

Tracing the roots of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara
and the Sun* in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*:
an uncanny perspective on loveless humanity

An analysis of the uncanny perspective provided by the juxtaposition of the human and nonhuman in the “loveless” fictions of Ishiguro and Shelley

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Abstract

This master's thesis identifies and discusses how the roots of Kazuo Ishiguro's latest novel *Klara and the Sun* are grounded in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*. Comparisons are drawn between the two novels in terms of thematical concerns, societal critiques, and, principally, the composition of the specific juxtaposition between the human and the nonhuman, which grants the reader a particular lens through which ideological and moral issues threatening modern society become accentuated. In fictions like these, the reader is invited to sympathise with the nonhuman Others, as they come to display qualities and capacities indicative of human nature, which the human characters of the novels simultaneously lack. In this sense of paradoxicality, the artificial lives of both novels act as means of estrangement, creating an uncanny perspective on both the novels and the readers' societies. The issues and criticisms which this juxtaposition illuminates include how human societies increasingly come to resemble the machines and artificial beings they create, as capitalist trends of conformity cause them to stray further and further from what is essential human nature.

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Introduction

The degree to which Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* has transformed and moulded the genre of modern science fiction is hard to overestimate, as Shelley's Creature itself has attained a mythological status through its multitude of adaptations in films, comic books, television series, and music. These adaptations have presented many different perspectives on the novel, and their various interpretations have added to the archetypal quality which *Frankenstein* represents in literature and science fiction. These archetypes include the classic horror story of the mad scientist's artificial monster who wishes to destroy its creator and his humankind; the heart-rending melancholy of the estranged outcast longing for companionship; and the cautionary parable of the dangers of technological advancements and scientific hubris, to name a few. What I wish to focus on, however, is the particular juxtaposition of the human and nonhuman which Shelley presents us with, and what that juxtaposition entails.

In *Frankenstein*, and the vast amount of literature it has inspired and generated, a trend has emerged in which the reader is indirectly invited to sympathise with the artificial Other (in Shelley's case with Victor Frankenstein's Creature) as opposed to with their human creators and counterparts. In many cases, these artificial Others are perceived as more human (a term I will elaborate on in due course) than their human counterparts, thus deconstructing the binary of human/nonhuman and leaving the reader in a mood of ambivalence regarding their supposed nonhumanity. These nonhuman beings frequently display emotions of empathy, altruism, and communality – values which the human characters of the juxtaposition oftentimes show a glaring and paradoxical lack of, as they are moulded by the societies they represent and their emphasis on individualism and productivity. This inverse mirror image then, of human creator and nonhuman creation, provides the reader with a particular lens through which the ideological and moral issues shaping both the novels and the readers' societies, are accentuated in explicit fashion. This specific lens – its narrative composition, its impact on the reader, and, chiefly, the issues it exposes – is what I wish to explore with this

thesis. I will perform this analysis by comparing two novels of science fiction that are, in many ways, very different. They are Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*, as I believe much of Ishiguro's thematic concerns and narrative technique (i.e., the juxtaposition I have discussed) can be traced back to Shelley's foremost novel. My discussion on these novels will explore issues of humanity, alienation, ideology, and the notion of "lovelessness", as discussed by Eileen Hunt Botting in her book *Artificial Life After Frankenstein*.

Heralding Shelley as its founder, Botting examines one strand, among others in her book, of "modern political science fiction: the literature of lovelessness" (Botting 138). "Loveless fiction" is science fiction in which the classic image of dystopic annihilation not only transforms human livelihoods and communities, but it also erodes traditional notions of morality and love as we know them. Ultimately, this anxiety is expressive of a fear of losing our essential humanity, of losing ourselves, in a time where artificial intelligence and rapid advancements in bioengineering continuously force us to question our significance in a posthuman setting. According to Botting, love becomes the final hope we cling to, the ultimate attempt at validating our essential humanity.

But why is the theme of love so central in fictions preoccupied with the distinction between human and nonhuman? Why is love the yardstick with which we measure our own humanity? The answer, I contend, lies in the inherent imperfectability of our human nature. Compositely, love represents our adoration of human individuality, of uniqueness; it represents our acceptance of inadequacy, of human error; it represents our unconditional and unequivocal embrace of imperfectabilities. Ultimately, love represents our quintessential humanity in that it, through its promising devotion, reifies individuality in a time of imposed conformity. In a time of scientific engineering of human life, whose form and features may be handpicked by its creator; of wide-spread genetic modification, offered to young children so they can further fulfil the mould which society has shaped; and, for that matter, in a time where AI has the ability to write poetry and compose music, further scrutinising those qualities which we claim as our own – our human individuality is suddenly volatile, even threatened. Identifying this apprehension in numerous works of science fiction, Botting commences to pose the daunting question: "would artificial life extinguish love?" (Botting 139).

The anxiety which Botting discusses is expressed and manifested through various means in this type of fiction, such as bioengineering, robotic uprisings, virtual realities, and totalitarian regimes. Essentially, it expresses a fear that modern technology, and our incessant use of it in

modifying individuals to maximize their productivity, will eventually transform humanity as we know it to such a degree that our fundamental human nature will no longer be recognizable to us. Botting cites political scientist Francis Fukuyama's book *Our Posthuman Future* when analysing this transformation:

Human fusion with technology, he [Fukuyama] portended, would cause the extinction of the species. Its system of morality would die too, buried in the ground by the replacement of sex and the family with wholly artificial means for the reproduction of life and values. *Our Posthuman Future* (2002) fleshed out Fukuyama's apocalyptic vision of biotechnology as the self-medicated abortion of the species. (Botting 139)

This anxiety, I contend, becomes an interesting point of comparison in *Klara and the Sun* and *Frankenstein*, as the artificial life presented in both novels becomes a means of estrangement – a lens which grants the reader an uncanny perspective on the human notions of love and morality, and their essential mutability and vulnerability.

Exploring humanity and personhood

In order to proceed however, a clarification must be made on what I mean by “human” sentiments and qualities. There are certain central tenets of consciousness which are, traditionally, thought to be exclusive to humanity, including capabilities for empathy and sympathy, reasoning and cognition, and the obtainment of a general self-consciousness. An oceanic number of studies have been made on the subject, and a wide-ranging variety of texts could be used to analyse both *Klara and the Sun* and *Frankenstein*. One of these is Charles Taylor's *Human Agency and Language*, which I believe holds interesting parallels to my discussion of these novels.

In addition to traditional notions of reasoning and self-consciousness, Taylor discusses the importance of “mattering” in defining personhood. He writes, that “what is crucial about agents is that things matter to them ... To say things matter to agents is to say that we can attribute purposes, desires, aversions to them in a strong, original sense” (Taylor 98-9). This “original sense” thus translates to the sense of having free will, and is, according to Taylor, the opposite of having a “derivative purpose”. Taylor calls derivative purpose something that is “user-relative”, as the actions resulting from it are in fact actions derived from the agent's user or maker. Taylor likens this to a “computing machine” which one day calculates a payroll. If the next day, a user “makes it run through exactly the same programme, but with the goal of

calculating *pi* to the *n*th place, then *that* will be what the machine is ‘doing’”, and the action will constitute a purpose which is merely derived from its user (Taylor 99). In *Klara and the Sun*, the robotic protagonist Klara initially possesses only derivative purpose, as her actions are determined by her engineered programming, rather than personal desires. However, Ishiguro operates to deconstruct the supposed binary of human/nonhuman, as Klara repeatedly comes to display signs of exceeding her programmed limitations. I will explore these instances shortly, but first I must explain what I mean by the *supposed* binary of human/nonhuman.

Klara and the Sun is set in a futuristic society that is characterized by posthuman and transhuman sentiments. By posthumanism, I refer to the set of ideas and perspectives that question the centrality of the human in traditional humanism and political formations. In other words, post-humanist thinkers are critical of the anthropocentric sentiments which shape modern society. Transhumanism is one tenet of the post-humanist view, and its ideals involve “transcending the current physical and mental limitations of the human by technological means” (Farman). That is, the aim of transhumanism is to transcend the body and species of traditional humanity through technological means such as genetic modification and robotic implementations. Thus, 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.

Interestingly, observers of transhumanism have interpreted it in different fashions, both as supporting post-humanist sentiments by breaking down evolutionary processes and thereby transcending, and thus abandoning, the traditional human condition; and as a perverse form of humanism itself, which aims to further extend humanity’s mastery over the world it itself inhabits (Farman). It is not my intention, however, to imply that the human characters of the novels are void of humanity or portrayed as dehumanised vessels of self-centred desire – they certainly possess all those qualities and capabilities discussed by philosophers of the human condition such as Descartes, Hegel, and Taylor, to whom I will return to discuss in this context also. Rather, I aim to highlight how they themselves are victims of an increasingly individualistic society, wherein capitalist powers and utilitarian sentiments force the characters to contemplate realisations that challenge love and humanity as we know it. I believe Ishiguro is highly critical of these notions throughout his career, as he positions the reader in the internal focalisation of Klara, who, from her unique in-between perspective and

paradoxical juxtaposition, grants the reader a lens through which ideological issues of modern society become uncannily accentuated. From this position, Klara, along with the reader, “witnesses the process of defamiliarization of human nature” (Süt 1525).

Chapter 1: Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun*

Klara and the Sun represents a glowing example of the genre “loveless fiction”, as introduced by Botting. In his latest novel, Ishiguro tackles the question of whether artificial life would “extinguish love” head-on, as Klara, an AI, narrates her own short lifespan, and reflects on her experiences of human relations, alterity, and love. The story is set in a near-futuristic society which displays moral and ideological problems that are eerily similar to those we ourselves face, and which forces the reader to reflect on ideas of post- and transhumanism. These ideologies issues and discussions thereof are all brought to the fore in Ishiguro’s latest novel, in which the lines dividing human and nonhuman are increasingly blurred.

Discussing biotechnology in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Fukuyama’s *Our Posthuman Future*, Botting writes that “by taking insidious control of human bodies and their feelings, it [biotechnology] kills the love that once made life virtuous and humane” (Botting 140). As mentioned, the anxiety of the death of love in modern capitalist dystopias is a common theme for political science fiction, and is represented by biotechnology and artificial intelligence, often coupled with totalitarian regimes preaching utilitarian sentiments. *Klara and the Sun* echoes these discussions, while simultaneously providing them with a fresh perspective, as its unique focaliser Klara – an Artificial Friend, or AF, designed to prevent young children from becoming lonely – narrates her process of coming-into-knowledge of human abilities like reason, empathy, and love.

Identifying the machine

The ever-present theme of love, specifically, is presented early on in the novel, along with allusions to its potential artificiality. In the very first chapter, when Klara and Rosa watch how Rex (like them, an AF) is chosen by a young girl, Rosa reacts excitedly: “‘Look!’ Rosa whispered. ‘She’s going to choose him! She loves him. He’s so lucky!’” (Ishiguro 6). There is, however, something naïve in Rosa’s use of cliché and in her childlike sense of wonder, which

invites the reader to assume that Rosa's reaction merely reflects her programming. "Love" is part of her vocabulary, but her understanding of it is limited. Supposedly, Klara must start from the same position and base of knowledge as Rosa, which is evident in the earlier parts of the novel. My task then becomes to analyse how Klara develops from this superficial base of knowledge of love and human capabilities, and the transcendence of her machine-status. In a conversation between Klara and Chrissie, who bought Klara to be her daughter Josie's AF, the two of them reflect on Klara's emotional capabilities: "'It must be nice sometimes to have no feelings. I envy you.' I considered this, then said: 'I believe I have many feelings. The more I observe, the more feelings become available to me ... When Josie was unable to come with us just now, I felt sadness'" (Ishiguro 111). It is easy to reject Klara's emotional education as rudimentary and comically analytical, as the Mother herself initially does when "she laughed unexpectedly, making me start. 'In that case,' she said, 'maybe you shouldn't be so keen to observe'" (Ishiguro 111). Klara's expression of "sadness" seems obviously programmed – a generic catch-all term used in response to disappointment. In fact, when hearing the story of Josie's deceased sister Sal, Klara responds in the same manner, stating mechanically: "'How very sad'" (Ishiguro 100). However, is Klara's process of *discovering* feelings after initially observing its triggering factor so different to the human experience? Is that not a realistic illustration of emotional causation? Obviously, this mechanism also mirrors the exponential learning capabilities of AI and may thus expose Klara's programming rather than her emotional growth. But I believe it is Klara's painstakingly reasonable approach to this internal process which catches Josie's mother, and the reader, off-guard, and which, at this particular stage of Klara's character, expresses her incomprehension of human emotion and cognition.

