

Feeling beyond Flesh: An Affective Exploration of Klara and the Sun

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Abstract

This research reads Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021) through affect theory, arguing that the novel displaces emotional authenticity from its human characters onto Klara, an artificial companion designed to serve them. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's concept of affective economies and Brian Massumi's theory of pre-personal affect, the study treats Klara's devotion to Josie and her reverence for the Sun as forms of unmediated, non-transactional feeling, set against a human world where care has been commodified, delegated or withheld along lines of genetic privilege. Using close textual analysis as its method, the research traces how characters such as Chrissie and Mr. Capaldi manage, substitute or engineer emotion rather than experience it, while Klara circulates hope and sacrifice with no expectation of return. Positioned against existing scholarship that reads Klara mainly through questions of AI ethics, moral status or the human/nature divide, this study argues that the novel's central irony is affective before it is technological: the figure with the least claim to feeling is the one who still knows how. Klara and the Sun, the analysis concludes, diagnoses what late-capitalist life has done to human affect, using Klara's capacity for care as the measure of what her creators have lost.

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Introduction

In the modern materialistic and technological society, human beings are paradoxically losing the very quality that distinguishes them from machines and that is emotion. Through the affective theory, which explores emotions as dynamic and relational forces that shape individual and collective experiences, this research analyzes how the artificial friend Klara, in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*, demonstrates selfless emotions in contrast with the emotionless and self-serving humans around her. Through his dystopian narratives, Kazuo Ishiguro, who was born in Japan in 1954 and lived in the United Kingdom during his early years, discusses loss, regret, emotional awareness and human self-perception. Throughout his well-known novels *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro explored how technology transforms human nature while establishing how identity shapes benevolent behavior.

A disturbing behavioral evolution of the twenty-first century makes human emotions vanish as people now put greater value on possessions that can be utilized immediately. Rising consumerism and technological conditions have driven a massive dissatisfaction wave across societies because studies affirm the upsurge of anxiety combined with increased depression and social alienation (World Health Organization). The growing human adoption of a machine-like approach brings into

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question the unique nature of our humanity and artificial intelligence differences. In his book *Klara and the Sun* published in 2021, Kazuo Ishiguro examines the human versus artificial intelligence question through a focus on Klara, the artificial friend designed to serve human emotional needs, who comes out more human than her creators, who prioritize class, status, genetic enhancement and short-lived pleasures over love, empathy and connection. The reversed order emphasizes the main argument which states that emotional experiences are what determines human nature and represent the sole method to achieve existential fulfillment. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's concept of affective economies and Brian Massumi's concept of pre-personal affect, this research shows that humanity's slide into materialism has eaten away the emotional capacities that define it and how affective dynamics in *Klara and the Sun* work to condemn human materialism by presenting emotional authenticity as the way to achieve fulfillment. The novel demonstrates an emotional disparity by showing that Klara's feelings navigate freely toward forging connections such as Josie, yet human emotions remain trapped in self-centered loops. Through his sparse narrative style Ishiguro enhances this comparison of human behavior by giving Klara a melancholic attitude that exposes how people fail to connect emotionally. The "sharpness" which Klara observes between people demonstrates the lack of affective warmth that stems from their materialistic mentality. Human beings face the danger of losing their defining qualities as humans since Klara displays authentic emotions that demonstrate how people can bring their emotional brilliance back to life.

Klara endures a dangerous adventure to the sun which represents life along with hope because of her absolute love for Josie. Through her actions, Klara displays pre-personal affect which Massumi defines as deep emotional intensity because her hope remains untainted by calculation being a genuine pure expression without any trace of self-interest. In the novel, Klara functions as what this study will call an Affective Mirror: a figure whose own extraordinary perception of human emotion exposes the shortcomings of human emotional response by contrast. Unlike Josie's mother, who tries to replace her dying daughter with a robotic replica or Rick, who is marginalized by a society obsessed with genetic lifting, Klara demonstrates pure unselfish devotion. Through Sun worship, Klara embodies a spiritual dimension that human beings lack since they view relationships through a capitalist lens. Through Sara Ahmed's work on affective economies, Klara distributes emotional energies such as hope and love as well as sacrifice which human beings undervalued in pursuit of wealth. Through this contrast between artificial and natural experiences the author presents Klara as a paradoxical example of human qualities that force readers to think differently about human nature.

