

Loneliness in Science Fiction: The Function and Workings of Loneliness in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, “Supertoys Last all Summer Long”, and *Klara and the Sun*.

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## Introduction

“What was becoming clear to me was the extent to which humans, in their wish to escape loneliness, made maneuvers that were very complex and hard to fathom” (Ishiguro 127). This quote is the thought of the artificial friend, Klara in Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel *Klara and the Sun*. Even though Ishiguro is not a science fiction writer, his 2021 novel fits the genre because of its futuristic technology. Klara is an android programmed to befriend her teenage owner who feels lonely in an isolated world. *Klara and the Sun* is one of many science fiction (from here on out shortened to SF) works where loneliness is thematic. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) is often revered as the first SF novel (Roberts 127) and the most prevalent theme in it is loneliness. Victor Frankenstein invents his terrible monster out of missing his mother, and when the creature arises from the table in its horrid form, its strongest wish is to feel included. The plot is set in motion and keeps moving from those internal wishes to connect with others. Followed by Shelley, many SF works similarly include loneliness as a theme in their works. It is present in *A Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (1979), *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985), *Brave New World* (1932), *The Hunger Games* (2008), and *Foundation* (1951) to mention only a few.

From a natural scientific perspective, loneliness is a condition that affects both the body and the mind. Being lonely is as bad for a person as smoking 15 cigarettes in a day, it is worse than obesity (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2010), and it increases the risk of death by 26% (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015). These are the severity of the biological effects that loneliness has on the body. From a cultural perspective, one can draw strings back to the origin story of humans and find loneliness. Adam was lonely so God created Eve to be his companion (Appadurai 645). In contrast, the romantics believed that solitude was crucial to a creative genius. The usage of the term ‘loneliness’ rose greatly, and authors would hide multiple authorship and companionship when they were supposed to be alone to maintain the myth of their solitary genius (Wittler 729-732). In 2011 Sherry Turkle wrote *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* in which she argues that people are unjustifiably positive about the social bonds we form with machines and how an increasing amount of our social lives are outsourced to technology. Even though we are lonely, we are too fearful of intimacy to talk to each other and therefore we mediate our relationships through phones and computers (Turkle 1).

It is impossible to pinpoint technology as the main transgressor in this issue, but as technologies perform an increasing number of tasks in our lives, we also have increasingly intimate relationships with them. We sleep next to our phones or wear watches that measure the number of

steps we take or our quality of sleep. SF offers a valuable framework wherefrom to speculate on loneliness in a technologized world. Yet loneliness in SF is grossly under-researched. In this thesis, my main aim is to explore the effect and function of loneliness in science fiction in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), “Supertoys last all Summer Long” (1969), and *Klara and the Sun* (2021)<sup>1</sup>. These works were chosen because they include depictions of advanced technology, androids, and because they focus on loneliness rather than isolation. In the theory section, it will be explained how isolation and loneliness differ in more detail but, to explain briefly, isolation indicates physical separation from others whereas loneliness is a feeling that can be felt in company. Therefore, I have rejected primary material where characters’ loneliness stems primarily from lack of physical access to others (for example, that they are the last person on Earth). Future research must examine such an angle. I made this choice because I believe that a focus on loneliness instead of isolation will enable exploration into how certain relationship cultures or material realities shape loneliness. When social technology is introduced in the real world, it is usually in android or animal robot form, but both are essentially robots. Since I wish to research social relationships as they function in relation to technology, all primary materials include android characters in them because these androids serve social functions and therefore bridge the gap between social and technology.

To answer my thesis, I am including a definition of loneliness in the theory section to categorize loneliness in characters. Here I will also account for Sara Ahmed’s emotion theory from *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014). This theory will enable me to understand how loneliness emerges as well as travels among characters. Since all primary material include androids, I will review the research concerning androids. I will also review transhumanism since this philosophy is valuable in understanding the workings of the storyworlds. The analysis will be split into three chapters where the first analyzes *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* The second analyzes “Supertoys Last All Summer Long”, and the third one analyzes *Klara and the Sun*. In all three works the workings of loneliness will be explored using Ahmed’s emotion theory. The discussion/conclusion will compare the different texts and condense the theme of loneliness in SF.

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<sup>1</sup> I have marked the original years that texts were published. The versions of texts that are used for this paper are different, however. The short story “Supertoys” is also featured in the novel called *Supertoys Last all Summer Long and Other Stories of Future Time*.

## Theory

### Loneliness definition

Loneliness has numerous definitions and is viewed dissimilarly either as pathology (in psychiatry), as a condition of life (in existentialism) or as the enabler of calm and creative genius across fields which makes it a somewhat elusive term. It is also important to note that loneliness can be viewed in a positive light, but this paper is interested in the negative affect that it produces. Loneliness has a history of connoting positive affect or even enabling art or genius in literature, especially during the Romantic period. As an example, William Wordsworth's poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1802) describes the pleasures of solitude. The simile "as a cloud" (Wordsworth, line 1) indicates that the state of being alone enables the poem speaker to connect and fuse with nature. In lines 19-24: "For oft, when on my couch I lie/In vacant or in pensive mood,/They flash upon that inward eye/Which is the bliss of solitude;/And then my heart with pleasure fills,/And dances with the daffodils" Wordsworth expresses pleasurable affect from being alone; one capable of transforming his mood from 'pensive' to 'blissful'. Based on the last line of the poem it is interpretable that the solitary recollection enables Wordsworth to contemplate on and thereby transform his experience into art.

In the former interpretation, I do not use 'loneliness' to describe the emotions of the poetic speaker, since those emotions cannot be categorized as loneliness in this paper. Instead, I have used 'solitude' to describe the feelings of Wordsworth. Synonyms for loneliness might feature in this paper but will never be conflated. These are isolation, aloneness, and solitude, etc. I

am choosing now to define their meaning to specify that even if characters are described as solitary or alone it does not necessarily mean that they are also lonely. The state of loneliness is unique since it can also be felt among other people. Isolation indicates loneliness caused by a physical separation from others. Aloneness indicates the neutral, self-elected state of being without others, and solitude connotes 'reclusiveness' – being alone by choice and perhaps even finding happiness in that state, such as in the Wordsworth poem. Solitude in my definition is also influenced by Romantic ideals of being alone – the subject must expect some positive change or outcome from the reclusive experience whether that be creation or personal development. A definition is also needed to categorize loneliness consistently. If a character does not adequately show signs of loneliness according to the loneliness definition of this paper, they will therefore not be called lonely even if other definitions might allow such an interpretation.