These instances are many, as Klara's computerised expressions of emotions are accentuated in the narration of her "consciousness" relating to her worldly surroundings. In the same chapter, when departing for Morgan's Falls by car, Klara says: "Because it was my first time inside a car, I couldn't make a good estimate of our speed. It seemed to me the Mother drove unusually fast, and for a moment fear came into my mind, but I remembered she drove up the same hill every day, and so wasn't likely to cause dangers" (Ishiguro 109). Klara's consciousness has an undoubtably mechanical way of analysing her interactions. When humans talk, they forgo explaining steps in logic, because they know their interlocutor will connect the dots of their exchange and, mostly, draw a satisfying conclusion. Klara's analytical explanation, on the other hand, of why she cannot gauge the speed of their car, breaks the unspoken rules of relevance that govern human conversation, and thus exposes the

limitations of her programming in this instance. What Klara seems to lack in these scenes, is that which Taylor referred to as an “original purpose”. The roots of her purposes and desires seem to be grounded not in her own sense of selfhood, but in the nature of her programming. Because Klara merely performs the role she is designed to do in the lives of her creator-species, she possesses only “derivative purpose”, and does, in other words, not possess free will at this stage of the novel.

However, I believe that throughout the story, Klara progresses past the point of Rosa’s superficial expression of love and human sentiments, and in time comes to display many of the qualities that the human characters of the novel glaringly lack. It is a common theme in this type of fiction, that the reader is invited to sympathise with the nonhuman Other when opposed with dystopian and unempathetic human societies, and I will explore how Ishiguro tackles this dynamic in *Klara and the Sun*.

Klara’s transcendence

In many instances of the novel, Klara’s robotic nature and programmed behavioural patterns are undeniable. For example, when Chrissie demands from Klara how Josie’s “voice was pitched” in the Store before purchasing her, Klara replies that “her conversational voice has a range between A-flat above middle C to C octave” (Ishiguro 50). Such occasions emphasise her mechanical genesis, while simultaneously providing Klara with narrative room to develop into the dynamic and complex character she becomes. These occurrences of development, wherein Klara displays signs of being able to exceed her programmed limitations, are many, although one in particular is significant, I believe, and it takes place on the same trip to Morgan’s Falls as mentioned earlier. During this drive, Klara gazes out the window and spots a single bull in a field, feeling “alarmed by its appearance”:

I’d never before seen anything that gave, all at once, so many signals of anger and the wish to destroy. Its face, its horns, its cold eyes watching me all brought fear into my mind, *but I felt something more, something stranger and deeper*. At that moment it felt to me some great error had been made that the creature should be allowed to stand in the Sun’s pattern at all, that this bull belonged somewhere deep in the ground far within the mud and darkness, and its presence on the grass could only have awful consequences. (Ishiguro 113; emphasis added)

This passage is a defining one for Klara's transcendence of the notional binary and can be interpreted in various ways, which I will commence to illustrate. Firstly, Klara's simplistic expressions of seemingly programmed emotional responses (referred to above as catch-all terms) are expanded in this scene. A comparison with Klara's baseline emotional capabilities can be made when assessing her frightened reaction to the Mother's gaze early on in the novel: "when I saw her and the way she was looking at me, the fear ... came back into my mind" (Ishiguro 48). The sight of the bull triggers the same fear in Klara, but she also feels "*something more, something stranger and deeper*". Although she herself seems unaware about what this constitutes, Klara's cognitive processes illustrate an exceedance of her programmed emotional capabilities. Ultimately, she does, however, fail to convey the impact which the bull makes on her. In this sense, Klara is still a machine, but she is developing intuitive responses that go beyond the limits of her language – experiences that surpass her programmed limitations, as she herself makes the reader question her heretofore explicit nonhumanity.

However, it is not just Klara's emotional capabilities that are exceeded in this passage. When read in context with an observation which Klara makes on the return trip from Morgan's Falls, her capabilities for reasoning and her reflection on universally human themes like morality and ethics are also brought to the fore. The scene in question involves Klara noticing a flock of sheep in a field: "We passed one field containing more than forty such creatures, and although we were moving very fast, I was able to see that each one of them was filled with kindness – the exact opposite of the bull from earlier" (Ishiguro 121). Whereas the bull seemed to be emblematic of some principle of evil inherent to the human world which Klara is exploring, the sheep come to represent a childlike innocence, untainted and impervious to the malevolence of the bull which "belonged somewhere deep in the ground." This dynamic of contrasting representations of human morals is reminiscent of William Blake's poems "The Tyger" and "The Lamb". In these poems, from the collections *Songs of Experience* and *Songs of Innocence* respectively, Blake questions the paradoxicality of a righteous God that is both punitive and forgiving, wrathful and embracing. The oxymoronic images and moods of "The Tyger" and "The Lamb" represent Blake's struggle to accept the moral, dichotomous aspects of religion and humanity, and constitute one of his many critiques of the Church. Similarly, the highlighted scenes in *Klara and the Sun* express Klara's difficulty in comprehending how such contrasting illustrations of morality and ethics – a "fearful symmetry" – can be part of the same humanity. When recalling the awesome bull and its "wish to destroy", Blake's

frightening question about his tiger “burning bright” is echoed in Klara: “Did he smile his work to see? / Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” (Blake 7).

Although Klara finds this juxtaposition troubling and “the immense problem of Evil” which it represents difficult to comprehend (Damon 9), her acknowledgement of and reflection on such inherently human discussions signals an exceedance of her programmed limitations in itself. This development is clarified further when comparing this scene to an earlier one, occurring when Klara observes two taxi drivers fighting on the street outside her store window:

They fought as though the most important thing was to damage each other as much as possible. Their faces were twisted into horrible shapes, so that someone new might not even have realized they were people at all, and all the time they were punching each other, they shouted out cruel words. The passers-by were at first so shocked they stood back, but then some office workers and a runner stopped them from fighting any more. And though one had blood on his face, they each got back into their taxis, and everything went back to the way it was before. (Ishiguro 21)

In this instance, Klara recognises emotions of anger and cruelty, but when attempting to look for them in herself, she admits “the idea seemed ridiculous ... and I’d always end up laughing at my own thoughts” (Ishiguro 22). Whereas the impressions of the bull and the lamb stay with Klara throughout the novel and significantly affect her perspectives on the world and her place in it, she quickly rejects and forgets the internal discussions of morality and malevolence which the scene outside the store window prompted. The cognitive limitations which Klara experiences at this stage are displayed even more evidently by the naivety of Rosa, to whom such impressions seem imperceptible:

‘Oh. You mean the taxi men! I didn’t realize you meant them, Klara. Oh, I did see them, of course I did. But I don’t think they were fighting.’ ‘Rosa, of course they were fighting.’ ‘Oh no, they were just pretending. Just playing.’ ‘Rosa, they were fighting.’ ‘Don’t be silly, Klara! You think such strange thoughts. They were just playing. And they enjoyed themselves, and so did the passers-by.’ (Ishiguro 22)

However, despite the many instances where Klara exceeds her programmed limitations and breaks free from the rigidity of her machine-status, she is not a human entity, and I do not

believe it is Ishiguro's wish that we interpret her as such. She is, however, something more than a lifeless machine – something more than the “vacuum cleaner” which Rick's mother is inclined to treat her like. Like the tree “that was in fact three twin trunks entwined together to look like a single one”, the field in which “other trails might be hidden within it”, or Paul's mirrors that all “show you the wrong way around”, there is more to Klara than first meets the eye – some intangible quality that invites the reader to sympathise with her (Ishiguro 122, 131, 209). That quality, I believe, is her uncompromising identity and individuality.

Klara's individuality

Through Klara's ambiguous emotional capabilities, Ishiguro expresses the anxiety of loveless science fiction and astutely tiptoes the line of adopting or condemning its transhumanist sentiments – whether we as readers should rally around the idea of transcending our human form in the posthuman era in order to improve our cognitive, intellectual, and physical abilities, and thus our quality of life; or whether we should adhere to traditional notions of anthropocentrism, and cherish our humanity as our unique ability for empathy and love-sharing. Through an allusive writing style and nuanced representations of ideology, Ishiguro never confesses a clear answer to this question. However, one thing remains certain. In a society whose cultural and political spirit revolves around the notion of uniformity of the individual (which I will return to discuss), Klara's identity remains undoubtably resolute. Even though Klara is not human, she is as unique as any of her human counterparts. In this sense, Ishiguro continuously interrogates the nuanced differences and similarities between human and machine, while simultaneously insisting on the irreducible particularity of the individual, regardless of its ontological nature.

One facet of Klara's character, from which we can elicit a sense of her individuality, is her relationship with the Sun. Klara's machinery is solar-powered, and much of her early internal dialogue and existential worry thus revolves around the Sun's influence and availability: “I'd lean my face forward to take in as much of his [the Sun's] nourishment as I could, and if Rosa was with me, I'd tell her to do the same ... When we were new, we used to worry that because we often couldn't see the Sun from mid-store, we'd grow weaker and weaker” (Ishiguro 3). However, as the novel progresses and Josie's health worsens, Klara's relationship with the Sun transforms into one resembling a quasi-religious worship. In Mr McCain's barn, “where the Sun goes down. The exact place he goes to at night”, Klara confronts her deity and pleads with him to cure Josie of her illness:

I understand how forward and rude I've been to come here ... and I fully understand your refusal to even consider my request. Even so, because of your great kindness, I thought I might ask you to delay your journey for one more instant ... Supposing I could do something special to please you. Something to make you particularly happy. If I could achieve such a thing, then would you consider, in return, showing special kindness to Josie. (Ishiguro 185)

These two scenes depicting Klara's obsession with the Sun express her gradual process of surpassing the "derivative purpose" which she displays in the store, and her attainment of the "original purpose" prompting her to repeatedly venture to McCain's barn to negotiate with the Sun. In the store, she and Rosa's affinity of sunlight derives from their inherent need for its vitalising powers and, consequently, their programmed inclinations to merely re-charge. In the barn, however, Klara exceeds these limitations, signalling her abilities to experience "mattering" and thus to operate under an "original purpose", granting her agency, individuality, and identity. Some may argue that Klara's worship of the Sun and her plea for "him" to cure Josie only reflects her machine-like nature, in that she expects Josie will be vitalised by the same solar power which she herself runs on. To those critics I echo William Lombardo's question: "Of what use is a religious robot?" (Lombardo). Not only is Klara's meek and mild humility in her request of the Sun (as quoted above) expressive of a certain unconditional servitude reminiscent of religious devotion, but Ishiguro also alludes to the image of the bull anew, this time as a contrast to the Sun-deity itself: "I remembered the terrible bull on the walk up to Morgan's Falls, and how in all probability it had emerged from beneath the ground, and for a brief moment, I even thought the Sun wasn't kind at all, and this was the true reason for Josie's worsening condition" (Ishiguro 175-76). These are not the reflections of a mass-produced server-bot, as Klara for a moment falters in her faith, but ultimately remains resolute. Again, I invoke the words of Lombardo to support my argument: "Ishiguro wants to go further, imagining that the world does matter to Klara. Her worship of the Sun as a sort of deity makes no sense otherwise. There is no indication she was programmed to do so" (Lombardo).