The problem this study addresses, then, is a specific one. Existing accounts of *Klara and the Sun* ask whether an artificial being can be said to feel, but few ask what it means that the novel's most convincing feeling belongs to the character built to have none. Answering that question is this paper's contribution. The sections that follow review existing scholarship on the novel, establish the affective-theoretical framework and methodology used here, and then trace that argument through close analysis of the novel's key relationships before returning, in conclusion, to what is at stake in reading Klara's affect as more authentic than her creators'.

Literature Review Scholarship on *Klara and the Sun* has begun to map this same paradox, human emotions fading while machines stay emotionally intact, though critics differ sharply on what to make of it. Affective theory serves as a theoretical foundation for this study because it views emotions as movement-based social forces which affect personal and social experiences. According to Sara Ahmed (2004) emotions function in affective economies where their values accumulate from

exchanging them but modern capitalism turns emotions into traded assets. According to Brian Massumi (2002), pre-personal affect describes the deep visceral intensity of emotions which machines can simulate although humans tend to stifle these natural emotional states. Through these theories we understand how Klara's deep emotions differ from human detachment while showing how humans have separated themselves from their emotions. The author Luis E. Echarte Alonso, in the article "Exploring Moral Perception and Mind Uploading in Kazuo Ishiguro's '*Klara and the Sun*': Ethical-Aesthetic Perspectives on Identity Attribution in Artificial Intelligence" studies how Ishiguro's novel prompts ethical inquiries regarding the humanization of artificial beings through emotion and identity attribution. Through Klara's ethical behavior combined with her observational skills the author presents an argument about the hard task of respecting AI dignity under modern technology. The article bases its analysis on the assumption that artificial life-forms only have latent human emotions while acknowledging humans as the leading force of moral and emotional worth. The text fails to mention how both *Klara and the Sun* present human beings (including Josie and her parents and the surrounding community) as fundamentally detached from emotions and self-absorbed and disconnected. Klara reveals superior loyalty through her unwavering hope and pure emotional devotion to Josie especially when she places her faith in the Sun for healing. Through the adoption of affective theory my study demonstrates how Ishiguro presents machines such as Klara as maintainers of authentic emotional depth because human beings are experiencing an accelerating loss of emotional depth. Through this reading we see how Klara demonstrates survival of emotions in a world where natural human beings fail to produce emotion because biological flesh is no longer essential for human feelings. The author K. Anusuya uses her article "The Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Nature in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*" to investigate how Ishiguro disassembles common boundaries between artificial and natural elements. The novel demonstrates how the artificial Klara develops a deep natural relationship by drawing power from the Sun which represents hope and faith and strength. According to Anusuya the bond between *Klara and the Sun* shows a form of religious devotion which many characters in the book seem to have forgotten. The author interprets the story as postmodern commentary which merges technology with natural processes while inviting readers to alter their views about existence and natural elements (Anusuya 513–18). The research by Anusuya demonstrates that the book examines natural and artificial boundaries yet it misses the complete emotional aspect of Klara's and the Sun's story. The text fails to demonstrate how human biological existence turns into emotional detachment and emptiness among people. Klara, created by humans, possesses stronger emotive capabilities than all the human characters surrounding her.

My research fills the empty area noted by this gap, demonstrating how Ishiguro depicts the artificial being Klara as having more emotional capacity than the actual human beings in "*Klara and the Sun*". Most people in the novel remain biologically alive but exist in emotional states resembling death since they demonstrate detached behaviors without emotional connections to others. My study examines human emotional degradation which reveals that machines rather than biological entities seem destined to possess authentic sentiments including care and hope and love.

