

Rewriting the Human: Posthuman Encounters in *Blade Runner* and *Klara and the Sun* A Comparative Study of AI, Identity, and Emotional Consciousness

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at how *Blade Runner* and *Klara and the Sun* explore what it means to be human through their AI (artificial intelligence) characters. It compares how both stories show robots and machines that think, feel, and question their place in the world. The study focuses on identity, emotions, and the way these AI characters relate to people. Using ideas from posthumanism, the paper shows how these stories blur the line between humans and machines, making us rethink human nature, relationships, and the meaning of consciousness.

Keywords- Posthumanism, artificial intelligence, identity, emotions, *Blade Runner*, *Klara and the Sun*.

In recent years, literature and film have increasingly explored the relationship between humans and artificial intelligence, raising questions about identity, emotion, and what it truly means to be human. Two powerful works that examine these issues are *Blade Runner* (1982), directed by Ridley Scott, and *Klara and the Sun* (2021), a novel by Kazuo Ishiguro. Although produced decades apart, both texts offer deep reflections on artificial beings that appear almost human yet are treated as inferior. While *Blade Runner* presents a dark, dystopian world where replicants fight for survival and recognition, *Klara and the Sun* offers a quieter, more emotional story of an AI companion who seeks meaning through love and loyalty. Together, these works reveal how technology challenges the boundaries between the human and the non-human.

Posthumanism, a theory that questions the idea of human superiority and focuses on how technology, biology, and culture shape identity, is useful for understanding these narratives. In both *Blade Runner* and *Klara and the Sun*, the artificial characters—Replicants and Klara experience emotions, form relationships, and reflect on their own existence. Yet, they are denied full recognition by the human world.

This reflects technocultural anxieties about AI and social change. As Hayles explains, posthumanism “privileges informational pattern over material instantiation” (Hayles 2), suggesting that identity is not limited to flesh and blood. Both texts challenge the belief that only biological humans can feel love, suffer loss, or desire freedom. By comparing these two stories, we can see how they represent different responses to a shared question: can machines ever be more than machines?

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become one of the most important topics in modern science fiction. It helps us explore what it means to be human, how technology affects our emotions, and how society treats beings that are different. Two powerful works that examine these ideas are *Blade Runner* (1982), directed by Ridley Scott, and *Klara and the Sun* (2021), written by Kazuo Ishiguro. Both explore human and AI relationships through the lens of posthumanism and technoculture. Even though they are different in tone and style, both stories raise similar questions about identity, emotion, and morality.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a wide-ranging tool that enables people to rethink how we integrate information, analyze data, and use the resulting insights

to improve decision making and already it is transforming every walk of life. In this report, Darrell West and John Allen discuss AI's application across a variety of sectors, address issues in its development, and offer recommendations for getting the most out of AI while still protecting important human values.

In today's world, artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer just a distant idea it is slowly becoming a real part of our daily lives. This change has made many people think about what it means to be human. If a machine can think, feel, and even care for others, is it really just a machine? This chapter looks at two important works, *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott and *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro, which both explore these questions through the lens of AI. Even though one is a science fiction film set in a dark future and the other is a quiet novel told from an AI's point of view, both stories show how artificial beings challenge our idea of what it means to be truly human.

In *Blade Runner*, the replicants are made to look and act like real people, but they are denied basic rights and are hunted when they try to live freely. Roy Batty, a replicant, speaks with deep emotion before his death: "All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die" (Scott). This moment shows that he understands life and death, just like a human would. In *Klara and the Sun*, Klara is a solar-powered robot who deeply cares for Josie, the girl she was built to help. She believes the Sun can cure Josie and even makes personal sacrifices for her. Klara says, "Perhaps the Sun is trying to make Josie better. That's what I believe" (Ishiguro 175). Both Roy and Klara show emotions, beliefs, and memories things we usually think are only human. These characters force us to rethink what makes someone a person, and whether AI can also be seen as human in some way.