It is this sense of identity that invites the reader to sympathise with Klara, and which constitutes Ishiguro's deviation "from the conventional and antiquated view of AI as a cold, emotionless machine" (Ajeesh and Rukmini 856). Additionally, it explains the recoil we as readers experience when the idea of Klara "continuing" Josie after her death is put forth. We expect to be distressed by the image of a machine assuming a human girl's life, although it is

less obvious that we should object for a different reason entirely as well – on the grounds that it would obliterate the identity of the machine. Klara has an undeniable identity, although it is never a human one. Interestingly, one possible proof of her nonhumanity may be gleaned from precisely that ultimate self-sacrifice. In a discussion between Klara and the Mother, it dawns on the reader that Klara will never fully comprehend the workings of the human heart:

‘We’ll find a way to live to live together. Away from ... everything. We’ll stay out there, just ourselves, away from all of this. You, me, Rick, his mother if she wants. It could work. But you have to pull it off. You have to learn Josie in her entirety. You hear me, honey?’ ‘Until today,’ I said. ‘Until just now. I believed it was my duty to save Josie, to make her well. But perhaps this is a better way.’ (Ishiguro 237)

In this moment of acquiescence, Klara conforms to the humans’ shift towards transhumanism in the novel, leaving the reader in a mood of ambivalence concerning her previous adoration of humanity in its traditional sense. As Josie’s parents themselves repeatedly express a reluctant admittance of futility regarding Josie’s continuation, Klara’s acquiescence, at this point in the novel, exposes her ignorance of fundamentally human values. Conversely, the possibility of this “substitution” even coming to fruition similarly reflects the way in which a society fixated on uniformity and productivity has a flattening effect on its citizens’ individuality and identity.

Individualisation and conformity in *Klara and the Sun*

As mentioned previously, Klara is witness to a “defamiliarization of human nature” (Süt). This defamiliarization is, according to Gungor Süt, related to the political climate of the novel’s setting, in that consumerist, capitalist, and utilitarian sentiments have drastically transformed the structure of society, to one that resembles an ominous and isolated image of our own. It is a highly individualised society which shows a total disregard for its weaker members, while simultaneously having a flattening effect on its citizens’ individuality. In a Marxist sense, the governing forces of *Klara and the Sun* operate to alienate their citizens from their essential modes of production, and thus to obfuscate the social relations uniting them. This results in an individualised society, in which people are increasingly isolated of their shared existence.

As alluded to repeatedly, the anxiety over the death of love in “loveless fictions” is oftentimes viewed as concomitant to late capitalist societies characterised by sentiments of utilitarianism,

consumerism, and individualism. Consistent with much of the genre of political science fiction, *Klara and the Sun* undoubtedly conveys Marxist criticisms. In “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret thereof”, Karl Marx gives a detailed analysis on the process of commodification, a phenomenon in which items without monetary value transform into products of commerce which gain not only economic values, but also the social values which its producers (the proletariat) are thus deprived of. Then, Marx writes, “it is changed into something transcendent”, and it takes on a “mystical character” (Marx). This mystification refers to the alienation which labourers in a capitalist society experience when the products of their labour (items, services, art, etc.) are given an objective monetary value that is independent of, and that ultimately eclipse, the product’s use-value. That product is then arranged in a system along products of different fashion and labour, and together they are equally assigned an exchange-value based on their “expenditure of labour power” and “the duration of that expenditure” – an objective quantification of labour power which, through the now constructed inter-relationship of said products, alienate the producers from their own labour and from the social relations which it establishes. Thus, commodities subvert and eventually usurp the social relations existing between labourers (Marx).

This specific dynamic of consumer capitalism is personified in *Klara and the Sun*, as Klara, a product of labour, is granted the ability to create and sustain social relations that occasionally undermine the interrelationships of the human characters. This sense of subversion can be gleaned from several of the human characters’ interactions with Klara. In Klara’s first meeting with Rick, the subversion of social relations is represented by Rick’s worry over Klara, a commodity, influencing the relationship between Josie and himself: “‘Oh God, I haven’t even introduced you! Rick, this is Klara.’ Rick went on concentrating on his remote and didn’t look my way. ‘You said you’d never get an AF,’ he said. ‘That was a while ago.’ ‘You said you’d never get one.’” (Ishiguro 69-70). The same anxiety is evident in Paul’s initial meeting with Klara as well: “‘Paul, come on. You haven’t said hello to Klara. This here’s Klara.’ The Father and Josie fell silent, both looking at me. Then the Father said: ‘Klara. Hello.’ The smile he’d had since entering the apartment had vanished” (Ishiguro 210).

As mentioned, the human characters of *Klara and the Sun* are subjected to an individualised, capitalist society which continuously works to isolate and alienate its members from each other and from the products of their labour. Indoctrinated by the mystifying fetishism of commodification, the people of Ishiguro’s dystopic setting increasingly lose sight of the social relations which unite them. These tendencies are expressed through various means in the

novel, one example being the notion of genetic modification. As the capitalist force of consumerism deprive people of the social aspect of their labour and obfuscate them of their essential modes of production, the human characters of *Klara and the Sun* increasingly deviate from what is, in the Marxist sense, essential human nature, and instead come to resemble more and more the machines and AI they produce. Lombardo writes that the threat represented by AI and genetic modification in *Klara and the Sun* does not resemble the trope of super-intelligent robots destroying humanity, like, for example, the one depicted in Alex Garland's film *Ex Machina*. Conversely, he states, that:

the real threat is a ruthless technological logic, the logic of the factory foreman, *instituted by humans*, which governs all aspects of life save the intimate relations of the main characters. It's the logic of human capital — that is, of humans *as* capital ... It is this logic — not the possibility that we might one day create intelligent machines, but the idea that that is what we've already become — that we should really be anxious about. (Lombardo)

Interestingly, the human anxiety of being replaced by machines – of suffering technological unemployment or “substitutions” – is paradoxically mirrored, as Klara herself, the manifestation of ever-encroaching technology, also expresses a fear of becoming outdated and eventually replaced by newer and better technology. Reflecting on the fact that no AFs ever pass the sidewalk outside their store window, Klara narrates: “Then as I continued to watch the outside, another possibility came to me: that the AFs weren't embarrassed, but were afraid. They were afraid because we were new models, and they feared that before long their children would decide it was time to have them thrown away, to be replaced by AFs like us” (Ishiguro 18). Klara thus realises the limitations of the utilisation of her kind, as the inevitable, capitalistic strive for increased productivity will eventually render the AFs around her superfluous and obsolete. This anxiety is soon turned inward, when the new B3 units arrive at the store: “The new B3s – three boy AFs – were soon calibrated and took up their positions. Two went straight into the window, with a big new sign, and the other was given the front alcove ... Rosa and I remained mid-store, though we were moved to the Red Shelves side once the new B3s arrived” (Ishiguro 39). On the one hand, this paradoxical anxiety expresses Klara's transcendence of her machine-status, as she experiences an existential worry similar to that of her human counterparts. However, it simultaneously accentuates Ishiguro's critique of consumer capitalism and its self-reinforcing tendencies. Klara holds an

ambiguous position in this dynamic – both manifesting and suffering the capitalist commodification – and thus acts as a means of estrangement, providing the reader with a meta-perspective on the ideological issues permeating the society of *Klara and the Sun*.

A significant portion of *Klara and the Sun*, which I am yet to discuss, revolves around the practices of eugenics and genetic modification. These practices imminently lead to the widening of social differences and individualisation, as certain children become “lifted” (i.e., having received genetic modification), and others remain “unlifted”. The ideological and political nature of these thematic concerns are most clearly expressed through the characters of Josie and Rick, and the relationship they share. Although Josie and Rick are best friends and plan to “spend [their] lives together” (Ishiguro 64), the reader can quickly sense that they are destined different lots in life. For their plans of a future relationship to be realistic, Rick, an unlifted, is invited to Josie’s “interaction meeting”, something he doubts that “[her] guests will be so pleased” about (Ishiguro 69). The nature of this interaction meeting exemplifies the isolation that members of this society experience, as Josie must host it in order to practice how “to get along with others” in her “peer group” before attending college (Ishiguro 73). In this meeting, Rick’s inferior status is signalled immediately: “He was dressed as he’d been on the grass mound, in normal jeans and a sweater, but the adults seemed immediately to notice him. Their voices didn’t actually stop, but the volume fell” (Ishiguro 76). Later, Klara overhears the adults speaking about Rick and his mother’s choice to reject the proposal of genetic modification: “Seems so bright too. Such a shame a boy like that should have missed out” (Ishiguro 77). What Rick has “missed out” on, specifically, is the opportunity to attend college, and, consequently, have a respectable career. Atlas Brookings, whose “intake of unlifteds is less than two per cent” (Ishiguro 145), remains Rick’s only chance, and for that to be realistic, Rick needs “screen tutors”, who are “either members of the TWE, which forbids its members to take unlifted students, or else they’re bandits demanding ridiculous fees which we [Helen and Rick] of course are in no position to offer” (Ishiguro 165). In this sense, the dystopian society of *Klara and the Sun* presents a utilitarian, capitalist vision of society and the encroachment of technology on human lives. Upper classes are created artificially through genetic modification, and thus perpetuate their superior status and wealth over the lower classes, who, because of initial financial disadvantages or ethical concerns, are abandoned, alluded to in Josie and Rick’s conversation about his mother, Helen: ““But your mom, she doesn’t have *society*. My mom doesn’t have so many friends either, but she does have *society*.’ ‘Society? That sounds rather quaint. What’s it mean?’ ‘It means you walk into a store or get

into a taxi and people take you seriously. Treat you well. Having society. Important, right?” (Ishiguro 144).

In his article, “The Case Against Perfection”, Michael Sandel writes that “the more alive we are to the chanced nature of our lot, the more reason we have to share our fate with others” (Sandel). He likens this dynamic to that of an insurance company: When people are uncertain of whether accidents or ills might afflict them, they “pool their risks”, and, ultimately, “the healthy wind up subsidizing the unhealthy, and those who live to a ripe old age wind up subsidizing the families of those who die before their time” (Sandel). However, when one’s fate is less of a mystery, as genetic enhancements may lower the risk of illness or an early death, people are less inclined to rely upon their surrounding community for safety and insurances and are in turn increasingly alienated and isolated from the people around them. Eventually, this leads to an individualized society, ruled by a utilitarian vision which abandons its weaker members.

In Ishiguro’s novel, this is displayed through the characters of Helen, who struggles to provide her son with opportunities to “have a decent life”, and Josie’s father, Paul, who lives in an independent community consisting of people violently opposed to the governmental proceedings, and who suffered “substitutions”, i.e., technological unemployment. Ultimately, Helen’s desperate attempt at reigniting an “old flame” in order to ensure her son’s future prospects, and Paul’s “community barricading itself with weapons” (Ishiguro 262), represent the hopelessness of the lower class of a society in which the notion of natural giftedness is replaced by a sense of individual achievement through eugenics. A consciousness that *natural* talents are inherently due to fortune, rather than one’s own achievements, would promote a sentiment of solidarity and collective provision, as those less fortunate would be viewed as exactly that – *less fortunate*, rather than “simply unfit”. Conversely, as is portrayed in *Klara and the Sun*, a “perfect genetic control would erode the actual solidarity that arises when men and women reflect on the contingency of their talents and fortunes” (Sandel).