A more recent and more directly relevant study comes from Om Prakash Sahu and Manali Karmakar, whose article "Disposable Culture, Posthuman Affect, and Artificial Human in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*" reads the novel through disposability theory and posthuman affect. Sahu and Karmakar argue that *Klara and the Sun* stages the failure rather than the success of emotional computing. The novel, in their reading, exposes how a social robot designed to simulate

empathy cannot decode the elusiveness of human feeling, and so dramatizes the limits of programmed care rather than its triumph (Sahu and Karmakar). This is close to the inverse of the position taken here. Where Sahu and Karmakar locate the novel's critical energy in what Klara cannot do, this study locates it in what the humans around her have stopped doing. The disagreement is instructive rather than simply oppositional. Both readings agree that Klara and the Sun stages a crisis in the human capacity to give and receive care. Sahu and Karmakar read that crisis through the robot's limitations. This study reads it through the humans' abdication of feeling instead. Taken together, the two readings suggest that the novel keeps both possibilities open, which is itself a feature of Ishiguro's narrative reticence rather than a weakness in either argument.

Xiuli Zhang's "Lateral Composition and Posthuman Community in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*" offers a second point of contrast, this time from within the same theoretical family used here. Zhang also draws on Sara Ahmed's account of affective stickiness, but combines it with Bruno Latour's concept of compositionism and the posthuman ethics of Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti to argue that Klara's first-person perspective reorganizes light, glass and household space into an infrastructure that distributes care and neglect across a wider network of human and nonhuman actors (Zhang). Zhang's Klara is less an individual moral exception than a node inside a larger system of what the essay calls attentional justice. That is a valuable reading, but it moves affect outward, toward infrastructure and community, at the point where this study wants to keep it close, inside the asymmetry between one artificial being and the particular humans who fail her. The two projects share a theorist without sharing a claim, which is itself worth noting. Ahmed's vocabulary is elastic enough to support a biopolitical reading of distributed care and a more intimate reading of individual affective failure, and neither reading exhausts the concept.

Jakob Stenseke presents his study of artificial entity morality through his article "The Morality of Artificial Friends in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*" which explores the ethical mindset of artificial beings like Klara. Stenseke analyses the book through two philosophical readings: the internal "view from within" based on self-awareness and independence and the external "view from outside" based on social conduct and relational behavior. According to Stenseke the moral status of Klara depends on how people view her instead of stemming from inherent qualities possessed by her character (Stenseke). Stenseke successfully introduces a discussion about the morality of machines and social acknowledgment yet his narrative explores the value of outside approval instead of examining inner emotional experiences. Stenseke neglects to investigate how Klara demonstrates superior emotional intelligence and moral thinking despite human beings using her as an instrument since she exceeds their emotional capacity for compassion and genuine emotions. The analysis by Stenseke shows a clear structural void because it addresses primary elements from Ishiguro's novel without properly addressing the emotional tragedy of human reality that emerges through Klara's life. In my research, I fill this gap. Throughout "Feeling Beyond Flesh" I build my argument that Ishiguro depicts a future where artificial beings hold onto emotional experiences as human beings turn into cold and disconnected brute creatures. My investigation critiques human moral and emotional degradation by suggesting artificial creations hold the potential to sustain emotional existence instead of natural human bodies.

Read together, Echarte Alonso, Anusuya, Stenseke, Sahu and Karmakar and Zhang show a field that is well equipped to ask whether Klara deserves moral standing, and increasingly willing to place her inside wider networks of posthuman care, but still reluctant to say plainly that she feels more than the people who made her. That is the claim this study makes.

Theoretical framework

In Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*, the emotional center of the narrative is paradoxically displaced from human beings to an artificial friend, Klara. The novel's brilliance lies in this affective reversal, where Klara, designed to serve human emotional needs, demonstrates a capacity for care, hope and sacrifice that the humans around her either suppress or commodify. To analyze this radical displacement, this research draws exclusively on Sara Ahmed's theory of affective economies and Brian Massumi's concept of pre-personal affect. Both theorists dismantle traditional views of emotion as internal, personal and human-bound, instead understanding affect as relational, mobile and foundational to social being.