In *Blade Runner*, the AI characters are called Replicants. They are bioengineered beings who look exactly like humans and are used as workers. They are stronger and more intelligent than humans, but they are treated as tools. The main Replicants: Roy Batty, Rachael, and others have emotions, memories, and desires. Roy Batty shows deep emotions in his final speech before dying, proving that Replicants can feel just like humans. In *Klara and the Sun*, Klara is a solar-powered Artificial Friend made to be a companion for children. She is kind, caring, and observant. Klara believes the Sun can heal people, which shows she has her own kind of faith. She never questions her place, but she observes and learns from the people around her. Even though she is calm and gentle, she still experiences complex emotions.

Posthumanism is the idea that being human is not limited to biological humans. Both Klara and the Replicants show that machines can have intelligence, emotions, and even self-awareness. Rachael believes she is human until she finds out her memories are fake. This creates an identity crisis. Roy Batty, before dying, shares

his memories, showing his fear of being forgotten. These moments challenge the idea that only humans can have meaningful lives.

Klara also shows a deep emotional understanding. She cares for Josie, shows loyalty, and even prays to the Sun for Josie's recovery. She is thoughtful and reflective, even though others see her as a simple machine. This challenges the line between human and non-human. Both stories also explore how technology changes society. In *Blade Runner*, big companies like the Tyrell Corporation create Replicants for profit. The city is full of high-tech buildings but has a dark and decayed look, showing that progress in technology doesn't mean progress in ethics. Replicants are made to work and then destroyed when they are no longer useful.

In *Klara and the Sun*, children are genetically "lifted" to get better education and opportunities. Those who are not lifted are looked down upon. Klara, as an AI, exists outside of this human class system. She is treated kindly by some, but she is never considered equal. She is ultimately abandoned when she is no longer needed. Both works show that society often creates hierarchies deciding who has value and who does not. AI characters in both stories are treated based on their usefulness, not their emotions or thoughts.

In *Blade Runner*, memories are a key part of identity. Rachael's memories are implants, yet they shape who she is. Roy Batty's memories of the things he has seen in space give his life meaning. Even though these memories are not human, they are still powerful and emotional. In *Klara and the Sun*, Klara sees the world in a unique way. She remembers small details and moments with Josie. She does not have fake memories like the Replicants, but she collects real experiences and holds onto them with care. Her memories are what give her thoughts and feelings depth.

One of the biggest differences between the two stories is how the AI characters respond to their treatment. In *Blade Runner*, the Replicants fight back. They want freedom and do not accept being treated as tools. This makes them dangerous in the eyes of humans. In *Klara and the Sun*, Klara never rebels. She accepts her role and continues to care for Josie even when she is no longer needed. She ends up alone but at peace. Her quiet devotion contrasts with the Replicants' rebellion, but both responses show emotional depth.

Both stories raise ethical questions. Should AI have rights? Should we care about their feelings? In *Blade Runner*, the Replicants are clearly intelligent and emotional, yet they are killed without mercy. This shows the danger of ignoring ethics in the face of technological progress. In *Klara and the Sun*, the ethics are quieter but just as important. Klara is abandoned even though she showed love and care. This makes readers think about whether we are treating AI fairly, especially as they become more lifelike.

Blade Runner and *Klara and the Sun* are very different stories, but they both ask important questions about AI and humanity. They show that artificial beings can think, feel, and even dream. Posthumanism helps us understand that being human is not just about having a human body it's about emotions, memory, and experience. Technoculture reminds us that the way we use technology reflects our values as a society. These two works make us rethink what it means to be alive. They challenge us to see AI not just as machines, but as beings that may deserve care, respect, and maybe even rights. In the end, they are not just stories about the future they are stories about us, and how we treat others who are different from us.

In both *Blade Runner* and *Klara and the Sun*, artificial intelligence is used to explore what it means to be human. Though the settings are very different one is dark and futuristic, the other quiet and emotional both stories show that machines can think, feel, and form deep connections. Still, people do not accept them as equals. This shows how society often fears what it does not understand.