Returning to Klara, she functions as an interesting contrast to these tendencies. As discussed, she possesses an undeniable identity when confronted with a society which continuously works to suppress that specific characteristic in her and its other members. Previously, I discussed the issue of free will as pertaining to Klara, in that she moves from having a derivative purpose to an original one. In order to highlight the paradoxical juxtaposition which frames the reader’s view of the novel, this discussion can be expanded and applied to the human characters as well, in an inquiry of the identity that they are being deprived of.

Such a discussion could occupy a paper in itself, and so I will keep it focused to those tenets of purpose, as explained by Taylor, and already outlined for Klara's sense of personhood. There are two significant agents in this discussion, namely, Chrissie and Helen. Chrissie chooses to accept the process of genetic modification for her daughter Josie, and thus conforms to society's expectations of her as a parent. However, as Chrissie admits, this choice was highly pressurised and affected by surrounding factors such as the future prospects which that society may provide for her daughter. In a climactic dialogue towards the end of the novel, Chrissie questions Rick about his own prospects, and longs for affirmation concerning the potentially fatal intervention in her daughter's life:

'I'm asking you, Rick, if you feel like you've come out the winner. Josie took the gamble. Okay, I shook the dice for her, but it was always going to be her, not me, who won or lost. She bet high, and if Dr Ryan's right, she might soon be about to lose. But you, Rick, you played it safe ... Do you really feel like a winner? ... What exactly do you believe you've won here? I ask because everything about Josie, from the moment I first held her, everything about her told me she was hungry for life ... That's how I knew from the start I couldn't deny her the chance. She was demanding a future worthy of her spirit ... What is it you've won? Take a look. *Take a look at your future.*' (Ishiguro 310-11; emphasis added).

It becomes obvious in this passage that Chrissie's choice was not of her own free will, but that it rather derived from societal circumstances and the challenges thereof. In this sense, Chrissie can be said to have derivative purpose and thus a limited sense of personhood in the novel. By extension, one may argue that Josie's lack of agency in a decision which shapes her own life constitutes an obstruction of her own free will, but that feels somewhat drastic. Ultimately, is that not what parenthood entails? In an age where in vitro fertilization allows for the screening and selection of the sex of embryos prior to implantation (Sandel), how is this any different? Conversely, Helen – possibly worried about the dangers surrounding the process of “lifting”, or simply unable to proceed with the operation due to financial reasons – chooses a different path for her son Rick. And although Helen struggles to “accept ... that Rick can't have a decent life” and “that the world has become so cruel”, Rick seemingly manages and finds his own path in the end of the novel, saying to Klara: “we're [Rick and Josie] no longer kids, we have to wish each other the best and go our different ways ... I've got my own plans now, and that's how it should be” (Ishiguro 262, 322). Ultimately, I believe Ishiguro is critical of the societal trends that advocate conformity and the modification of the individual to a

predetermined mould of being. Such trends impinge on the individual's free will, however drastically, and may lead to a paradoxically individualised society whose weaker members are routinely disposed of, explored even more thoroughly in Ishiguro's 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go*.

Klara, as the artificial being whose unyielding individuality characterises the story's focalisation, thus marks an interesting contrast to these societal trends. Through her unexpected abilities for empathy, reason, and love-sharing, and her possession of an identity and personhood, Klara represents a halcyon image of the paradoxical juxtaposition of human/machine in *Klara and the Sun*, as Ishiguro expresses a longing for essential and equitable human relations through unnatural, futuristic beings.

Tendencies of subjugation

I mentioned earlier that the society surrounding Klara continuously operates to deprive her of her individuality and agency. This trend can also be interpreted as Ishiguro's critique of the human desire for mastery over others, elaborated on by Yuqing Sun in her article "Post/Human Perfectibility and the Technological Other in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*". The humans' participation in this act can also be seen as an extension of the trends of conformity as they are detailed above, I believe, as the human characters have themselves internalised this sentiment and routinely employ it in acts of subjugation with their technological servants. Such an interpretation may be read in tandem with Nicola Simonetti's review of *Klara and the Sun*, which revolves around "gaze theory". She discusses embodied and disembodied practices of looking influenced by Foucault when analysing how the human characters of the novel actively alienate and objectify Klara and others of her kind. As pertaining to literature, Simonetti describes the "act of looking as signifying a psychosocial relationship to power, in which the gazer is empowered over the object of the gaze" (Simonetti 1). Through the employment of the gaze, the subject (i.e., the person embodying the gaze) enforces upon the object a sense of alterity and inferiority. Additionally, when employed in a larger schema of structured power, the gaze may have disciplinary measures – referred to by Foucault as "panopticism". In short, panopticism describes how a constant state of potential surveillance forces the object to eventually become the surveyor of his own behaviour, and in time to conform to the laws and norms expected of it (Foucault).

From the very beginning of the novel, practices of gazing solidify the AFs inferiority and subjugation in society: “Manager had explained that it was highly *vulgar* to make eye contact ... Only when a passer-by specifically signalled to us through the glass, were we to respond, but never before” (Ishiguro 10; emphasis added) The labelling of their reciprocal look as something “vulgar” bestows upon it a sexualised connotation, and forces a sense of unrightful shamefulness upon the AFs. This further accentuates their alterity, as the very idea of their equality to humans is ridiculed. Later, Klara’s first interaction with Josie’s Mother, whose “piercing stare” initially caused Klara to “immediately [look] away” (Ishiguro 10), is also dominated by practices of gazing. Upon closer inspection of Klara, she narrates how the Mother’s “eyes narrowed like people on the sidewalk when they’re trying to see if a taxi is free or taken. And when I saw her and the way she was looking at me, the fear ... came back into my mind” (Ishiguro 48). Afterwards, when Klara is asked to “please reproduce for [her] Josie’s walk” (Ishiguro 50), the subjugating powers of the gaze are manifested anew, as the Mother is “effectively transferring Josie’s disability upon Klara in a way that exacerbates her inferior status as nonhuman” (Simonetti 4). Again, the reader’s sympathy for Klara is strengthened, as her sense of victimhood at the hands of human ideologies expresses Ishiguro’s subtle critique of human tendencies of subjugation and mastery.

Objectifying practices of gazing are a recurring theme in *Klara and the Sun*. When Klara is introduced to Rick, he refuses to reciprocate her glance, and thus denies her the agency of a level social exchange: “Rick went on concentrating on his remote and didn’t look my way. ‘You said you’d never get an AF,’ he said” (Ishiguro 69). Rick thus asserts his superior status as human, perhaps urged on by his similarly internalised worry concerning his status as unlifted. The same disregard of Klara’s persona can be seen in the interaction meeting, when Danny, a guest of Josie’s, circumvents a social exchange with Klara by addressing Josie, her “owner”, instead: “‘Hey, Josie, that your new AF? Tell her to come over here.’ ‘Go on, Klara,’ Josie said. ‘Go say hello to those boys’” (Ishiguro 85-6). During this meeting, the dynamics of the gaze extend, as the panoptic aspects of power relations are highlighted. For a period, Klara becomes the sole focus of Josie’s guests: “She [Josie] was signalling me to come closer, and as I did so all the eyes turned my way ... No one seemed to pay him [Rick] further attention because they were now looking at me” (Ishiguro 84). Subsequently, she is scrutinised, ridiculed, and objectified, as the boys urge each other to “‘Throw her onto the sofa. She won’t get damaged’”, and interrogate her regarding her specifications: “‘You’re not a B3, right?’” (Ishiguro 87). In response to such objectifying scrutiny, Klara freezes: “I wasn’t sure how

Josie wished me to respond so I waited for her to speak ... I'd by now fixed a pleasant expression on my face and was gazing past her, much as Manager had trained us to do in the store in such situations" (Ishiguro 87-8). Klara thus reverts to the self-regulated behaviour which she was taught by humans, enacting the internalised vision of the detached, objectified servant, moulded by self-surveillance and manifesting Foucault's "automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 6) (Simonetti).

However, it is not just Klara who is subjugated to practices of gazing. I noted previously how these tendencies may be manifestations of the internalised worries of conformity present in the human characters of the novel, suggesting that they are themselves subjects to the panoptic model. Towards the end of the novel, when Rick and Helen meet to curry favour with Helen's old lover Mr Vance, a man of high power and status, the same practices of gazing are repeatedly alluded to: "'You may not mind being poor, Helen. But you've become fragile. And I think you mind that a whole lot more.' Miss Helen was silent for several further seconds while Mr Vance kept staring at her with big eyes. Finally she said: 'Yes. You're right. Since the days you knew me, I've become ... fragile'" (Ishiguro 280-81).

A repudiation of uniformity

In the novel's ending, when Klara is left in what resembles a junkyard to slowly fade, she comes to a realisation concerning the limitations of emotional and affectional capabilities in AI:

Mr. Capaldi believed there was nothing special inside Josie that couldn't be continued. He told the Mother he'd searched and searched and found nothing like that. But I believe now he was searching in the wrong place. There was something very special, but it wasn't inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her. That's why I think now Mr. Capaldi was wrong and I wouldn't have succeeded. So I'm glad I decided as I did. (Ishiguro 338)

This passage has been highlighted by many critics and has oftentimes been interpreted as Ishiguro's ultimate "message" regarding his exploration of the essence of humanity. Lanlan Du, for example, writes in relation to this passage that "It is love that makes human beings special and able to sustain harmonious relationships" (Du 560). Claiming the ability to experience love as something exclusively human would align *Klara and the Sun* closer with the traditional notions of humanism than is otherwise reflected in the rest of the novel's post-

and transhumanist sentiments. While such a reading may hold some truth, I believe it is a simplistic one, as the passage's overtness resembles Rosa's cliché and naïve expressions of love which I discussed initially. I believe that Klara's mentioning of "love" distracts from the passage's true significance – it is a red herring. What Klara seems to ponder is rather the inter-relational and social aspect of acquiring personhood, and it is reminiscent of Desmond Tutu's famous phrase: "A person is a person through other persons". The act of knowing someone – and, for that matter, the act of caring for someone, loving someone – is only possible through an application of the self in that same process, and although Klara seems to disagree, I do include her in that model of Tutu's. Jakob Stenseke formulates this dynamic more elegantly however, when discussing why Chrissie was doubtful whether she could truly believe in the continuation of Josie:

Klara would not be able to become Josie because the identity-relation (Klara = Josie) relies on the Mother's own belief in the identity-relation ... As the subject-dependent dimension of the social-relational view stresses, what Josie *is* does not (only) depend on her inherent qualities or outward behavior; *it hinges on what she is for the people who care about her.* (Stenseke 13)

I would like to extend this argument to include those inanimate objects surrounding us, which in *Klara and the Sun* become ambiguous. The novel's ending reveals an accentuation and extension of Ishiguro's sentiments of what constitutes the particularity of the individual, be it human or machine. I have discussed how Ishiguro disapproves of the modification of the individual and is critical of those forces in society which trend towards conformity and uniformity. What *Klara and the Sun* also reveals, I contend, is how we inevitably project our humanity onto the objects we interact with, as a way of avoiding their non-uniqueness, their mass-produced uniformity.

In Garland's *Ex Machina*, the humanoid robot Ava has her human capabilities tested by her maker, Nathan, and his colleague (and the film's protagonist) Caleb. This Turing test however, in which Ava's responses as pertaining to reason, emotion, and empathy are studied by Caleb, not only reveals a great deal about Ava's capabilities and nature, but it also exposes the qualities and sentiments of Caleb, Nathan, and us as viewers. In an attempt to understand Ava, we cannot truly see her without exposing ourselves: we project aspects of our own personality and humanity onto her in the act of knowing her. The test itself – its predetermined questions, aims, and practicalities – is engineered by Nathan, and is thus permeated by his assumptions and values. In this sense, examining these values in an AI merely exposes us, and how we,

through intricate interrelations concerning our social, political, and cultural perspectives, are only able to know someone through an extension of our own personhood. What is examined in the Turing tests of fiction (including *Klara and the Sun*) is therefore not the object of the test, but rather the human subject – the reader.