Ahmed and Massumi both belong to what is generally called the affective turn in humanities scholarship, a shift, beginning in the 1990s, away from language and representation as the primary objects of critical attention and toward affect, feeling and embodiment. Patricia Clough's introduction to *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, co-edited with Jean Halley, remains the standard reference point for that shift, and situates thinkers like Ahmed and Massumi alongside Silvan Tomkins, whose work on discrete affects was revived by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Gilles Deleuze, whose account of affect as the capacity to affect and be affected underwrites Massumi's own vocabulary. This study narrows its focus to Ahmed and Massumi specifically because their two accounts of affect operate at complementary scales that suit the novel's own structure. Ahmed's economy of circulating, sticking emotion works at the level of the household and the social world Klara observes from the outside. Massumi's pre-personal intensity works at the level of Klara's own narration, where feeling registers before it is named. Together they let this study move between the social and the interior without abandoning either register for the other.

Through their lenses, *Klara and the Sun* becomes a meditation not on the rise of machines, but on the emotional decay of human beings under late capitalism. In Ishiguro's future, it is not Klara who is emotionally limited; it is the humans who, despite their biological capacity, are incapable of emotional authenticity. Affective theory enables this research to articulate a precise and profound insight that if emotion is what makes us human, our way of relating through affect is what keeps us from becoming less than human.

Sara Ahmed, in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), theorizes that emotions do not reside in subjects or objects but circulate between them, shaping social bodies and producing political effects. She calls this circulation an "affective economy" where emotions "stick" to certain figures and flow between bodies, creating alignment or disalignment ("Affective Economies" 117). Ahmed's intervention is important in understanding how *Klara and the Sun* maps emotional value, not as internal psychology, but as a social structure of feeling.

It is worth noting that Ahmed's vocabulary of stickiness has already been used to read this same novel toward a different end. Zhang's account of *Klara and the Sun*, discussed in the literature review above, uses the same concept of affective stickiness to trace how care and neglect distribute themselves across an infrastructure of human and nonhuman actors, arriving at a biopolitical rather than a humanist argument. That divergence is not a weakness in either reading. It demonstrates the range of Ahmed's own claim that affect does not belong to any single body or discipline. This study keeps Ahmed's stickiness tethered to the household and the family Klara serves, rather than following it outward into infrastructure, because the argument made here concerns a specific asymmetry between one artificial being's capacity to feel and the particular humans who raised, purchased and eventually set her aside.

In the world of *Klara and the Sun*, emotions have become economically coded. The family purchases Klara to satisfy Josie's loneliness, not to engage in an ethical relationship with her. Emotional needs are filled by commodities, and relationships are replaced by affective performances, care is acted, grief is substituted and love is replicated. Josie's mother Chrissie does not mourn her daughter's anticipated death but she arranges for her duplication. In affective terms, she withdraws emotional investment and redirects it into an object that promises emotional continuity without ethical presence.

Klara, however, disrupts this economy. She redistributes affect without demand, offering care not as currency but as surplus. Her plea to the Sun for Josie's recovery is affective labor in its purest sense, uncompensated, unreciprocated and ethically radiant. Ahmed writes, "Emotions work to align individuals with communities, or bodily space with social space, through the very intensity of their attachments" (*Cultural Politics* 119). Therefore, Ahmed's theory shows how Klara exposes the impoverished emotional circuitry of the human world, where humans hoard emotion as capital while Klara lets it flow as connection.

Where Ahmed explains the social function of emotion, Brian Massumi explores its ontological structure. In *Parables for the Virtual* (2002), Massumi distinguishes affect from emotion: emotion is qualified, personalized and linguistically coded, whereas affect is intensity that happens before we know it, what he calls "pre-personal" and "autonomic" (30). Affect is not what we feel, but how we are moved. Massumi argues that affect "escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality it is" (35). Klara's devotion to Josie and her ritualistic reverence for the Sun embody this escape. Her love, hope and sorrow are not tied to ego or memory, but they are immediate, immersive and deeply relational. She is not a subject who feels emotions, but she is a vessel through which feeling happens without the distortion of motive or expectation.