For my definition of loneliness, I am affiliating myself with Perlman and Peplau. Their definition of loneliness sounds: “Loneliness is a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship, which happens when there is a mismatch between the quantity and quality of the social relationships that we have, and those that we want” (Perlman and Peplau 1981) (note that this definition is condensed from the entire article. It is the most common definition of loneliness, and is always quoted this way by other academics). This definition emphasizes loneliness as a subjective state, which means that other people cannot tell the lonely person that their feelings are not valid. Moreover, when the definition relies on subjective affect it is at the cost of a quantifiable, objective state of loneliness. What one person might count as loneliness; another might consider solitude. The definition also poses that loneliness means that there is a mismatch between the reality of the relationship(s) that the lonely person has and the ones that they want. They might not have the number of friends that they would like, or they do not have the emotional connection that they desire to their existing friends. In this paper, characters are viewed as lonely if they express or can be interpreted as wanting higher quality or quantity of relations than what they already have. Since loneliness is subjective, the best indicator of loneliness is a declaration of loneliness affect by the character, but a character will also be categorized as lonely if they express a wish for increasement in number of relationships or relationship quality while having little or no positive contact with others. This last criterion might seem paradoxical to the reader since loneliness, again, by definition is subjective, and while the paper agrees that no-one but the individual feels their own emotions, it also recognizes that not every character possesses complete self-awareness (because of gender expectation, or age, etc. something which will be expanded on in the analysis) or is reliable in their statements. Therefore, I assert that complete reliance on character statements will excessively restrict the number of characters allowed into the loneliness category.

### Cultural Politics of Emotion

I intend to interpret my literary works through the lens of the outwards-in model that is configured in Sara Ahmed’s book: *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* from 2014. Ahmed’s approach is a social constructivist one, where emotions are looked at as they exist culturally and are mediated through signs. Since I intend to explore the theme of loneliness in SF, I believe it relevant to explore the emotions elicited by loneliness, and regard how these function and make meaning in SF narratives. SF narratives are of interest in this regard as they conjure loneliness because their worldbuilding structures often herald isolation (as in dystopias or space exploration narratives) or features

narratives that explore human nature (as in a scientific experiment where a variable is isolated to study it). This paper will elaborate on Ahmed's chapter on pain and love, but only limitedly account for the other emotions and with no note on the chapter on queerness and feminism. In relation to loneliness, I will use her model more generally. With this action, I mean to use its core elements such as the notion of 'sticky' object feelings that circulate from person to person and translate these core elements to work on loneliness.

Historically, emotion has been viewed as a faculty 'beneath' reason or rationality. Emotionality was conflated with negative qualities such as femininity, since women are perceived as worse at controlling their emotions, and emotion was believed to prevent someone from adequately making judgments about a given situation (Ahmed 3). Emotions also belonged 'in' the body, and one should try to transcend the bodily urges to amalgamate with reason which, again, was considered impossible for a woman. This negative view of emotion is spurred by evolutionary thinking where Darwin argued that emotionality had a prehistoric role that had escaped into civilization (qtd. Ahmed 3). To be emotional was to act so primitively that you would place yourself hierarchically beneath animals (Ahmed 3). Ahmed argues that part of this hierarchical thinking relating to emotion has been displaced with a hierarchy between different emotions: "some emotions are 'elevated' as signs of cultivation, whilst others remain 'lower' as signs of weakness (ibid. 3). Moreover, Western society's interpretation of emotion ensures a social hierarchy, where emotions are attributed to the bodies that they are thought to inhabit, and this transforms "what is 'lower' or 'higher' into bodily traits" (ibid. 4).

Ahmed draws from Marxism and psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is present namely as Ahmed agrees that there are emotions within the individual that are subconscious so that the individual is not aware of certain emotions. From Marxism, she borrows the notion of 'economy' but instead of product, it is the emotion that circulates and accumulates affective value (ibid. 11). In her affective model she rejects both the psychological and sociological way of looking at emotion although she borrows from crowd psychology which is affiliated with sociology. The psychological way of looking at emotions as a 'state' or something that one 'has' is too reliant on an ontological understanding of emotion, which Ahmed rejects. By rejecting an ontology of emotion, emotion becomes performative and socially constructed. She is inspired by crowd theory because this model allows emotion to not originate in the individual but acquiesce it to move 'outside' and turn inwards. However, in crowd theory, the crowd is replaced with the individual as the one 'having' emotions which again is too ontological an understanding. Instead, Ahmed argues that emotions circulate

dynamically between bodies and create the surfaces between themselves and the ‘objects’ that they come into contact with (ibid. 9-10). This reworking of emotion means that emotion comes not to rely on its positioning embedded into either the individual or the crowd; it is mobile. In this way “surfaces of bodies ‘surface’ as an effect of the impressions left by others” (ibid. 10). Emotions leave indents or impressions on other people, and this is the way that emotion can circulate from person to person. This also means that the subject does not possess the emotion. People are surfaces states wherefrom objects of emotion circulate (ibid. 11). The relation between emotion and object is inspired somewhat by *Passions of the Soul* where the ‘passions’ concerning objects do not arise because of their inherent nature but rather because of their attribution to either harm or benefit (ibid. 5). From this, Ahmed infers that people ‘read’ the contact that they have with objects which makes them capable of translating the object into ‘good’ or ‘bad’. This reading can happen already before contact with an object and attributes certain emotions to the object that are derived from former histories and experiences. Emotions are shaped by contact with objects which means that emotions are not inherent within neither the subject nor the object. Nonetheless, objects are often attributed to causing the emotions that contact with them elicits (ibid. 6) – “the circulation of objects of emotion involves the transformation of others into objects of feeling” (ibid. 11).

In practice, Ahmed accounts for the emotions of hate, pain, disgust, love, shame, and fear while she also showcases how these emotions shape the realities of queer bodies and in relation to feminism. Feelings of injury can turn into hate for the ones perceived as causing the injury, and this hate is circulated in an affective economy. Fear intensifies from the possibility that the object of fear might pass one by. Disgust leaves the feelers to want to eject ‘the disgusting’ from the community, and love and shame are emotions where objects are taken in and deemed as ‘mine’ or ‘ours’ (ibid. 15). “In both these chapters (...) the objects of emotions can be ‘ideals’, and the way in which bodies, including bodies of nations, can take shape through how they approximate such ideals” (ibid. 16).

Ahmed does not examine the working of loneliness but that does not mean that a framework on loneliness cannot be imagined through the scope of her theory. The emotion may be read by the subject as despair, while it still stems from deficiency. When a subject is lonely, there is either no circulation of objects or inadequate circulation of these. For an isolated subject, there is no access to object circulation. However, for subjects who feel lonely in social situations, something in the relational encounter must make the surface states of the subjects ‘un-sticky’. When subjects become ‘non-stick’ surfaces, object feelings that others circulate to them do not ‘stick’. Loneliness



can ‘stick’ to subjects from the external world or it can travel between bodies that come into contact.