This dynamic is not only valid for discussions of AI, but also applicable to humans' relations to their dolls, pets, friends, and strangers. As humans we seem incapable to cope with the ordinary nature of things around us, and instead project onto them a sense of our derived identity. It is this quintessentially human trait that occupies Ishiguro – the urge to impose a unique identity upon a single doll, however mass-produced and ordinary it is. Interestingly, Klara also possesses this trait. In the previously mentioned sheep-scene, in which she observes a flock of sheep and comments on how “each one of them was filled with kindness”, Klara, a nonhuman AI, imposes on the animals a sense of her own derived identity. Again, the lines dividing human and machine are blurred, as Ishiguro signals the unequivocal individuality of all entities in the posthuman setting of *Klara and the Sun*. Additionally, through the individuality of nonhuman machines, Ishiguro seems to insist on the persistence and importance of love in a posthuman, or loveless, setting, and the need for humans' adaptation of the concept to adhere to our changes in humanity.

Paradoxically, Klara as a machine is the lens through which we view these tendencies in a society fixated on the conformity of the individual. Seemingly unaware of her own personhood, as the passage above suggests, Klara is simultaneously adept at noticing these worries of conformity in the human society she inhabits, evident in her reflections in the aftermath of the interaction meeting: “I'd begun to understand also that this wasn't a trait peculiar just to Josie; that people often felt the need to prepare a side of themselves to display to passers-by” (Ishiguro 96). Echoing T. S. Eliot's “There will be time, there will be time / To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet”, Ishiguro expresses his concerns over humanity's paradoxical obsession with conformity, while simultaneously superimposing individuality.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*

Having discussed and analysed the thematic concerns of Ishiguro in *Klara and the Sun*, I now wish to revisit a text wherein much of the themes and narratives of that novel, and modern science fiction in general, has its roots. As mentioned, *Frankenstein* is a novel of great

significance, and easily lends itself to a multitude of interpretations. What I wish to focus on, however, is how the artificial life of the Creature is used by Shelley as a means of estrangement, granting the reader an uncanny view of human society's notions of individualism, love, and conformity. In some cases, these themes will take on different shapes than they did in *Klara and the Sun*, but will, I believe, amount to the same conclusion. The topic of lovelessness will also be subject to discussion, as Shelley's Creature longs for a sense of love and kinship of which his surrounding society seems determined to deny him.

Frankenstein differs greatly from *Klara and the Sun* in many regards, particularly in the stylistic and structural sense of its writing. The naïve, narrow, and oftentimes childlike first-person narration employed by Ishiguro marks a stark contrast to Shelley's more complex framework narrative, whose focalisers routinely display thoughtful reflections, intellectual capabilities, and beautifully indulgent language. Because of Ishiguro's unique (and, perhaps, unreliable) narrator, the ominous landscape of *Klara and the Sun* is filtered and conveyed through the innocent eyes of Klara, whose outlook is untainted by either worldly knowledge or antagonistic tendencies. This at times narrow-minded narration creates Ishiguro's allusive style, which never clamours for concord in the reader, but carefully forebodes an image of eeriness: "Ishiguro never sets the scene for us; we must gather all we can from Klara's observations, inflected as they are by her programming and relative inexperience, and from her interactions with Josie's family and friends" (Lombardo). Shelley's uncompromising portrayal of the Creature's violent agony on the other hand, marks a contrast to Ishiguro's style, as she oftentimes leaves the reader in a mood of despairing sympathy. The difference in impacts which these styles constitute can sometimes make comparisons difficult, as their respective themes are shrouded in such varying veils of conveyance. I do believe, however, that much of Ishiguro's concerns in *Klara and the Sun* can be traced back to *Frankenstein*, and I will commence to illustrate how Shelley's principal novel transformed the genre, and paved the way for what was to come.

There are significant thematic and ideological elements in *Klara and the Sun* which shadow those of *Frankenstein*, I believe. Most notable among these are the authors' interest in artificial life. I have discussed in detail the ambiguous humanity or nonhumanity of the character Klara, and how her personhood may affect our reflections over a posthuman society. Similarly, extensive research has been made concerning the human faculties of Victor's Creature in *Frankenstein*, as it too (or *he*), deconstructs the rigidity of the traditional human/nonhuman binary. In *Klara and the Sun*, the ontological status and particular abilities

of the artificial protagonist provides the reader with a distinct lens through which the ideological issues of a human society which increasingly resembles its robotic counterparts, become accentuated. This paradoxical juxtaposition is present in *Frankenstein* as well, as the reader is invited to sympathise with the alienated Creature, whose intercourse with the human society he wishes to partake in leaves the reader repeatedly questioning its moral and ideological inclinations. The society under consideration – that is, the society of the Frankensteins, among others – is characterised by individualistic sentiments, wherein egotistical pursuits and societal notions of conformity operate to alienate its existing members, as well as those outside its self-reproductive circle.

Individualisation

Whereas the trend of individualisation in *Klara and the Sun* is explained through the sentiments of capitalist consumerism, which continuously works to undermine, or mystify, its subjects of the social relations uniting them, *Frankenstein* depicts a slightly different dynamic. Shelley frequently displays her human characters as isolated and individualistic, tirelessly pursuing desires that alienate and endanger their surrounding fellow beings. According to Kim Hammond, this egotistical drive is a product of the individualist, romanticist ideal that is evident in several of the novel's human characters (Hammond). Hammond is unsatisfied with the traditional and simplistic interpretation of *Frankenstein* as a cautionary tale, warning its readers of the dangers of ever-enhancing technology at the heights of the Industrial Revolution. Instead, she “offers a reading of *Frankenstein* as a critical questioning of both anti-Enlightenment Romanticism and anti-Enlightenment science that provides a framework for evaluating contemporary ecobiocentric ideals” (Hammond 181). Most central to this interpretation is the novel's main protagonist, Victor Frankenstein. It is evident from the beginning that Victor is a man of “lofty ambition” and “passionate enthusiasm”, as he is “imbued with a fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature” (Shelley 52). While in Geneva, his scientific faculties are kept in check by his adoptive sister Elizabeth, who, being of a disposition more aligned with the humanities, “busied herself with the aerial creations of the poets; and in the majestic and wondrous scenes which surrounded our Swiss home – the sublime shapes of the mountains...” (Shelley 38); and Clerval, Victor's close friend and companion. However, when Victor travels to the University of Ingolstadt to begin his studies, he is “animated by an almost supernatural enthusiasm”, in the pursuit of the evasive question: “Whence ... did the principle of life proceed?” (Shelley 52). This

supernatural enthusiasm is procured and maintained in isolation, as Victor, in his “selfish pursuit”, “in a solitary chamber ... separated from all the other apartments”, “pursued nature in her hiding-places” (Shelley 55-56).

Victor is aware of the questionable moral aspects of his project, as he himself admits: “I became nervous to a most painful degree; the fall of a leaf startled me, and I shunned my fellow-creatures as if I had been guilty of a crime” (Shelley 57). Despite this, he forges onward in his enterprise: “often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion” (Shelley 56). Victor repeatedly displays highly individualistic and egotistical tendencies that endanger those around him, and, potentially, the world at large. This irresponsibility culminates in his immediate abandonment of the Creature upon seeing his work completed: “now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream had vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room” (Shelley 58). In turn, this abandoning ultimately leaves the Creature in despair, as he himself laments his own existence: “Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?” (Shelley 133). Thus, the Creature is the product of a self-centred, individualistic ideal, and condemned to a life of despair and loneliness.

The disregard which Victor displays towards society at large by ignoring the social relations of his productions represents a society of great transformation, in which humanist and romantic ideals continually emphasize the creative and subjective powers of the individual, and thereby sacrifice values such as communality, social relations, and humanitarianism. I believe Shelley is critical of this upsurge of neo-Romantic ideals, which is expressed through the character of Victor, but also through Captain Walton. Walton possesses many of the same characteristics as Victor, as he himself embarks upon a voyage, “inspired by this wind of promise”. He also recognises the dangers of his enterprise but reveals that his “enticements” are “sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death” (Shelley 16). Like Victor, he is a romantically inclined pioneer, evident amongst other things in his several allusions to William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and he also shares Victor’s narrow-minded sense of entitlement: “And now, dear Margaret, do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose?” (Shelley 17). Spurred on by his ambitious fervour and romantic ideals, Walton also displays the same individualistic and egotistical tendencies as his “guest”, Victor: “Yet it is

terrible to reflect that the lives of all these men are endangered through me. If we are lost, my mad schemes are the cause” (Shelley 215).

According to Hammond, Shelley expresses a subtle criticism of anti-Enlightenment and neo-Romantic science through the characters of Victor and Walton, and their similar glorification of individual brilliance. That is, she writes, “science void of genuine humanitarianism” (186), and it is an important factor in adjusting the critical lens through which we view the human protagonists of the novel. By extension, this critique can signify a grievance over the further loss of communal values such as altruism and empathy in the modern society which Shelley wrote in, and is perhaps even more relevant today regarding concerns over ever-increasing social stratification. Victor’s careless pursuit, together with his neo-Romantic ideals expresses this concern, as he abandons his Creature who is “cast ... abroad an object for the scorn and horror of mankind” (141). Through the romantically inclined and morally ambiguous human characters of *Frankenstein*, “Shelley highlights the *irresponsibility* of the individualist self-absorbed and self-centred aspects of Romanticism, with its focus on the freedom of the individual, presumably over and above collective social needs and rights” (Hammond 188). Similar to the sentiments of *Klara and the Sun*, these critiques hold clearly Marxist connotations made explicit by John A. Dussinger, who writes:

The subtitle, ‘The Modern Prometheus,’ indicates her [Shelley’s] intention of invoking the classical myth of human creativity to convey the spirit of the Industrial Revolution, which among other things exalted scientific inquiry, technological invention, division of labour, and surplus productivity as ends in themselves ... Mary Shelley's story casts a fatalistic gloom over the whole enterprise of individualistic striving for power and glory, and seems to urge the humbler values of one’s moral responsibility to the family. (Dussinger 38)

Human mastery

Another topic of concern to both authors is the theme of human mastery and the construction of hierarchical relations of power designed to enforce this mastery. The differing stylistic expressions and general tones of the novels do, as previously mentioned, affect how these themes are portrayed, as Shelley is less allusive than Ishiguro in her depictions of stark and violent exploitations. Both novels do, however, express tendencies of mastery as something

inevitable, as it becomes a point of critique viewed through the alternate lens of our paradoxically nonhuman protagonists.

Following the death of his beloved mother, Victor's scientific pursuit begins initially as a humanitarian project for the well-being of his fellow peoples, as he aspires to "banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death" (42). His humanitarian intentions are, however, short-lived, and Victor's quest quickly transforms to one resembling of colonialist desires for mastery and ownership, as he dreams of how "a new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs" (Shelley 55). Victor's desires express an individualist notion of subjugation common for modern, capitalist societies, which once more signifies rigid social stratification and alienation. The theme of mastery is introduced early in the novel, when Victor describes his cousin, Elizabeth: "And when, on the morrow, she [Victor's mother] presented Elizabeth to me as her promised gift, I ... looked upon Elizabeth as mine ... All praises bestowed on her I received as made to a possession of my own" (Shelley 37).