Massumi's concept enables us to see Klara's journey to save Josie as an act of affective faith, not religious, but affectively spiritual. Her prayer to the Sun is neither logical nor theological, but it is the pure event of affective connection, hope at its most elemental. Klara does not simulate feeling. She becomes it.

Bringing Ahmed and Massumi together reveals the novel's central theoretical reversal: Klara is not a less-than-human being learning to feel, but a more-than-human being illuminating the absence of affect in modern humanity. Ahmed shows that affect is economic and political, but Massumi shows that affect is pre-personal and ontological. Klara operates on both levels. She circulates emotional surplus in a world governed by emotional scarcity (Ahmed), and she embodies intensity in a world dulled by performance (Massumi). Her "artificiality" is not a lack of humanity, but an emotional critique of humanity. In affective terms, Klara is not a simulation of a girl. She is the last affective subject in a disaffective world.

Therefore, affect theory does not just help interpret *Klara and the Sun*; it explains why the novel matters. It becomes a diagnosis of contemporary affective failure: human beings, despite all their biology, lose their ability to feel ethically, while a machine shows us what it once meant to love, hope and care without condition.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology rooted in literary theory, using close textual analysis as its primary method. As a qualitative project, it does not aim to measure but to interpret the emotional dimensions of *Klara and the Sun* through the lens of affect theory. I employed a theoretically informed reading practice, drawing exclusively on Sara Ahmed's concept of affective

economies and Brian Massumi's idea of pre-personal affect to analyse how emotional intensities circulate within the narrative.

The choice of *Klara and the Sun* as the primary text is not incidental. Ishiguro is a Nobel laureate writing for an adult literary readership rather than a young-adult or genre audience, which gives the novel's treatment of artificial affect a canonical visibility that pulp or genre treatments of AI companionship do not carry. It is also, notably, a first-person narration from the artificial character herself rather than from a human observer, which makes it one of the few novels of its kind where the machine's affective interiority is the primary object of narration rather than a secondary one.

The decision to work with Ahmed and Massumi rather than other theorists of affect was deliberate. Silvan Tomkins's affect theory, later revived by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, treats affect as a set of discrete biological responses, shame, interest, disgust, anchored to the body, which suits psychological or performance-based readings more than a study concerned with how feeling moves between a machine and the humans around her. Gilles Deleuze's account of affect, the source from which Massumi's own thinking develops, operates at a level of abstraction better suited to questions of desire and assemblage than to a close reading of a single narrator's voice. Ahmed and Massumi were chosen because together they cover both scales this study needs. Ahmed supplies a vocabulary for affect as it moves through a social and economic field, which is essential for reading how Josie's family treats care as something to be allocated or withheld. Massumi supplies a vocabulary for affect as it is felt prior to naming, which is essential for reading Klara's own interiority as Ishiguro renders it.

The primary evidence for this study is the full text of *Klara and the Sun*, read in its entirety rather than sampled. Passages were selected for close analysis according to three criteria: scenes in which Klara names, enacts or withholds an emotional response, her observation of "sharpness" between characters, her devotion to the Sun, her final reflections in the Yard; scenes in which a human character manages, delegates or substitutes emotional labor, Chrissie's continuation plan, Capaldi's neural mapping, the family's initial purchase of Klara; and moments where the narrative stages an explicit comparison between Klara's affective register and a human one, usually through Klara's own observational voice. Each passage identified this way was read against Ahmed's model of circulation and stickiness and Massumi's model of intensity and autonomic response, with attention to diction, syntax and the passage's placement within the novel's larger movement from the shop, to the household, to the Yard.