Pain has to do with the possibility of damage to the surface of the skin (ibid. 23). “It is through sensual experiences such as pain that we come to have a sense of our skin as bodily surface (see Prosser 1998: 43), as something that keeps us apart from others, and as something that ‘mediates’ the relationship between internal or external, or inside and outside” (ibid. 24). Ahmed uses the image of stabbing your toe on a table to exemplify: in the stabbing, the surface of the table left an impression on the body and this impression is what the body attributes pain to. Surfaces and boundaries materialize only in the encounter with others. Pain is interpreted and feels a certain way because of former impressions left in former interactions with others, which are often occluded from us. When pain enters the body, the pain is felt because of the transgression of the border between the object and the surface of the body, and when there is no external object in sight the mind creates an image of one (ibid. 25-27). To fill the empty space of the object, we construct images of weapons or objects, and we try to push the pain out of the body. The interpretation of the pain might be read as caused by the other rather than the encounter with the other and from there, the one in pain comes to associate the other with the negative impression in a way that might ontologize the pain within their being (ibid. 27-28). There is a loneliness in pain stemming from the fact that no one else can feel our pain, but this loneliness only requires it to be communicated to and acknowledged by others (ibid. 29-31).

Love is imperative in pursuing happiness. Ahmed refers to Freud who argues that love should be at the center of everything to avoid suffering. However, love also makes the subject vulnerable to suffering because love requires openness to hurt, since love means that one must depend on someone who is ‘not myself’ and could “take away the possibility of love” (ibid. 125). She distinguishes between love as identification (love as being) and idealization (love as having). In love as identification, the subject wishes to be like the object to move closer to them, and in idealization, the subject desires to possess the object (ibid. 126). Ahmed again borrows these concepts from Freud’s psychoanalysis where the child wishes to be like his father (identification) and in this identification, the boy must also have what the father has, which means to have (idealize) the mother. This distinction between idealization and identification entails a disidentification with the mother. When the mother or other women like her takes the place of the ideal object, the value of this is not inherent in the object itself. Rather it is the valorizing or investment in the object that “accumulate value for the subject” – the time and labor spent to

enhance the affective quality of the object (ibid. 127). Ahmed argues that this idealization ‘makes’ likeness where “the lover and the object approximate an ideal, an approximation which binds them together” and buttresses her argument with the notion in heterosexual love that good reproduction is replicating the couple (making likeness) (ibid. 128). “Furthermore, the distinction of love-as-having from love-as-being secures a restricted domain of loveable subjects, *through the imperative to idealise some objects and not others*, whose ideality ‘returns’ to me” (ibid. 129). There is a need for approval from ‘loved others’ to love and idealize an object since this is the only way to reach identification, and this restricts the subject from loving all (ibid. 129).

### Androids

This paper examines works with androids which is why this literature review will focus partly on these as they figure in literature and culture. This review will consider the literature most relevant for the paper while it will still acknowledge the other ways that the corpus has been interpreted. The definition of android is “a mobile robot usually with a human form” according to Merriam Webster (“Android”). Literature considering androids has spawned over a myriad of different themes. Since androids, as the definition reads, possesses a human form, they are often receivers of that metaphorical status of the ‘other’. Since they can be made to look identical to humans, they figure into an unknown space of the ‘almost’ human, and it is this problem of allocating them to either side of the human-machine binary which makes them interesting characters in SF narratives. The anthropomorphization of androids enables the author to question humanness as a category. This point is made in the introduction of vol. 49, no. 2 of *Neohelicon* by Yuqin Jiang and Péter Hajdu, who also points that both *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* And *Klara and the Sun* invite this interpretation.

In his book *Androids and Intelligent Networks in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (2013), Kevin LaGrandeur traces the roots of the artificial servant back to the *Iliad* (9). In the end of book 18, the god Hephaistos employs android appearing creatures: “There were golden handmaids also who worked for him, and were like real young women, with sense and reason [noos], voice also and strength, and all the learning of the immortals” (Hom. Il. 18.388). The handmaids are made of gold but are still like women in other regards, and this make them appear much like the android figure of SF today. LaGrandeur’s premise does not solely, rely on androids but the theme of the artificial servant is one that is well known in modern android fiction. According to him, those themes that permeate modern cybernetics stem from an “archetypal drive that pits human ingenuity

against nature via artificial proxies” (LaGrandeur 1). Through analysis of different ancient and pre-modern works and artifacts he also concludes that “we envision artificial slaves as prosthetic devices to expand the natural limits of those who make them; but sometimes, because of their very power and their makers’ lack of wisdom, they become virtual proxies for their creators (ibid.).

Two things are worth noting from LaGrandeur: one is the theme of android as slave and the other is the notion that the technology, we create will overtake us. Both are themes that are extensively researched in literature and appears as a reoccurring theme in SF. In terms of the latter, the fear of robots turning against humans is one of the most pervasive themes in SF, particularly in the bodyless shape of computer system (Hermann 3), but Isaac Asimov’s Frankenstein Complex is closer to LaGrandeur’s more archaic notion of artificial slaves that overturn their creators. In Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), Dr. Frankenstein creates a monster who kills its master. The meaning behind the masterpiece is that one must not play God, and to point a finger towards science in the same breath. Scientists should be careful to not create something more powerful than ourselves (McCauley 153-154). The solution to Asimov was to create laws that robots could follow and that would ensure their benevolence towards humans. Just as the Frankenstein complex was interwoven into his texts, so were the three robotic laws stating that:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law (qtd. Ibid. 153-157).

As a part of the Golden Age SF writers, Asimov’s interpretation of science was positive comparing to the otherwise Faustian tales that characterized literature at the time (Roberts 188), although he has been criticized for not entirely eliminating the Frankenstein Complex in his own works (See Beuchamp 1980).

The android as a slave, that interpretation that in many ways is an archaic motif, has been researched extensively in contemporary literature. As audiences and readers, we feel bad for androids that are treated poorly and more so than we do for robots. Alexandre Gefen argues that android slavery in SF can be viewed as a metaphor for slavery of black people in the US as these people were thought of as pieces of technology (137), and an array of scholars examine android slavery in other ways (LaGrandeur, Gefen, Banerjee, Vint, Süt Güngör, Toth to mention a few).