Victor's change of intentions also holds consequences for the Creature itself, as Victor initially "began the creation of a human being" (Shelley 54). However, "as the minuteness of the [body] parts formed a great hindrance", he "resolved, contrary to [his] first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature", which is subsequently described as a "new species" (Shelley 54-55). This active distancing and classification of an unknown Other is reminiscent of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in which the human protagonist Prospero, through exploitations resembling colonialist practices, dehumanises the native Caliban, who is labelled "A freckled whelp, hag-born – not honored with / A human shape" (Shakespeare 16). Like Frankenstein's Creature, Caliban possesses all those qualities that one would deem human – reason, emotion, ambition – yet, in the eyes of his master, Prospero, he is still viewed as inferior to the category of himself and his daughter, Miranda. Through the character of Caliban, Shakespeare thus challenges the binary of human/nonhuman, and transcends the traditional notions of humanity in the colonialist period he wrote in. Author and literary critic Maureen N. McLane captures this transcension aptly in *Frankenstein*, stating that "Victor inadvertently engineers not a human being but the monstrous critique of the very category", as the Creature's conception unveils man's folly in the alienating nature of classification, and consequently the sentiments of subjugation which derive from it (McLane 88). The similarities between the two miserable Others continue, as Caliban laments the education he

receives from Miranda: “You taught me language, and my profit on’t / Is I know how to curse” (Shakespeare 19). With these famous words, Caliban regrets his learning of “human” (or perhaps, in the context of *The Tempest*, “Western”) knowledge and systems, as they operate to reaffirm his status as an inferior being, subjugated to the will of his human counterparts. Similarly, the Creature of *Frankenstein*, having observed Felix’s lecture on *The Ruins of Empire*, realises his own inevitable rejection from his neighbouring community: “I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me: I tried to dispel them, but *sorrow only increased with knowledge*” (Shelley 123; emphasis added). From the xenophobic and anthropocentric ideals of their surrounding societies, the Creature and Caliban are alienated and categorically rejected, despite their undoubtable humanity; and from the human systems of knowledge in which they are placed and educated, they are continuously interpellated as inferior and subjugated to their human masters. By interpellation, I refer to Louis Althusser’s theory of ideology and subject-hood. He contends that ideology ‘hails’ us (i.e., it calls out to us) as individuals, and constitutes in us a subject-hood that we mistake for identity. He writes, that “ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation...*” (Althusser 13th chapter). The term “subject” implies, for Althusser, both the notion of an individual agent within a structure, as well as that of being “subjected” to a dominating influence – to ideology.

With this sense of Althusserian interpellation in mind, I would like to recall my discussion of behaviouristic surveillance through practices of gazing in *Klara and the Sun*, as it is also clearly connotative of tendencies of subjugation. As discussed, Klara is objectified and scrutinised by the humans’ practices of gazing, and her behaviour is regulated to conform to societal expectations through its panoptic functioning. This interpretation can be extended however, to highlight how Klara’s own utilisations of gazing practices merely operate to further alienate her from the human experience, as her acts of gazing deprive her of the agency which they conversely grant the human characters of the novel. Spotting a girl walking ahead of her AF across the road from her store window, Klara makes the interesting observation:

I could see, even in that small instant, that he [the AF] hadn’t lagged behind by chance; that this was how the girl had decided they would always walk – she in front and he a few steps behind. The boy AF had accepted this, even though other passers-

by would see and conclude he wasn't loved by the girl. And I could see the weariness in the boy AF's walk, and wondered what it might be like to have found a home and yet to know that your child didn't want you. Until I saw this pair it hadn't occurred to me an AF could be with a child who despised him and wanted him gone... (Ishiguro 20)

In contrast to the humans' acts of looking, Klara's attempts to envision her place in the world around her ultimately confirm her status as an inferior object, as she is powerless in the face of the panoptic doctrine which she has internalised (Simonetti). A similar conclusion may be drawn from the novel's melancholic ending. When she is left alone to fade away in a junkyard, Klara is visited by Manager, who wishes to say farewell. Afterward, Klara stares at her leaving, and observes how, "when she was mid-distance, she stopped and turned, and I thought she might look back one last time at me. But she was gazing at the far distance, in the direction of the construction crane on the horizon" (Ishiguro 339-40). As the object of Klara's gaze is unaware, careless even, of its employment, Klara is unsuccessful in asserting the dominance attributed to the objectifying gaze, which she has been subjected to throughout her life. Interestingly, this dynamic clearly resembles how Caliban and Victor's Creature are educated in the systems and ideologies of the societies they are subjugated to, and consequently have their inferior statuses reaffirmed through ideological interpellation.

The particular narrations of Klara and the Creature give the reader unique insight on their experiences of victimhood and imposed inferiority. A scrutinization of this inferiority, however, reveals its inherent groundlessness, as their undoubtable human capabilities are paradoxically juxtaposed their human oppressors and utilitarian societies ruled by capitalist notions of individualism. Through the unnatural, nonhuman characters of Klara and the Creature, Ishiguro and Shelley thus express how human agents deviate from nature and increasingly resemble the antagonism which they impose on the Others of their respective communities.

Nativity and xenophobia

Moving forward, the objectifying and alienating practises discussed for both *Frankenstein* and *Klara and the Sun* continue to be a topic of concern for Shelley, and its related themes of eurocentrism and xenophobia appear in many of the novel's human characters. When Walton first discovers the Creature, he describes him as "a being which had the shape of a man, but

apparently of gigantic stature” (Shelley 25). This sighting is followed by that of Victor Frankenstein, who is conversely introduced as “a human being ... He was not as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but a European” (Shelley 26). Walton’s immediate distinction between the two travellers, and his specific identification of Victor as a “European” and thus not a “savage”, recalls those same colonialist, Eurocentric sentiments topical to *The Tempest*, and expresses some of Shelley’s critiques towards the modern, capitalist society which the human characters of the novel represent. McLane writes that “the hailing of Victor as a European emerges as a differentiation against a savage backdrop” (McLane 89), functioning to distance the human characters from their places of conquest. She adds that Walton’s negative syntax when describing Victor as “not ... a savage, but a European”, “introduces one dimension of the anthropological problem of the novel”, i.e., that a savage is not a European, and, therefore, not a human being (McLane 89).

This theme is expanded upon in the relationship between Walton and Victor, and, later on, in the Creature’s despairing isolation. After having identified Victor as a fellow European lost at sea, Walton notes how “the stranger addressed [him] in English, although with a foreign accent” (Shelley 26). Soon after, Victor is spoken of as a French speaking Genevese, increasingly distant from the novel’s English narrator. Similarly, Walton excitedly calls Victor “the brother of [his] heart”, before again, in the very next sentence, referring to him as a “stranger”. This oxymoronic progression represents the alienated disposition that humans have towards one another in the novel, as they “identify each other through increasingly differentiated and estranging categories”, losing sight of the social relations and sympathetic bonds that unite them (McLane 90).

This tendency of alienating one’s fellow beings through estranging classification and oftentimes racist generalisation is also present in *Klara and the Sun*. Yuqing Sun writes that in his latest novel, Ishiguro “shifts the emphasis from human attempts to master other humans to human attempts to master *nonhumans*” (Sun). Although I find this perspective to be lacking in nuance – as humans certainly master other humans as well by way of conformity and heightened social stratification through genetic modification – I do believe the remnants of that traditional human mastery which Sun alludes to is present, and can be found in the interactions with Melania Housekeeper, the maid of Josie’s household. In the interaction meeting, when the upper-class parents of the attending children mingle in the hallway, one of them says “Europe. The best housekeepers still come from Europe” (Ishiguro 76). Moments

later, Chrissie asks “Hey, what are we still doing here? Let’s go in the kitchen. Melania’s been preparing more of those wonderful cookies from her homeland” (Ishiguro 79). The racist generalisation of the parents and the patronising tone of Chrissie’s remark express a xenophobic and ignorant sentiment that still, in the posthuman setting of *Klara and the Sun*, permeates the structures of society. Additionally, frequent and out of the blue references are made to Rick’s English heritage:

‘Hey Rick, I’m wondering if this is the correct way to hold one of these.’ In the reflection I saw her holding up a table knife left from breakfast. ‘Or is it more like this?’ ‘How would I know?’ ‘I thought you might, being English and all. My chemistry professor said you should hold it *this* way. But what does he know?’ ‘What would I know either? And why do you keep saying I’m English? I’ve never actually lived there, you know that ... why would an English person know any more than anyone else?’ (Ishiguro 189-90)

Klara also notices this distinction but expresses an alternate perspective: “‘I think Rick’s accent is English.’ ‘Just a little perhaps.’” (Ishiguro 71). Although the difference is marginal, Klara’s remark connotes a sense of superficiality when compared to the humans’ notions of nativity and its inherently defining significance. Naturally, this may merely reveal Klara’s inexperience of history and worldly matters, but it may also signify an alternate view of human nativity, as the focalisation of Klara exposes human society’s tendencies of estranging categorisation – a feature reminiscent of *Frankenstein*’s Captain Walton.

Returning to *Frankenstein* in this discussion, the Creature provides a contrast to Captain Walton and Victor Frankenstein’s alienating dispositions. Having failed in his attempts to befriend the De Lacey family, and consequently set fire to their abandoned cottage, the Creature exclaims: “I resolved to fly far from the scene of my misfortunes; but to me, hated and despised, *every country must be equally horrible*” (Shelley 141; emphasis added). Unlike his human counterparts, he does not place much emphasis on classification or identification, nor does he share their insistence on “nativity”. The sense of belonging and one’s native roots are of great importance to the human characters of the novel, as Victor’s very first statement of his narration reveals this fact: “I am by birth a Genevese, and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic” (Shelley 33). His “native country” is referenced frequently, and, in preparation for his expedition to England, where he will create a companion for his Creature, Victor says: “I expressed a wish to visit England; but, concealing the true reasons of this request, I clothed my desire under the guise of wishing to travel and see the world before

I sat down for life *within the walls of my native town*” (Shelley 8; emphasis added). Despite his immense love for his native Geneva, however, Victor is ultimately a spiritual outcast of his society when the burden of responsibility for his brother’s death weighs him down: “as I drew nearer home, grief and fear overcame me” (Shelley 77). This claustrophobic sensation increases, as Victor expresses a desire to escape Geneva and the responsibilities it represents, as the incident with Justine “had rendered our residence within the walls of Geneva very irksome to me” (Shelley 94).

Conversely, the Creature has no native town or country to which he feels a sense of belonging. Thus, when he narrates his own genesis, it is tainted by confusion and misery: “It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct” (Shelley 105). The Creature is therefore what Werner Sollors calls “nationally alienated”. McLane writes, that “as a made thing, the monster violates natality as a condition of human (and animal) existence”, and because he also lacks a sense of nativity, the Creature eludes our notions of humanity and nativity, and represents a vision of a borderless and communal existence (McLane 91). This is again alluded to during the Creature’s negotiations with Victor regarding a female companion, in which the Creature states:

I will go to the vast wilds of South America. My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment ... the sun will shine on us as man, and will ripen our food ... The picture I present to you is peaceful and human, and you must feel that you could deny it only in the wantonness of power and cruelty. (Shelley 148-49)

Victor responds to this claim by questioning how he could “persevere in this exile?” (Shelley 149), ironically unconscious of his own spiritual exile from his native Geneva. The Creature, however, also experiences an exile of sorts, lamenting the fact that he ever discovered the cottagers and their community: “Oh, that I had forever remained in my native wood, nor known nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst and heat!” (Shelley 123). Although both characters experience a longing for what they deem a “native” place, their expression of that place is vastly different. According to McLane, “the monster experiences a nostalgia for the woods, for nature, for purely sensual being, whereas Victor regrets his exile from a naturalized social state and domestic intimacy” (McLane 93). Thus, Victor’s desires become representative of the modern, capitalist sentiment, which, through “walls” and “gates” both literal and metaphorical, distances humans from one another by geographical and social

classification. Victor and the Creature's contrasting perspectives on nativity and isolation strengthen the sympathy we as the reader feel for the Creature, as he becomes the contrast to a society governed by individualist and bigoted sentiments. As it does in *Klara and the Sun*, the artificial life in *Frankenstein* becomes a means of estrangement, as it grants the reader an uncanny perspective of the human world and its inherent, ideological issues. This sympathy is extended further by the Creature's reflections on the humane capabilities of love and affection, as he, like Klara, undergoes a transformative process of coming-into-knowledge.