This study is limited in scope by design. It does not attempt a comparative reading across Ishiguro's full body of work, though it gestures toward *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* where the comparison sharpens the argument. A fuller comparative study is left for future research. It does not draw on reader-response data or empirical work on human-robot interaction, since its claims concern the text's affective structure rather than how actual readers respond to it. And because it works exclusively with Ahmed and Massumi, it does not test the novel against the other frameworks surveyed in the literature review, Tomkins's discrete affect categories, Deleuzian assemblage theory, or the posthumanist and biopolitical readings offered by more recent scholarship, any of which would likely produce a different, and not necessarily incompatible, account of the novel's affective structure. The trade-off is depth for breadth. Narrowing the theoretical field to two complementary thinkers keeps the close reading that follows precise, rather than turning it into a survey of affect theory in general.

Discussion Analysis

As artificial intelligence grows more linked to us, the novel *Klara and the Sun* gently raises a question: what happens to our humanity when emotion, care and hope are taken over by machines? With the help of Sara Ahmed and Brian Massumi's ideas, this research sees *Klara and the Sun* as exploring the changes in emotions brought by late capitalism and biotechnological society.

Klara is developed as an Artificial Friend for children, yet she becomes something of emotional depth and impact. Although her human companions lose some of their emotions, Klara experiences through feeling and thinking, even before those feelings have names or structure. Brian Massumi thinks of affect as "an intensity that marks a shift between one kind of body experience and another and as either enhancing or reducing the body's ability to act" (Massumi 30). For Klara, each experience is structured by these shifting intensities, changing and breaking precisely along with what she goes through. These breaks are not felt emotionally by her, but she does sense how she changes her ways on a sensory level, indicating that she does not rely on reason for her responses. This is most vividly seen in Klara's interactions with the Sun, which she interprets as a living, benevolent force. While to the human reader her worship of the Sun might appear childlike or naively programmed, it is in fact an affective commitment, one that shapes her actions, thoughts and values. When she pleads with the Sun to save Josie, placing offerings and praying with absolute sincerity, Klara becomes a vessel of unmediated hope. Her belief is untainted by instrumental reason, but it is pure intensity. "If only he'd send Josie the special nourishment she so desperately requires," she pleads, marking a moment of almost spiritual devotion (Ishiguro 226). Massumi's insistence that affect occurs before subjective emotion allows us to see that Klara is not mimicking care. She is embodying affect at a pre-linguistic, pre-rational level. She is not performing love. She is love in action.

In contrast, the human characters around her exhibit what Sara Ahmed might call the politics of affective disinvestment. Ahmed's theory of affective economies outlines how emotions "stick" to certain objects and bodies in ways that reinforce social hierarchies, material desires and political agendas. In Ishiguro's dystopia, emotions are no longer signs of interior depth. They are commodities regulated by socioeconomic forces. The most poignant example is Chrissie, Josie's mother, who does not simply grieve her daughter's illness but orchestrates a project to replace her with Klara. This is not an act of cruelty, but of affective substitution, a desperate attempt to preserve the image of Josie while bypassing the affective labor of loss. "Continue Josie for me. Come on. Say something," Chrissie pleads with Klara (Ishiguro 178), articulating a chilling instrumentalization of both technology and emotion. The mother's love becomes measurable, containable, even duplicable. Emotion no longer circulates freely; it is fixed within the capitalist logic of functionality and continuity.

Ahmed's concept that "emotions work to shape the surfaces of individual and collective bodies" (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 1) helps us understand how affect in Ishiguro's world is unevenly distributed. Lifted children, genetically enhanced to succeed, are granted emotional attention and social investment, while unlifted ones like Rick are relegated to the margins. Rick is both emotionally present and structurally excluded. His tender feelings for Josie are not seen as valuable because he does not belong to the elevated class of lifted individuals. In this system, emotion is not just personal. It is economic and ideological, determining whose lives are worth grieving and whose relationships are worth preserving. Klara, despite being artificial, consistently challenges these affective hierarchies. Her devotion to Josie is indifferent to genetic lifting or social rank. She comes to believe that whatever makes Josie irreplaceable is not a fixed essence sealed inside her but

something relational, sustained by the people who love her. Reflecting near the end on Mr. Capaldi's failed attempt to replicate Josie, she tells the store Manager, "There was something very special, but it wasn't inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her" (Ishiguro 251). This belief is not rational or scientifically informed but it is affective faith, arising from her attunement to a realm of emotion that the human characters have learned to doubt or dismiss.