Other scholars such as Masahiro Mori (1970) have read the android oppositely as ‘creepy’. Mori, a Japanese roboticist, examines public affinity with androids and robots, theorizing that public affinity rises with increased human similarity until a certain point where affinity with the robot drops. Stephen Cave and Kanta Dihal writes in “AI Will Always Love You: Three Contradictions in Imaginings of Intimate Relations With Machines” (2021), Cave and Dihal uses the notion of the uncanny valley to explain the theme of alienation that occurs in much SF. According to them, the uncanniness of the machine characters functions as vehicle to confront the audience or reader with the non-humanness and remind them that their humanoid relations might only love or care for them because they have been programmed to do so. The android can never escape their uncanniness, and in the narrative, there will inevitably come a moment where their anthropomorphism fails. Cave and Dihal, furthermore, categorizes android (or AI)-human relationships into three categories as they exist in fiction: friendship, family, and romantic love. Western fiction is filled with tales of failed relationships that conjure broken hearts or feelings of abandonment or rejection. In SF “artificial companions promise to eliminate such problems” (Cave & Dihal 108). Androids do not die, and they can be programmed to never leave us or reject us (Cave & Dihal 123).

### Transhumanism

In this paper transhumanism posits a relevant lens from where to inspect the three literary works because the storyworlds of these are all to some extent affected by transhumanist ideals.

Transhumanism is a sub-theory under the broader umbrella term of posthumanism. However, transhumanism is an umbrella term in itself, containing multitudes of political ideologies such as anarcho-transhumanism, libertarian transhumanism, democratic transhumanism, and techno-progressivism. This paper will take a holistic approach to transhumanism and not limit itself to one political ideology or one figure or theorist within the ‘ism’. Instead, the focus of the paper will be on an overview of the broader theory. Transhumanism can be defined as: “The intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities” (Various 2003).

Natasha Vita-More traces transhumanism to Dante Alighieri’s *Divina Commedia* which was completed around 1321 and notes that the term appeared in a variety of ways throughout

history. She credits Julian Huxley and Max More as the founders of transhumanism (Vita-More 50-51), although Huxley's essay "Transhumanism" was published in 1957 while More's "Transhumanism: Towards a Futurist Philosophy" was published in 1990. Britannica credits Huxley as the founder (Ostberg). In "Transhumanism" (1957) Huxley writes that human life is filled with misery with no alternative but through science human life will be made better. This should happen through enlightenment principles of eradicating ignorance for the benefit of rationality. Huxley classifies transhumanism as "man remaining but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature" (76). Transhumanism rose in popularity during the 1980s with the invention of the internet which allowed transhumanists to connect and spread ideas as well as the emergence of new technologies expedited by the internet. The rise of transhumanism also meant a divide between transhumanists, and technophobes and bioethicists (Vita-More 51). Famously, transhumanism has been criticized as the 'most dangerous idea in the world' by Francis Fukuyama (Fukuyama), while it has similarly been opposed by bioconservatives (More, "Philosophy of" 13).

The core values and goals were codified by transhumanist Max More in 1990 in "Extropian Principles". These were: 'boundless expansion', 'self-transformation', 'dynamic optimism', and 'intelligent technology'. In boundless expansion lies the idea of rejecting natural limitations. The transhumanist relies on rationalism. Conserving the body or other parts of the human reality that is deemed 'natural' is irrational, and dependent on religion or ideology. Therefore, the transhumanist strives to conquer death, augment or modify the body, expand intelligence, and inhabit space, etc. (More, "Extropian" 17). Self-transformation means, again, that religion and mysticism must be rejected to the benefit of rational thought, while transhumanists should continuously reassess their values which they will never force on others. In dynamic optimism, it follows that the transhumanist should not although problems occur be lost in pessimist thinking (ibid. 17-18). The transhumanist must keep an optimistic mindset. Intelligent technology entails that technology is viewed as the best method of accomplishing the goals of transhumanism, but technology is not the goal in itself (ibid. 18).

Transhumanists believe that there is nothing holy or determined about human nature. Humans should strive for continuous evolution, and while we should be mindful of how and why technology is applied, it should still be done to better the human condition. Human nature is: "just one point along an evolutionary pathway and we can learn to reshape our own nature in ways we deem desirable and valuable. By thoughtfully, carefully, and yet boldly applying technology to

ourselves, we can become something no longer accurately described as human – we can become posthuman” (More, “Philosophy of” 4). From this quote, the reader will understand that the philosophical core of transhumanism is to transcend humanity as we know it today. I have noted more than once that transhumanism relies on rational thought. Transhumanism is rooted in the Enlightenment ideals of rationalism and is committed to meliorism while rejecting apologism (ibid. 14).

Transhumanism also advocates that other sentient beings outside of humans should receive personhood, Zoltan Istvan wrote the Transhumanist Bill of Rights (revised thrice) which states that sentient beings (Human beings, including genetically modified humans; cyborgs; digital intelligences; intellectually enhanced, previously non-sapient animals; any species of plant or animal which has been enhanced to possess the capacity for intelligent thought; and other advanced sapient life forms.) are entitled to a range of different rights such as the right to live, the right to pursue a life without suffering, extending life, individual free choice, and more.

## Analysis

The analysis is divided into three chapters that analyze the three works separately. The first chapter is on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, while the next is on “Supertoys Last All Summer Long”, and the last is on *Klara and the Sun*. This structure is chronological in terms of publishing year and through different themes it focuses on the way that loneliness ‘sticks’ to people and moves from body to body.

### Chapter 1: Do Lonely Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

This first chapter will analyze *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* from 1968 by Philip K. Dick.

There is an insurmountable amount of literature written about *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (this title will hereafter be abbreviated to *Electric Sheep*), and the literature spans a wide array of topics and points. This is both the case because of the age of *Electric Sheep*, which has allowed many scholars to comment on the novel, but also because *Electric Sheep* is a canon novel of SF. It is, however, possible to categorize the topics that are most often touched on, but not without some extent of condensing and possible reduction of the complexities the articles have to offer. Moreover, there are bound to be outliers that fit into none of the categories that I offer here. I divide the scholarship on *Electric Sheep* into simulacra/simulacrum, posthumanism, emotion,

mental illness, othering, ethics, and dystopia but, again, bear in mind that these categories are in no way exhaustive.