Love and longing

As mentioned, Victor's scientific pursuits are representative of the individualist and unhumanitarian sentiments of the disconnected era during the Industrial Revolution – sentiments Shelley are critical of throughout the novel. Victor's Creature on the other hand, the product and manifestation of his master's "selfish desire", becomes a point of contrast to Victor, as he gradually learns and displays notions of love, affection, and altruism – qualities that are in many ways lacking in the human society surrounding him. The love which the Creature comes to experience is a gradual one, as his earliest narrations are characterised by more primal urges: "I felt tormented by hunger and thirst. This aroused me from my nearly dormant state..." (Shelley 105). These instinctive and superficial feelings or desires can be compared to Klara's programmed, fundamental knowledge, as she too progresses emotionally as a dynamic character throughout the novel. It is noteworthy, however, that the Creature's experience of loneliness is also expressed very early on in the description of his sensations. In just the second paragraph of his narration, he admits that he "felt cold also, and half-frightened, as it were, *instinctively*, finding [himself] so *desolate*" (Shelley 105; emphasis added). This *instinctive* desolation suggests that he does, in fact, experience an innate need for community and kinship. Naturally, this augurs the question: does Klara experience this same essential longing for companionship? Although Chrissie seems sceptical, stating to Klara how "It must be great. Not to miss things. Not to long to get back to something. Not to be looking back all the time", I believe Klara does need companionship, and that she does experience the feeling of missing someone, whether she herself is aware of it or not (Ishiguro 102). On one of Klara's climactic trips to McCain's barn, this feeling of want is signalled in her cognitive processes:

I heard around me the cries of an animal in pain, and a picture came into my mind of Rosa, sitting on the rough ground somewhere outdoors, little pieces of metal scattered

around her, as she reached out both hands to grasp one of her legs stretched out stiffly before her. The image was in my mind for only a second, but the animal carried on making its noise, and I felt the ground collapsing beneath me. (Ishiguro 175)

When met with the cries of a wounded animal, Klara's mind *instinctively* recalls Rosa – her first ever friend – as she both longs for her company and fears for her safety. Compared to some of Klara's reflections on love and humanity later in the novel (some of which have been discussed already), which through their rationale seem to derive from her exponential learning capabilities rather than her fundamental programming, this connection expresses a nature of spontaneity, and may thus be read as an innate, essential reaction. During Klara's final visit to the barn towards the end of the novel, the recollection is made anew, as she, in a moment of despair and hopelessness over Josie's illness, imagines the woman in the Diner who "resembled Rosa": "The Sun's rays coming from the back of the barn were too intense to face directly, so though it might seem rude, I turned my gaze once more to the drifting shapes to my right, perhaps hoping to glimpse Rosa sitting in the lonely diner booth" (Ishiguro 303). Although Klara's expressions of loneliness and longing are less explicit than the Creature's, as her narration is characterized by her childlike and limited abilities of mediation, I believe these instances signal Klara's capabilities to experience a similar "instinctive desolation" to that of *Frankenstein's* Creature, and thus constitute a parallel in how Shelley and Ishiguro present artificial lives.

Before returning to *Frankenstein*, however, I wish to reiterate Botting's claim that love is the central pillar around which "loveless fiction" revolves and has come to be a litmus test of humanity for all artificial life in stories like these. One need only recollect Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?*, in which Voight-Kampff tests designed to measure empathetic capabilities are used by bounty hunters when "retiring" escaped androids, or "replicants". (The questions posed in said tests often revolve around animal cruelty and sexual freedom, and incidentally prove challenging even to the human reader.) Spike Jonze's film *Her* features an AI voice-service, whose ability to experience a romantic relationship with the film's protagonist, Theodore, ultimately heralds her transcension of the machine-status imposed on her. Even the classic tale of *Pinocchio* features an artificial entity whose sole ambition is becoming "a real boy" and thus experiencing humane love in its entirety. Naturally, these stories also present a more nuanced perspective on love as a humanising factor (especially Dick's novel), and the same undoubtedly applies to Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Additionally, the love and the notions of kinship and community which the Creature comes to

realise are in many instances viewed in contrast to the human society's tendencies of rejection and neglect of the Creature, thus accentuating the inverse image of society as it is presented by Shelley, and emphasising the reader's tendency to sympathise with the abandoned Creature.

Shelley's Creature learns about love from his interactions with the human society around him, mainly the De Lacey's. Through small chinks in the hovel behind the family's cottage, the Creature observes, both with envy and joy, those acts of affection which come to shape his understanding of love. He is moved by the music they play, which produces "sounds sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale", their "benevolent countenance", and "the gentle manners of the girl" which "enticed [his] love" (Shelley 110; emphasis added). Furthermore, when the girl sobs "audibly" in response to the old man's music, the Creature is deeply affected:

He [the old man] raised her, and smiled with such kindness and affection that I felt sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature: they were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as I had never before experienced, either from hunger or cold, warmth or food; and I withdrew myself from the window, unable to bear these emotions. (Shelley 110-11)

These "peculiar and overpowering" sensations once more recall *Klara and the Sun*, as their effect on the Creature clearly resembles Klara's reaction to witnessing the lone bull in the field. Just as Klara's programming was challenged by her recognition of "something more, something stranger and deeper", so does the Creature experience feelings that exceed his capabilities of language and his emotional comprehension. The Creature's reaction to these emotions differ from Klara's, however, as they paint a more sombre picture. Whereas Klara's ability to impose a sense of her own derived identity to the things she observes is constructive to her own personhood through interrelations (as explained in relation to the sheep in the scene following), the Creature's formative experiences of the world around him are moulded by his lifelong loneliness. As opposed to Klara's, the Creature's reaction signals an attention inward, as his interactions with the humans of *Frankenstein* deprive him of exchanges of consciousness by denying him the agency of symmetrical interactions. This dynamic is also present when he meets the young William Frankenstein: "I seized on the boy as he passed and drew him towards me. As soon as he beheld my form, *he placed his hands before his eyes, and uttered a shrill scream*" (Shelley 144; emphasis added). Unable, or forcibly denied the chance to form the inter-relational bonds that constitute a process in acquiring personhood,

the Creature is left in desolation, and remains, in the eyes of the reader, a despairing character when compared to Klara's undeniable identity. Realising his exclusion and alterity, the Creature is then devastated by his inability to partake in the communal suffering of the De Lacey household, and is left questioning his own morbid existence.

Kinship and conformity

In this sense, the Creature's experiences of love and kinship are characterized by lack and longing, as he is never able to fulfil his desire for human relations. According to Jung Eun Seo, the Creature's exclusion from human society expresses Shelley's critique of the emphasis placed on biological and familial ties in view of kinship and sympathetic community. She reads *Frankenstein* as Shelley's attempt "to move sympathy from the realm of nature to the realm of culture" (Seo 209). In this interpretation, much attention is paid to the two idealised and isolated family units present in the novel, the Frankensteins and the De Laceys. As Victor narrates, "no human being could have passed a happier childhood than [himself]. [His] parents were possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence" (Shelley 39). For the Frankensteins, this domestic bliss seems to be self-reproductive and forcibly closed, illustrated when Victor's mother adopts the young Elizabeth with the seemingly pre-conceived idea that she will one day be Victor's wife, his "more than sister" (Shelley 37). According to Seo, this incestuous sense of enforced isolation represents Shelley's critique of the domestic circle's "failure to expand its boundary to outsiders" (Seo 206).

The same idealised domesticity can be gleaned from the Creature's descriptions of the De Lacey household: "Nothing could exceed the love and respect which the younger cottagers exhibited towards their venerable companion. They performed towards him every little office of affection and duty with gentleness; and he rewarded them by his benevolent smiles" (Shelley 113). Upon witnessing this familial harmony, the Creature desires to partake in their shared community, as he dreams of such affectionate relations. His attempts at befriending the old De Lacey are rejected however, as Felix "tore [him] from his father, to whose knees [he] clung..." (Shelley 137). Shortly thereafter, the Creature recalls the incident in which he meets Victor's younger brother, whom he wished to "seize ... and educate ... as [his] companion and friend" (Shelley 144). Again, his careful approach is met with horror and disgust, as William warns the Creature: "Hideous monster! let me go. My papa is a syndic – he is M. Frankenstein – he will punish you. You dare not keep me!" (Shelley 144). William's

invocation of his family name in his defence is significant, as it represents the barriers of filial love which the Creature desperately desires to, but never will, overcome (Seo 206-07).

According to Seo, Shelley is not critical of the familial ties themselves or their effect in domestic lives, in fact, she thought parental affection and duties a central tenet to the nature of man. Rather, she “warns against ... the confinement of familial affection within a parochial circle and its almost instinctive impulse to reproduce the self and the same” (Seo 208). Seo cites Shelley’s mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, to clarify this argument. In a response to Edmund Burke, who saw “filial love as the most natural human moral sentiment” there was (Seo 209), Wollstonecraft expressed scepticism, speculating how “filial love” could be distinguished from “mistaken self-interest”. Wollstonecraft turns Burke’s argument for naturalising filial bonds on its head, instead highlighting how such a practice may lead to “the perpetuation of property in our families”, and “its benevolence to such a narrow circle” (Seo 209). Seo argues that Burke’s arguments are under scrutiny in *Frankenstein*, as the idealised family units are exclusive, “parochial” circles, which, instead of embracing the Others of their surrounding societies, seek to perpetually “reproduce the self and the same”. The latter point is also hinted at more explicitly through the incestuous sense of filial bonds in the Frankenstein family (Seo 208-10).

The Creature, then, becomes a contrast to this naturalisation of parochial family units, as he questions his isolated nature: “But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses...” (Shelley 124). He becomes Shelley’s champion, tasked to “move sympathy from the realm of nature to the realm of culture”, defying the isolated and xenophobic nature of his fellow beings. He does, of course, ultimately fail in his attempts to find kinship through the cultural means of language, as he eventually “declare[s] ever-lasting war against the species” (Shelley 138). Having realized the futility of his efforts, the Creature finally comes to see himself as his humans counterparts do, as “a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned” (Shelley 123). Furthermore, in his demands of Victor to create a female companion for him, he claims: “I am alone, and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as *deformed and horrible as myself* would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the *same species*, and have the *same defects*” (Shelley 146; emphasis added). In this despairing exhortation, the Creature expresses his perspective on species as something ruled by appearances. Defeated by self-loathing and alienation, the Creature surrenders, and internalises the xenophobic sentiments of his human counterparts.