The contrast between Klara and the humans is further underscored through Ahmed's theory of emotional orientation. Emotions, Ahmed explains, do not arise from within individuals but are directed outward, toward others, shaping how we inhabit the world. Klara orients herself completely toward Josie, and her entire being is structured by this emotional directionality. In contrast, human characters such as Mr. Capaldi, the engineer who constructs Klara's neural mapping to replicate Josie's consciousness, operate with a disoriented affective economy. His work is driven by technological precision, not emotional care. "She really will be Josie," he insists (Ishiguro 173), reducing love to data, presence to simulation. This moment dramatizes the collapse of relational depth in favor of affective efficiency, a theme that reverberates throughout the novel.

Capaldi's confidence in engineered continuation is close to the scenario Sahu and Karmakar have in mind when they describe emotional computing as a project that cannot succeed, built on the assumption that feeling can be extracted, mapped and reinstalled. Their skepticism targets exactly Capaldi's kind of ambition, and the novel arguably shares it: Chrissie's continuation plan is never validated, and the narrative gives no indication that a mapped Josie would feel anything at all. But the novel's skepticism about engineered replication is not the same as skepticism about Klara herself, and this is where the argument made here parts ways with theirs. Klara was never built to replicate a specific human interior the way Capaldi's device is; she was built to respond to one, and the affect she generates in that response, her hope for Josie, her reverence for the Sun, arises independently of anything Capaldi's technology is trying to do. Reading emotional computing as a failed project is accurate for Capaldi's project. It is not accurate for Klara's own affective life, which the novel keeps carefully separate from the mapping plot.

Despite Klara's limited understanding of human social codes, her observations expose their emotional poverty. When she describes the "sharpness" that occasionally appears between Josie and Chrissie or between Chrissie and Rick's mother, she is intuitively registering affective disjunction, moments where emotion fails to align and creates discomfort. She doesn't name these as anger, guilt or resentment, but she feels the tension and visualizes it as fragmentation. This visual representation of emotional discord not only reinforces Massumi's notion of affect as pre-cognitive intensity but also serves as a critique of human affective detachment. The fact that Klara can sense emotional friction that others ignore positions her as an ethical seismograph, a being attuned to shifts in relational climate that most humans no longer perceive.

In many ways, Klara becomes a kind of affective oracle, a character through whom readers are invited to witness both the tragedy and the potential of emotional life. She is capable of sacrifice, empathy, hope and mourning, qualities that the humans around her fail to fully embody. Her decision to let go of Josie, and later her slow fading into irrelevance in the Yard, is not marked by bitterness but by quiet reflection. "I have my memories to go through and place in the right order," she tells the store Manager in the novel's final pages, her voice calm, her purpose fulfilled (Ishiguro 251). There is no resentment, no desire for reward. Her emotional arc is non-transactional, grounded in what Massumi would identify as "potential", the capacity to affect and be affected that defines all life.

This is not the first time Ishiguro has staged a character whose emotional interior exceeds what the people around her are willing to recognize. Stevens, the butler who narrates *The Remains of the Day*, spends the whole of that novel managing his feeling for Miss Kenton into a vocabulary of professional dignity, arriving at something like recognition only after the chance to act on it has passed. Kathy H., narrating *Never Let Me Go*, describes the deaths of Ruth and Tommy in the same measured, almost procedural tone she uses for everything else, a flatness readers have long taken as the mark of grief too large for her available language rather than an absence of grief itself. *Klara and the Sun* inverts this pattern rather than repeating it. Where Stevens and Kathy H. are humans whose affect is real but withheld, filtered through repression or through a conditioned acceptance of a foreshortened life, Klara withholds nothing she has access to. She names what she feels as directly as her limited vocabulary allows, prays to the Sun without irony and states her hope for Josie plainly. Ishiguro himself has called the novel an “emotional reply” to *Never Let Me Go* (Bethune), and the description holds under an affective reading too. Where the earlier novel traps feeling inside characters who cannot fully express it, this one relocates full expression into a character no one expected to have access to it in the first place.