In terms of what the dystopian reading covers, some scholars read *Electric Sheep* ecocritically. For example, Aaron A. Cloyd (2015) reads the novel as a comment on wilderness and argues that Dick aims for a shift in environmental thinking that frames nature as a place of environmental conditions rather than a remote place for escape. Hatdce Övgü Tüzün (2018) focuses on the dystopian city as well as the relationship between human agency and advanced technology and thereby he focuses more generally on impending doom and dystopia in general. The novel has also been read as a dystopia by Halil Özdemir Sadullah Seyidoğlu (2022) although this article is not available in English. As a reading of mental illness Riccardo Gramantieri (2020) is of interest as he reads the characters as alexithymic which is a diagnosis given to people who are unable to describe their emotions. Gramantieri moves away from a reading of characters as schizophrenic (for a schizophrenic reading see Enns (2006), and Hayles (1999)). In terms of othering, Sherryl Vint (2007) discusses speciesism and how animals appear in *Electric Sheep* as commodity fetishism, and Adam Pottle (2013) reads the novel as a critique of the American eugenics' movement. Josh Toth (2013) relates ethics to eating. He asks: "if our sense of self demands that we 'consume' others, how can we possibly relate empathically to others without risking our ability to assert and maintain ourselves?" (Toth 66). According to Fırat Karadaş (2021) Enlightenment ideals of controlling nature leaves a dystopic world where people have trouble distinguishing between the real and the simulacrum. Jill Galvan (1997) offers a posthuman reading where he asks what it means to be human when technology and 'human' merges. According to him, the android figure invokes a crisis of subjectivity. Moreover, *Electric Sheep* is also read with a focus on emotions. Jordana Greenblatt (2016) notes the paradox of the expectations of maleness contrasted with the required empathetic feeling to make a person human. Wang and Hao (2022) similarly interpret the novel with a focus on emotion and the posthuman. The novel has also been read in terms of feelings of loneliness by Miljana Lj. Dorovic (2022). In her article, Dorovic argues that humans program their emotions which makes them more android-like while androids, on the other hand, want to be more human. This, she states, is inverted parallelism and loneliness is the driving force behind it. This analysis will back up Dorovic's claim that loneliness is the driving force behind the inverted parallelism, but it disagrees on a number of arguments such as the characterization of Iran who Dorovic calls Iran "perhaps the saddest and loneliest of all characters". Likewise, Dorovic does not include a definition of loneliness which inhibits her from adequately categorizing characters or make claims

as to why the reader should consider them as such. This paper also disagrees that the use of the empathy box is a sign of pathology. Dorovic argues that the use of the empathy box is pathological because characters ‘depend’ on it, and according to her it isolates characters from each other. Iran’s “absent-mindedness and detachment from her everyday reality is so potent that it reduces her presence in her marital life and apartment to mere physical existence” (Dorovic 153). In this way, it is the empathy box that is at fault for the non-functioning relationship because Iran disappears into it and leaves Rick alone. Moreover, the use of the empathy box, leaves the user completely ‘detached’ from reality, which makes using it pathological. Dorovic argues that the use of the empathy box is a sign that a character is lonely, and while this is probable, she disregards that this behavior could be a healthy coping mechanism for characters that have no other way of authentic connection with others even if the connection is simulated. Lastly, Dorovic claims that Rick seeks an emotional connection with Iran, who prefers to escape into virtual reality:

“When talking about his wife, Rick says, ‘She has nothing to give me’, and desperately cries, ‘[M]ost androids I’ve known have more vitality and desire to live than my wife’ (Dick, 2017, p. 88). Rick thus feels deserted, abandoned, and perhaps even slightly betrayed by his wife and has to find a way to deal with all those emotions without her help. He wants his wife’s love, approval, support, and connection whereas she is unable to reciprocate” (152).

She then goes on to state that: “The feeling of rejection and the cold treatment from his wife have undoubtedly led Rick to seek solace somewhere else” (153). Whereafter, she recounts the affair with Rachel, and thus makes it seem like the affair is Iran’s fault for not responding to Decker’s emotions. However, Rick never voices any of these emotions to Iran. Instead, he tries to distract Iran from her emotions that he deem irrational, and when Iran gives in and lets Rick decide her mood, he dials a “594; pleased acknowledgment of husband’s superior wisdom in all matters” (Dick 4), which reconceals Iran’s underlying problems of disconnect with the world instead of bringing them out where they can be dealt with. It is true that Iran shows “no support” (Dick 75) in relation to her husband’s dream of owning a goat (animals are special in the storyworld. This will be expanded upon later in the analysis) and acts selfishly at times but, again, the only time it seems that Rick asks for emotional support is after he buys a goat, an action which threatens financial ruin on the couple, and in this scene it makes sense that Iran should be distracted from acknowledging Rick’s feelings.



What distinguishes my analysis from former readings is the novel take on characterizing loneliness through a definition. Like Dorovic, I will look for loneliness markers and answer what function loneliness takes in the novel, but while Dorovic limits loneliness to be a driver of inverted parallelism, she never explains the broader significance of this effect. I will take a more holistic approach and answer how and why loneliness confuses the boundary between the android and the human but also what broader significance loneliness holds in relation to the exploration of the human condition.

### The sound of silence

The novel offers different isolation markers such as silence and emptiness. These descriptions of the setting all contribute to the lonely atmosphere. Here, I am thinking especially of silence and empty space which both take on a near-embodiment in their description, meaning that they become tangible and are personified. The reader is introduced to ‘emptiness’ already on page 2: “‘And I heard the building, this building; I heard the –’ She gestured. ‘Empty apartments,’ Rick said. Sometimes he heard them at night when he was supposed to be asleep” (Dick 2). Emptiness is the absence of sound, and yet Iran and Rick Deckard (from now on referred to as Iran and Rick) both ‘hear’ the sound of it. The use of the hyphen which notes Iran’s pause establishes the emptiness as an entity of gravitas with an unspeakable quality to it. Rick’s final thought assumes a forbidden allure from being faultily awake, and the collective framing of the emptiness evokes both mythology and concreteness. While Iran and Rick can dismiss the void, its absence of human presence inflicts greater devastation on Isidore.

Isidore inhabits an environment reminiscent of a void (Dorovic 150) that threatens to “eat him alive” (ibid. 151). The kippleized setting with its emptiness and barrenness represents a world that has reached its decadent peak, has lost all vitality, and is dying. The kipple, which refers to the accumulation of useless objects, represents the physical manifestation of this entropic decay, and the void-like setting suggests the absence of meaningful connections. In contrast to the others, Isidore has no way of disregarding the silence with a mood organ. He, as opposed to the others, has no escape and copes only by drowning out the silence with tv (ibid.). Therefore, Isidore’s predicament is far direr than that of Rick and Iran who reside in a comparatively densely populated area by the standards of the story world. He is the character most affected by the entropic ruin, and due to his circumstances, silence begins to embody the entropy:

“Silence. It flashed from the woodwork and the walls; it smote him with an awful, total power, as if generated by a vast mill. (...) it oozed out, meshing with the empty and wordless descent of itself from the fly-specked ceiling. It managed in fact to emerge from every object within his range of vision, as if it - the silence meant to supplant all things tangible. (...) he experienced the silence as visible and, in its own way, alive. Alive! He had often felt its austere approach before; when it came it burst in without subtlety, evidently unable to wait. The silence of the world could not rein back its greed. Not any longer. Not when it had virtually won. He wondered, then, if the others who had remained on Earth experienced the void this way” (Dick 15).

