovery, they dump Klara in their storehouse near the barn. She exhibits a perspective where Klara is largely viewed as a commodity to fulfill her family's requirements, rather than acknowledging Klara's innate value and independence. This exemplifies the process of turning artificial beings into commodities inside the dystopian civilization depicted in the novel. Therefore, Klara can be seen as a consumer entity in the postmodern age. Donna Haraway highlights that by saying:

From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived Social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their Joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. The political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage points (Haraway,1985, p.15).

Haraway views the cyborg as a political metaphor for transgressing boundaries and resisting dominance. Klara, despite being originally programmed for servitude and obedience, demonstrates autonomy and resilience. Her resolute commitment to assisting Josie. Klara's actions suggest a deliberate assertion of independence, aligning with Haraway's vision of the cyborg as a figure of resistance. Klara's cyborg nature is further emphasized by her ability to interface with and influence human biology. This shows how the constant interaction between people and machines can be used to control people. people ask machines about their children's lives and ways, and they even tell

the machine to train other machines to act like their children after they die.

Klara has been sent to watch Josie so that she can learn her mannerisms, habits, and way of life so that she can carry on living like Josie after she dies (29). She exploits for human beings. Klara can be seen as a cyborg replication that is independent of organic production. In the novel, Rick's mother says when Klara first time into Rick's house to offer him Josie's special photo, she declares that no one knows how to handle guests of this nature and she interrogates, " One never knows how to greet a guest like you. After all, are you a guest at all? Or are you a vacuum cleaner?"(Ishiguro,2021, p.123). This quote presents how Rick's mother disgusts Klara and greets her in a bad way. Further, she presents how human beings depend on machines to such an extent. In fact, they appoint a robot to deliver their communications to the reciprocal transfer of personal information from humans to machines. Klara all the time is kind to Josie. Toward the end of the novel, Josie's mother, Rick, and Malina are sure that Josie is suddenly in danger. She is lying on her side as she often did. Klara patiently anticipates with trust and hope. Her unwavering belief in the mystical power of the sun motivates her to stay actively engaged. She is determined to get the Sun's attention by offering earnest prayers. The Robot, a symbol of cutting-edge technology, places its faith in the Sun. While intelligent humans do not demonstrate belief in it (233). When a human engages with a robot, it is anticipated that the robot's shortcomings will become apparent. However, each encounter between the human and the robot merely exposes the human's lack and adequacy.

As Haraway states" Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but based on seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other"(55). Klara is to be created as a verisimilitude of josie until her recovery. At this point, Ishiguro says

people will always need machines for their deeds. They do not socialize with other beings because humans made them to be easy to destroy. After the miraculous recovery, they put Klara in their storehouse near the barn and she is reduced to a broken object for them. Especially, Rosa tries to relieve Josie after her return to the store "You had such a special ability"(250).

Conclusion

Consumerism in postmodern era has changed humans into machines that care about fulfilling their needs more than anything. Ishiguro constructs a world driven by consumption in Klara and the Sun. The greed of the parents results in their giving their children a treatment of genetic engineering that twists their bodies and alters their health. These dying children, like Josie, could have lived a healthy long life if it was not for their parents intruding. However, the materialist desire to consume and gain more has pushed the parents to orchestrate their children in artificial ways and cause their deaths. Also, Klara the humanized intelligent robot is expected to serve an end and be thrown away. Her life is consumed used, and abused in the novel just like Josie. The novel stresses the need to consider other's emotions even when they are not humans. Overall, the novel stresses the danger of technology and science and state that knowledge without ethics can only lead to pain and destruction.

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