Identifying the individuality of the Creature

Incidentally, Felix De Lacey's rejection of the Creature upon seeing his hideous physique is reminiscent of the same sentiments of conformity which permeate the society of *Klara and the Sun*. In Ishiguro's novel, the notion of conformity is (partially) expressed through societal expectations of parents to genetically modify their children, despite of its potentially fatal outcome. Those who reject the practices of bioengineering, like Helen, are consequently ostracised from society, and condemned to a life of financial struggles. In *Frankenstein* however, the dynamic is reversed, as the Creature's engineered and unnatural physique results in his categoric expulsion. In a textually adapted performance piece, transgender theorist Susan Stryker echoes the Creature's sufferings when lamenting her own "exclusion from human community" (Stryker 238). Several critics have interpreted *Frankenstein* as a parable for transgender experience and rage (Mary Daly and Jeanette Winterson, among them), signalling Shelley's possible critique of conformist tendencies in modern society. The rigid gender binary of male/female rejects, and, according to Stryker, dehumanises those unwilling to conform to it through practices of gender performativity, as demonstrated by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*. Stryker finds both semblance and solace in the character of the Creature, as he, through his physique, signals both a violation of natural humanity, and a critique of the very concept in a posthuman society:

I who have dwelt in a form unmatched with my desire, I whose flesh has become an assemblage of incongruous anatomical parts, I who achieve the similitude of a natural body only through an unnatural process, I offer you this warning: the Nature you bedevil me with is a lie. Do not trust it to protect you from what I represent, for it is a fabrication that cloaks the groundlessness of the privilege you seek to maintain...
(Stryker 240-41)

Stryker reads *Frankenstein* as a critique of societal normativity and its attempts at modifying individuals to fit dichotomous binaries. Through the Creature's rage however, and his cultural means, she elicits an identity – a "monstrous identity". Like Ishiguro, Stryker identifies the individual, which, regardless of its specific nature, is of uncompromising stature: "I want to lay claim to the dark power of my monstrous identity without using it as a weapon against others or being wounded by it myself ... I am a transsexual, and therefore I am a monster" (Stryker 240).

Through the perspectives of Klara and the Creature, the reader is then granted unique insight through the juxtapositions of artificial characters in human societies, regarding their similar

experiences of rejection and expulsion. The reader is invited to sympathise with the nonhuman narrators, as the xenophobic sentiments of modern society becomes a point of critique both for Ishiguro and Shelley, while the authors simultaneously encourage ways of acceptance and kinship through cultural means in a posthuman setting.

Conclusion

Although Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* and Shelley's *Frankenstein* are two very different novels in many senses, the enduring legacy which *Frankenstein* possesses in the field of modern political science fiction is clear to see when tracing the roots of Ishiguro's latest work. The deconstruction of the human/nonhuman binary expressed through capabilities of empathy, reason, and altruism in artificial or nonhuman life has also been echoed in a multitude of works of science fiction, such as Dick's *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* (1968), Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Word for World is Forest* (1972), Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), and, obviously, *Klara and the Sun* (2021).

The transcendence which the artificial characters of *Frankenstein* and *Klara and the Sun* represent, as they surpass the limitations of their imposed inferiorities, results in a paradoxical inversion of the notional binary, accentuating the ideological issues at play in both novels. The artificial life thus acts as a means of estrangement, granting the reader a lens through which the nonhuman characters display qualities of humanity which their human counterparts oftentimes glaringly lack. This paradoxical juxtaposition then functions as a particular conveyer of social critique, as both Shelley and Ishiguro articulate moral and ideological issues that permeate the settings of their novels, as well as their own respective times and societies.

Through this particular lens, Shelley and Ishiguro present human societies that stray increasingly further from defining values of humanitarianism and altruism, as governing forces characterised by capitalist greed and utilitarian sentiments operate to alienate their human subjects from their essential modes of production and obfuscate the social relations which unite them. These mechanisms lead to individualised societies, in which the lack of mutual dependence, as explained by Sandel, causes people to live lives of isolation. This trend forebodes the socialisation of humans to lack abilities for affect and empathy – as the stark individualisation of society no longer necessitates these characteristics – and thus it ultimately threatens the erosion of core values of love and morality as we know them. In Eileen Hunt

Botting's discussions of loveless fiction, she describes how bioengineering, artificial intelligence and totalitarian regimes all come to represent the loss of our own humanity. The incessant modification of the individual to fit into optimised moulds of productivity, she contends, increasingly disconnects us from our fundamental human nature, until those qualities which define us are mere memories of a bygone era – distant dreams abandoned amid dystopic annihilation. According to Botting, love becomes the ultimate signification of our essential human experience, and the act of love-sharing thus constitutes a litmus test for humanity in all artificial lives. In an inquiry of humanity's lost love, she speculates whether "technology causes the death of love and the demise of a prosocial morality", or whether developments in technology and the disconnection which it stimulates is merely a reaction to the lovelessness of modern societies (Botting 19).

Ishiguro proposes a fresh perspective to this discussion in his latest novel, *Klara and the Sun*, as the focaliser Klara narrates her own experiences as a nonhuman robot, and her coming-into-knowledge of human qualities like reason, emotion, and love-sharing. In a society characterised by sentiments of utilitarianism and conformity, the humans of *Klara and the Sun* live increasingly isolated lives, in which they themselves come to resemble more and more the technological servants they employ. Josie, for instance, is forced to host an interaction meeting in order to practice "how to get along with others" of her own age before attending college, alluding to the potential socialisation of people to lack affect, as is expressed vividly in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. In fact, Josie's world is heavily influenced by these normative tendencies, as governmental and cultural forces proclaim conformity and a modification of the individual. This conformity is expressed most explicitly through the notion of genetic modification, which separates children into categories of "lifted" and "unlifted", and which intensifies the social stratification at play in the novel. Rick and his mother Helen, for instance, become outcasts of society, as they struggle to thrive in a world that "has become so cruel". The dynamic of genetic modification and social stratification thus becomes a subject of criticism, as Ishiguro seems to indicate that a society's morality is defined by its treatment of its weakest members, as he in effect dehumanises the futuristic society of *Klara and the Sun*.

In this sense, Klara, as an Artificial Friend, becomes an interesting contrast to the human characters of the novel. Throughout the story, Klara is seen to exceed the fundamental knowledge which reflects her innate programming and transcends her status as machine by displaying capabilities for reason, altruism, and love. When observing a lone bull in a field on

a trip to Morgan's Falls, for instance, Klara's programming is exceeded, as her emotional reaction to the scene surpasses her abilities for language and for conceptualising ideas of human morality. For Klara, the bull comes to represent an inherent evil of the human world, whose nuance and complexity she struggles to accept. This can be gleaned from her contrasting reaction to a flock of sheep on the return trip, as their heart-rending innocence connotes a sense of angelic purity. These examples of Klara's programming being surpassed by her worldly experiences and emotions culminate to the question regarding her sense of free will and personhood. For this discussion, I have identified parallels between Klara's facets of subjectivity and Charles Taylor's notions of "mattering" and inherent purpose. I have argued that the instances where Klara's fundamental programming is exceeded, and where she consequently transcends her machine status, reflects Klara's surpassing of Taylor's "derivative purpose" and her attainment of "original purpose", accentuating her personhood and her undeniable sense of individuality.

This individuality, I contend, is a key focus for Ishiguro, as Klara contrasts a human society whose trends of conformity function to modify individual human beings, depriving them of their essential identities and the imperfections which constitute them. Klara's particular status in society is ambiguous – she is not to be interpreted as a complete human, nor as an emotionless technological servant – but her sense of individuality is clear, as Ishiguro seems to insist on the particularity of the individual in a posthuman experience, regardless of its ontological nature. As the characters of *Klara and the Sun* insist upon imposing a sense of their own derived identities in their interactions with others, so does Ishiguro express a repudiation of uniformity – of perfection, of repeatability – as something quintessentially human, and as something volatile which a modern, posthuman society threatens to eradicate.

Frankenstein presents an interesting comparison to *Klara and the Sun*, as Shelley's novel constitutes a foundation to which much of modern science fiction owes its origin. In my reading of Ishiguro's latest novel, I have attempted to view it in this perspective, and to identify how its roots are grounded in Shelley's major novel. What I have chosen to focus on in this comparison, is Shelley's composition of the juxtaposition separating the human and nonhuman, and what this juxtaposition entails. As a reader of *Frankenstein*, we are invited to sympathise with Victor's Creature, as its interactions with human society leaves us questioning that society's moral and ideological inclinations. Similarly to *Klara and the Sun*, the specific juxtaposition of the human and nonhuman, in which the nonhuman is granted qualities and characteristics which are often deemed exclusive to humanity, and which the

human characters of the novel and the society they represent glaringly lack, functions as a lens through which the moral and ideological issues affecting the Creature as well as human society become accentuated. The artificial life thus functions to distance the readers, granting them an uncanny perspective of modern society, and the sentiments of individualism, conformity, and utilitarianism which threaten it.

Stylistically, *Frankenstein* is very different to *Klara and the Sun* in its technical elements, which occasionally make thematic comparisons difficult. The roots of Ishiguro's thematic concerns are, however, evident when analysing Shelley's novel. For instance, the theme of individualisation of society is clearly expressed through the characters of Victor and Captain Walton, and their similar glorification of individual brilliance seemingly at the cost of communality. Victor's scientific pursuits are of a selfish nature, as he expresses a desire to father a new species which would "bless" him as "its creator and source" (Shelley 55), simultaneously connoting a sense of Eurocentric colonialism. According to Kim Hammond, Shelley's attention to individualism reflects a critique of the emphasis placed on the creative powers of the individual, as their Romantic- and Enlightenment era sentiments constitute a science which is "void of genuine humanitarianism" (Hammond 186).

Additionally, Shelley also depicts a human society that is characterised by its inherent isolation, as its members are continuously alienated from the social relations which unite them. Jung Eun Seo interprets *Frankenstein* as Shelley's attempt "to move sympathy from the realm of nature to the realm of culture" (Seo 209), as its parochial family units seem determined to extend their kinship to outsiders. Together with Victor Frankenstein's emphasis on nativity as a defining factor of identity, and Captain Walton's estranging categorisation which distances himself from both human and nonhuman alike, these facets of alienation present an interesting comparison when contrasted with the Creature's reflections on kinship, community, and love-sharing.

Similar to the artificial life presented by Ishiguro in *Klara and the Sun*, the Creature too exceeds the fundamental cognition which he displays early in his narration, and thus he transcends the nonhumanity imposed on him by human ideology. Having initially expressed the primal sensations of hunger, thirst, and cold, the Creature soon comes to lament his own desolation, and crave a sense of companionship with other beings. His empathetic capabilities are evident when he observes the loving household of the De Lacey's, and, like Klara, experiences emotions which surpass his abilities for language and emotional comprehension, calling them "sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature" (Shelley 110). Unlike Klara,

however, the Creature's experiences of love and kinship are moulded by a lack thereof, as he is never allowed to form the inter-relational bonds that contribute to Klara's unique identity. This makes the Creature a despairingly isolated character, and may express some of Shelley's critiques towards a society fixated on conformity and individualism. Humanity's denial of the Creature thus reveals the superficiality of its own morality, as his mere physique augurs his inevitable expulsion. Several gender and transgender theorists have interpreted *Frankenstein* as a parable for transgender experience and as an image of societal tendencies of conformity. Susan Stryker, for instance, calls into question the "groundlessness of the privilege" that is human nature (Stryker 241), as its construction muddles the very category it claims. Instead, Stryker identifies the individual within the Creature, who, through conformity and modification of its essence, is dehumanised by social normativity.

In conclusion, Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* owes much of its genesis to Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in regard to their thematic concerns and social critiques. Their principal commonality, however, is found in the juxtapositions of human and nonhuman characters, as they together create an inverse mirror image of said binary, in which core values and qualities of human nature are expressed through unnatural, artificial characters. Together, these characters confront a human society in great transformation, as capitalist and utilitarian sentiments of individualism, productivity, and consumerism operate to modify the individuality of its members, and thus to eradicate its notions of human morality and love. Through acts of conformity, these forces eradicate those distinctions which constitute human nature – those imperfections whose uniqueness we embrace, and, ultimately, those instances of individuality which entice our exhortations of human love. Shelley's Creature and Ishiguro's Klara thus become champions of the posthuman society, epitomising the particularity of the individual, and illuminating the vulnerability which this quintessentially human notion represents.

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