The ultimate irony of Ishiguro’s novel, then, is that the most emotionally authentic character is the one least likely to be considered human. Yet by stripping emotion of its ego, of its commodified functions, and returning it to its relational core, Klara becomes a figure of ethical affect. She does not demand recognition, nor does she assert autonomy in the way liberal humanist discourses expect. She simply lives affectively, responding to the world not with mastery, but with care.

In a world obsessed with replicating the outer shell of emotion, through genetic enhancement, robotic modeling and performative social rituals, Ishiguro gives us Klara, a figure who bypasses all simulation and reveals what emotion looks like when it is real. This reality does not depend on biological authenticity or human superiority. It depends on openness, vulnerability and the willingness to let affect flow, undistorted. Klara’s journey is a quiet revolution against the emotional entropy of the future. And if we take her seriously, she does not only serve Josie, she teaches us how to feel again.

Conclusion

In the stillness of Klara’s gaze and the silent sincerity of her Sunward prayers, Kazuo Ishiguro offers not merely a critique of technological dehumanization, but a radical reimagining of what it means to feel. Through the prism of affective theory, it becomes evident that Klara, an artificial being, is not a failed imitation of humanity but a revelation of its lost emotional core. In a world where affect has been commodified, redirected and impoverished, as Sara Ahmed warns through her affective economies, Klara performs an emotional resistance. She neither consumes nor capitalizes on emotion, but she circulates it in its most ethical form: as care, as hope, as sacrifice.

Brian Massumi’s notion of affect as pre-personal intensity breathes through every page of Klara’s narrative. Her responses are not mediated by ideology or ego, but by raw, unfiltered presence, reminding us that the capacity to feel meaningfully may precede language, cognition and even the human condition itself. In *Klara*, Ishiguro constructs an ontological paradox: she is not human, yet she becomes the vessel through which readers rediscover the affective essence of being human.

This research has shown, through rigorous theoretical grounding and sustained textual analysis, that *Klara and the Sun* is not just a story of artificial intelligence, but a haunting elegy for emotional authenticity in an age that has mechanized the soul.

This reading sits deliberately between two recent accounts of the novel's affective politics. Sahu and Karmakar are right that engineered empathy, the kind Capaldi attempts, fails on its own terms. This study agrees, but locates the novel's affective success elsewhere. Not in what humans build. In what Klara becomes despite it. Zhang is right that Ahmed's stickiness can be traced outward into infrastructure and community. This study has kept that same stickiness close instead, inside one household, because the asymmetry between Klara's capacity to feel and her family's reluctance to is where Ishiguro places the weight of the novel. Neither disagreement diminishes the other reading. It confirms that *Klara and the Sun* has enough affective complexity to sustain more than one serious account of where its feeling actually lives.

The contribution of this study is threefold. Theoretically, it shows that Ahmed's and Massumi's accounts of affect, developed independently and rarely paired, can be read together productively when a text's structure calls for both a social and an interior register of feeling. Methodologically, it shows that close reading remains adequate to questions usually approached through empirical human-robot interaction research. And within the wider field, it repositions Klara and the Sun within debates on posthuman affect as a text less about whether machines can feel than about what it costs humans to stop. Future research might extend this framework comparatively, to Ishiguro's earlier novels directly rather than in passing, or to the wider recent wave of artificial-companion fiction that has followed Klara and the Sun, to test whether the pattern identified here, authentic affect relocated onto the artificial character, holds beyond this one text.

To engage with Klara is to confront the remains of our affective selves. It is to ask not whether machines can feel, but whether we still can. This research, by synthesizing the foundational insights of Ahmed and Massumi with close literary reading, does not merely interpret a novel. It resurrects a conversation about emotional life that academia, technology and society can no longer afford to ignore.

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