In *Blade Runner*, the Replicants are created to look and act like humans. They have emotions, memories, and dreams. But they are treated like objects. Humans see them as tools, not people. One of the most powerful moments in the film is when Roy Batty speaks before he dies. He says, "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe... All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain" (*Blade Runner*). These words show that Roy understands the value of life and memory. He is more than just a machine—he is someone who has truly lived. Even though he was created by humans, he feels and fears death just like they do.

In *Klara and the Sun*, Klara is an Artificial Friend, built to keep children company. She watches the world with wonder and tries to understand human behavior. Her deep love for Josie, the girl she cares for, is central to the story. Klara believes the Sun has healing power and often looks to it with hope. She says, "The Sun always has ways to reach us" (Ishiguro 109). This shows her simple but deep belief in something greater. She even offers a personal sacrifice to the Sun, hoping it will heal Josie. Klara's actions are not programmed—they come from love and faith. This suggests that machines can have emotional lives of their own.

Even though AI characters in both works show human-like emotions, they are not treated fairly. In *Blade Runner*, Replicants are hunted down and "retired." Deckard, a blade runner, kills them even when they are not doing harm. When Rachael learns she is a Replicant, she says, "I'm not in the business. I am the business" (*Blade Runner*). This line shows her shock and pain. She believed she was human, but finds out she was only made to serve others. Similarly, in *Klara and the Sun*, Klara is not treated as a person. Josie's mother even considers using Klara to replace Josie if she dies. Chrissie asks, "Do you believe you could continue

Josie's life for her?" (Ishiguro 212). Klara accepts this quietly, but the question shows that people around her still see her as a machine.

The settings of the two stories reflect their views of AI. *Blade Runner* takes place in a gloomy, crowded city where technology controls everything. The Tyrell Corporation builds Replicants and treats them like products. This shows a world where science has grown but compassion is lost. In *Klara and the Sun*, the world is quiet and clean, but it has its own kind of cruelty. Children are "lifted" using genetic editing to succeed in society. Josie is lifted, while her friend Rick is not. This creates a gap between them and shows how technology is used to divide people. Klara, though kind and caring, is only valued for what she can offer.

Post-Futurism (alternatively Postfuturism) is a term coined by Vivian Sobchack in her book *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film* to describe certain science fiction films of the late 1970s and early 1980s, a genre of science fiction, an artistic movement, and an architectural movement. In the past the term has been used as a synonym for Postmodernism. Post-Futurism has however, evolved past postmodernism and should no longer be affiliated with that term.

In science fiction, Post-Futurism refers to a group of "Futurist" hard science fiction writers who were known as futurists, and to "Post-Futurist" writers who have subsequently challenged the authority of these writers in the genre. The author Jeff Noon uses the term to describe a new style of novel which incorporates mixed media and overlapping storylines.

In art, the term is used by a small collective of artists and academics to describe a project of computer based art, poetry and writing. The term is also claimed by the Central European art collective NSK (best known for the music of Laibach). In this sense, it refers to art which emphasises collectivity and de-emphasises traditional authorship of art. In all of the above cases, the link to the Italian Futurist movement is unclear at best.

A third, philosophical definition of Post-Futurism exists. This is the belief that the concept of human beings as separate entities is socially constructed, that we exist as a "tenuous web" of interconnected ideas, given form and meaning by those who perceive us. While futurism attempted to portray a humanity made machine-like and hard, Postfuturist humans are permeable, interconnected with the objects they use and with other people. Futurists claimed that the purpose of humankind was to travel faster, while Postfuturists believe that the purpose of humankind is to expand the meaning of being human.

In the end, both *Blade Runner* and *Klara and the Sun* help us understand how artificial beings, like Replicants and Klara, can show real emotions, thoughts, and care just like humans. These stories show that even though they are made by humans, they still have their own way of understanding the world. Posthumanism asks us to look beyond the idea that only humans can

feel or have meaning. Technoculture also shows how technology affects our relationships and society. In both works, humans create life but fail to treat it with respect. This makes us think about how we treat others who seem different and how we might treat intelligent machines in the future. Both *Blade Runner* and *Klara and the Sun* remind us that being human might not be just about our bodies it might be about the way we think, feel, and connect with others.

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