The imagery of silence works to both materialize the silence and turn it into a beast-like entity. The silence first ‘flashes’ from the walls before it smites Isidore with force, it then ‘rises’ before ‘unleashing’ itself just to ‘ooze’ out and mesh with itself. Silence moves up and down, collects itself to a striking force, and coalesces with all the objects of the apartment. At this stage, it reaches an all-damming presence where it dematerializes the objects and supplants them with emptiness instead. Isidore also claims that the silence is ‘alive’ and paradoxically it is not silent or intangible as the objects it replaces but rather noisy and visible, and even if it begins as a bodyless presence, it soon gains material form and is personified through the description of its affect. Silence suddenly has human qualities such as an impulsive nature, rejoicing in winning, and feeling greed. Moreover, this greed must be ‘reined’ back which creates an image of the silence as a beast and not an anthropomorphic figure. Later, Isidore’s feelings about the silence turn apathetic as he begins to think about the entropic ruin that is inevitable in lieu of his death. Silence moves from a devouring state to one finished with its meal. Now, it is a “lungless, all-penetrating, masterful world-silence” (ibid.). Notably, silence has now become ‘lungless’ despite how it was formerly described as noisy, but this only contributes to its otherworldliness that enables it to make noise without the physical attribute required for it.

I am choosing to employ silence and emptiness interchangeably as they both describe the “absence of life” (ibid. 3), which adds an extra layer to the understanding of silence/emptiness because the absence of life is ‘death’. Dick, therefore, equalizes silence and death. Although the interpretation of silence may appear overly pathologized, this paper reads silence in this way to account for the despair experienced by the characters in response to their loneliness. The absence of life equates to death and when coupled with the absence of living things, it evokes a profound sense of existential dread embodied in the storyworld. Since silence and emptiness are signs of aloneness,

a character's negative affect associated with these factors can be read as the character expressing latent loneliness. Not all characters have the preconditions necessary to acknowledge their loneliness either because of societal expectations or because of the sedating effects of the mood organ. The object of loneliness that is conjured by emptiness 'sticks' to the people who come into contact with it. Therefore, loneliness can be circulated between bodies and people are enabled to leave each other empty. Silence and emptiness are prevalent in the world although not mentioned frequently.

### Hierarchies

The society of *Electric Sheep* promotes empathy as the highest-ranking emotion, but this does not make sense in practice since characters like Isidore who has a heightened sense of empathy, are not thought of as superior or valuable by others (Galvan 415). Instead, characters like Rick and Phil Resch are the winners of the system as they monetize from their low empathy which enables them to kill androids for profit while none of the more empathetic characters (Isidore and to an extent Iran) are rewarded socially or monetarily. In general, the system appears hypocritical. It is one that claims 'human' to be an ontological category while applying meaningless criteria to it to 'cleanse' it from undesirable individuals (Galvan 514), but really the categories of human, android, and chickenhead are culturally constructed. Rachel Rosen can fall in love yet she does not possess human rights as Resch do despite his lack of empathy. Similarly, Isidore effectively loses his personhood when he fails the intelligence test (Pottle np), and all of this supports that the criteria for who passes as 'human' encapsulate a different group than those that are biologically human. Galvan notes that the culturally constructed relegation of androids:

"which Rick adheres to in order to identify his android victims, not only nominally separates human from the machine, but also helps to insulate the human community: if humans alone have the power to empathize, then their only emotionally profitable, mutually beneficial relationships occur with each other. The android's deficiency patently expels it from the collective - any collective, for that matter, even one of other androids" (414).

This means that the relegation of androids due to their supposed lesser empathy isolates humans so that they can only relate to each other and repeats the process with androids. "[A]s the party line goes, the android lacks the capacity for fellow feeling for its own kind as much as it does for human beings" (Galvan 414).

Even if it is clear to the reader that the human category is culturally constructed, the characters in *Electric Sheep* still attempt to fit into it to maintain their human rights which creates a legitimacy crisis. Citizens must prove empathetic, but empathy is immeasurable (Wang & Hao 481). Wang and Hao claim that the Voight Kampff test is non-scientific. What it measures is not emotions, certainly not empathy and the sample of animals is not comprehensive enough (418). Both Rick and Resch take the test and fall into the human category. Rick seems to have some empathy which will be expanded on later, but Resch is a psychopath, meaning that lacks empathy. This brings into question what the test is actually measuring, since non-empathetic individuals should all fall out of the ‘human’ category. To account for the crisis of legitimacy, Mercerism has been established, and “owning and caring for an animal is a sign of one’s social and economic status and also an expression of one’s humanity” (Vint 112). The relationship between empathy and Mercerism is apparent in Rick’s conversation with Barbour: “if I had two animals and you didn’t have any, I’d be helping deprive you of true fusion with Mercer” (Dick 7). Animal ownership is believed to be a requirement to fuse properly, and to fuse is to be truly human since this act requires empathy, something that only humans possess. As empathy cannot really be measured, people attempt to perform it instead. Rick’s obsession with animal ownership is motivated solely by its status and monetary value and not by caring. Empathy is easily performed through ownership rather than actual empathetic actions, and this positions humans with monetary resources over those with less. Moreover, the pejorative ‘chickenhead’ appears paradoxical when animals are supposedly sacred (Pottle 8). The negative connotations associated with ‘chickenhead’ appear perplexing if a chicken is sacred, and from this ironic incident it is clear that even though Mercerism is supposed to not be hierarchical (Vint 117), the society in *Electric Sheep* divides people into ‘more’ and ‘less’ human (Pottle 8). These criteria are, furthermore, not transparent, but are rooted in arbitrary divisions while they still favor specific social hierarchies – those with money can buy more and bigger animals and are therefore symbolically more human than those without this opportunity. This also makes empathy easy to perform. Empathy does not have to be enacted through the psyche or through actions but can be acquired in a store.

Emotion has typically been attributed to femininity, with women being viewed as unable to tame their feelings, while men were reasonable (Ahmed 3). However, in *Electric Sheep*, society is promulgating emotion as the most significant criterion for the legal category of personhood, and in the case of many Western male subjects, this creates an internal conflict. Others have previously performed emotional labor to compensate for the flattened affect of the male subjects, and this

deficient affective performance is one that males have been entitled to (Greenblatt 58), but the new society creates a categorical conflict between the category of 'human' and 'male'. The human category requires a surplus of emotion while the category of 'male' requires a flattening of emotion (ibid. 49). Rick feels irritability towards Iran's empathy for the androids and is perplexed by her insistence on dialing for self-accusatory depression which he calls "self-perpetuating" and "dangerous" (Dick 3). Negative affect is not valorized in a world where it can be escaped, but Rick is also hostile because Iran's irrationality makes him 'feel' even though he did not program the mood organ to make him do so (Greenblatt 49). However, it is a theological imperative to fuse with Mercer to share and feel empathy and the fusing process is painful with people risking their lives and coming out of the simulation with physical wounds. Therefore, negative affect should logically have value, but Rick's relationship to emotion is characterized by a nonchalant distance: "he did not care to experience it directly" (Dick 3). Authentic negative emotion is a hassle that should be overcome. For Rick, of course, it is not only negative affect that seems difficult to perform but also empathy, which is why Rick rarely uses the empathy box like his wife. Empathy is a female emotion (Greenblatt 43). In general, Rick does his best to "ensure 'appropriate' (gendered) affect" (ibid. 48). Rick's position on how emotion should be appropriated is therefore a reaction to this crisis where it is better to deny emotions. For this reason, Rick has trouble attributing negative states to loneliness. The negative affect is perceived as embodied within the feminine and if certain feeling states are feminine then he, a masculine subject, must naturally feel other emotions or no emotions at all.

#### Latent affect

The characters in *Electric Sheep* seem to lack qualitative emotional connection to others, although they are not physically isolated. The human characters have the possibility of possessing a mood organ to regulate their emotions, which rids the subject of certainty and genuineness in feeling – when it is possible to manipulate emotions, you can never be certain of the authenticity of what you are feeling. This might explain why Iran and Rick Deckard do not attribute any negative affect to loneliness. Androids cannot use a mood organ and Isidore cannot afford one, so these characters are forced to feel their authentic emotions. Characters might also not possess full consciousness of their emotions, which makes the emotions circulate latently or by a different name than loneliness. However, there are other reasons why characters might choose to ignore or deny authentic emotions that have to do with class and gender. Moreover, the society of *Electric Sheep* is one that in general

has a strange relationship to emotion. Affect is appropriated and weaponized to justify certain hierarchies within society. Relegating undesirable individuals, while keeping others on top. In such a hostile environment, it becomes imperative to feel the right emotions or at least perform them correctly. In a hostile environment, individuals attempt to control or deny certain emotions to avoid subjugation. If there is shame involved, emotions could also commence existing on a latent plan where the feeler denies the unwanted emotions and they move to an unconscious level. This is especially relevant for individuals with low empathy such as Rick who is obsessed with animal ownership because it will help him perform empathy correctly. Not performing correctly ensures dehumanization, and in Rick's instance, performance is imperative as unempathetic individuals experience trouble building meaningful relationships, but this aspect will be expanded on later.

In the next chapter, it will also be expanded upon how loneliness sticks to Rick from Iran. Although both characters refer to loneliness as 'despair' the underlying emotion is loneliness. This is due in part to the fact that not all characters possess a well-functioning understanding of their inner selves, and emotions can circulate on an unconscious level. Additionally, the histories of emotions are often erased (Ahmed 11), making it difficult for characters to accurately name them. Loneliness takes an embodied form from the absence of people in certain settings such as Isidore's apartment and can stick to the people it encounters. However, the negative affect elicited by loneliness is not always explicitly recognized by characters, and as such, they may attribute it to other emotions such as existential dread, which suggest that loneliness is flexible in terms of the type of feelings it elicits. Although loneliness might be the root cause of certain emotions, characters will not always reach such conclusions. Nevertheless, interpreting emotions as despair instead of loneliness is not necessarily an invalid interpretation as there is indeed a despairing factor about being left alone in the world. The silence and loneliness that characters experience are also linked with entropy, and it is appropriate to despair over the apocalypse.

#### The empathy box and feeling adequately: Iran and Isidore

Iran displays almost solely negative affect and is described as depressed and without vigor. As was formerly accounted, Iran also feels negatively about the emptiness of the apartment building where she has residency, and throughout the novel, she interacts only with her husband whom she has a hostile relationship to; this is when she is not using the empathy box or watching tv. Without any seemingly meaningful activities, her life seems meaningless. Iran fits into the loneliness category because she feels negative about the absence of people and because she has little or no positive

contact with others. However, she displays less loneliness than other characters because she can use the empathy box in an expedient manner that affords her at least the illusion of togetherness. It is easy to disregard the effect of the empathy box. The affect that is gained through it is a simulation and the box is usually interpreted as separating its users rather than bringing them together (Galvan 1997, Dorovic 2022, Toth 2013). However, even if the togetherness is paltry, it offers a sense of social connectedness that can temporarily alleviate the feeling of loneliness. Both Isidore and Iran gain an immense sense of connection from fusing. There is an affective quality in the group relationship found in the empathy box. This relationship is framed as reciprocal in a way that none of Iran's or Isidore's other relationships are. Iran describes that other fusers 'shared their mood' after they acquired an animal and since all emotions are shared through the empathy box, it livened up all the participants. Likewise, she is willing to sacrifice her positive affect for the group: "It would be immoral to keep [the mood] for ourselves" (Dick 136) even if she knows that fusing could change her frame of mind for the worse.

Furthermore, Iran only gains a sense of well-being from social interaction and experiences greater interpersonal connections by feeling genuinely. Iran displays a change from the beginning of the novel to later. When the reader meets her initially, she seems self-sabotaging in her efforts to cause a self-imposed depression, but when Rick comes home for dinner later in the day, she is no longer absorbed in self-deprecation and her use of pronouns changes from singular to plural: "Now we can admit to everybody that the sheep's false" (ibid.). The 'we' is an indicator of togetherness with Rick, and from 'everybody' it is clear that Iran (and maybe Rick) does interact with others. Since they are talking about the goat, the people included in 'everybody' must be the neighbors and while there is nothing to indicate that the relationships with the neighbors are socially rewarding or hold much quality, and while the neighbors are more framed as a homogenized group that Rick and Iran must hold up appearances to, they are still a group of people that Iran talks to and is interested in.

Isidore is the only character who outrightly admits to being lonely. A character is lonely if they have a discrepancy between the quality or quantity of relationships that they want, and the most accurate measure of loneliness is for a character to tell the reader that they are lonely. He is unaffected by the hostile environment of society and for this reason, he does not realize the intricate schemes and hypocrisy surrounding empathy, which means that he gullibly believes anything the government or Mercerism feeds him. Both for this reason and since he has no way of regulating his emotions by mood organ, he feels his true feelings. This makes Isidore's character function as a

measuring device, showing the reader the most appropriate emotions for the setting. Furthermore, Isidore is the character most exposed to loneliness in all factors. He is the one to experience the silence with no filter, while the other characters only feel it “intellectually” (Dick 3). Although the loneliness is terrible for Isidore, he experiences it completely when he gains what looks like relationships to him, the android refugees that move into his apartment complex. Iran's character functions much like Isidore as a measuring device, although one who is easier to identify with because she has not been labeled an outcast. Iran's state of mind improves from the connection with others and likewise, the main component in her depression is the prospect of being alone. Ultimately, the novel aligns with these characters as Iran has no character growth and decides to relocate to a more densely populated area, only further reinforcing the path that he was already on.

#### Exchanging loneliness: Rick and Iran

The opening sentence of *Electric Sheep* is: “A merry little surge of electricity piped by automatic alarm from the mood organ beside his bed awakened Rick Deckard” (ibid. 1). Rick wakes up refreshed because his mood organ is set for him to do so, but this statement also works to foreshadow the anthropomorphization of technology. By calling the surge of electricity ‘merry’, Dick assigns human emotions to the electricity. Anthropomorphization of androids (technology) is a major theme in the novel and the borders between man and machine collapse in the end when Rick admits that electrical beings are alive. This first sentence then functions to structure the narrative as a circular one, but what is also significant is the emphasis on emotion as dependent on and carried by technology via the electrical signals of the mood organ. Rick and Iran’s emotions are electrical rather than inherently between their bodies. Object feelings are then reduced to ‘objects’ because they lack their means of authentic circulation.

The relationship between Rick and Iran is characterized by hostility and selfishness but most of all miscommunications. Rick and Iran are both circulating the wrong objects, and as a result, their interactions end in pain but they also exchange the object of loneliness. The first interaction between the spouses begins with Iran holding on to an object of dismal, while Rick holds one of positivity. Rick's first action is to attempt to regulate his wife "You set your Penfield too weak (...) I'll reset it" (ibid. 1). Rick indicates to Iran that her emotions are invalid and that she should feel different emotions. What Iran seeks is a witness to her pain, but Rick refuses and seeks instead to make her feelings manageable – the same as his own: “He seated himself beside her, bent over her, and explained softly. ‘If you set the surge up high enough, you'll be glad you’re awake;



that's the whole point. At setting C it overcomes the threshold barring consciousness, as it does for me" (ibid.). His soft voice paired with his regulation speaks to a gendered and infantilizing discourse about the emotionality of women. Iran suffers from depressive episodes and the object of depression takes on the quality of the surface area it came from which attributes the emotion as embodied while the history of the emotion is erased so that it seems that Iran's depression lacks justification or rationale: "I can understand now how you suffer when you're depressed; I always thought you liked it and I thought you could have snapped yourself out at any time" (ibid. 138). Rick views the depressed state as inhabited within Iran – as if it comes from nowhere, and for this reason, he faces difficulty in acknowledging the emotion.

As has been established, loneliness is embodied in silence and emptiness and since Iran experiences the silence, the affect sticks to her and this is the emotion that she circulates to Rick. Iran and Rick do not call the emotion loneliness but despair, and this tells the reader about the seriousness of loneliness as an affect that provokes extreme melancholy. Moreover, the scene and the fact that loneliness sticks itself to Rick from Iran is visible in Rick's conversation with his neighbor Bill Barbour: "something of the despair, Iran had been talking about tapped him on the shoulder" (Dick 9). Rick gains the object feeling of loneliness from his wife instead of a feeling of togetherness and while this is significant in relation to how and if Rick is lonely in general it is also significant because it communicates that something within Rick and Iran's relationship is wrong.

There is more than one reason why Iran circulates the object feeling of loneliness to Rick. As was mentioned, Iran describes loneliness as despair, and both loneliness and despair convey that pain is involved. Pain leaves an indent in the body which is interpreted as hurtful or damaging to the body. In *Electric Sheep*, much of the general population has immigrated and the ones that were left behind must live in constant fear of social exclusion. This exclusion could result from an inability to perform empathy correctly by owning or caring for an animal or it could stem from the exclusion resulting from a damaged IQ due to the polluting dust. No matter which type, exclusion would leave the individual without social support, or they would not be allowed to immigrate. Either way lack of support signifies a potential risk in a dangerous environment. When exclusion is paired with death, it signifies hurt to the body. What Iran desires from Rick in the context of them waking up is a witness to her pain. Pain in itself is a lonely feeling and therefore it requires someone to witness it – there is a desire to have a loved one acknowledge the pain. Through the witness the pain is granted status in the world – it becomes tangible and travels outside of the body (Ahmed 29-30). Iran's communication hints that what she wants is for Rick to become a witness to her pain.

However, it would be a shame to suggest that she communicates this clearly to Rick. Iran's communication is rather a product of past pains and in their initial morning routine, it seems that she brings up more than one topic of discussion in an unorganized way that does not clearly communicate the pain that she feels or incapacitates Rick to react the way she craves: "You're a murderer hired by the cops" (Dick 1). Iran brings up a topic that is rooted in a different topic than her wish to feel adequately. Iran never brings up again that Rick is a murderer, but she does bring up a concern that he will be killed by androids: "and you possibly getting killed by one of those andys" (ibid. 75) which suggests that her aversion against Rick's job is not only colored by its lacking ethics but also the risks that it involves. During the morning, Iran brings up the subject without any former context which makes it likely that Iran's feelings about the job are something that the couple has discussed before, and since all of their arguments are left unresolved, it leaves the reader with a sense that Rick and Iran have a habit of disregarding each other and bringing up multiple problems during the same fight, which again leads the reader to the conclusion that Iran is not good at communicating her true feelings. Instead of telling Rick that she feels that her authentic inner state is one of depression, she calls him a murderer and her inability to discuss one thing at the time suggests that her pain feels a certain way because of former impressions – former arguments and pains that are mixed in with the loneliness.

Both Rick and Iran ultimately feel lonely within the relationship (Dorovic 152-153), so it makes sense that feeling lonely in general would be mixed with the feelings surrounding loneliness in the marriage. The shape that the poor communication between the couple takes is that of no reciprocated circulation. They hold on to their own object feelings and make themselves 'non-stick' surfaces. Iran holds the object feeling of pain while having no trust in Rick's understanding, and Rick tries to regulate Iran to hold on to his object feeling of happiness. Rick's actions are also shaped by past events, but these are rather the inability to understand (bear witness) Iran's feelings. Since he lacks empathy, he does not "want to have her pain so she can be released from it" (Ahmed 30), and therefore he cannot give her pain a place in the physical world. Instead of listening, Rick tries to manage Iran's emotions and make them into other emotions that are easier to deal with. As a result, Iran suffers more because the pain cannot be pushed out of the body.

It is also significant to note that while their miscommunication is the product of ordinary human life, their emotions are largely electric and while the notion of simulated affect will be accounted for in the analysis of *Klara and the Sun*, it is not uninteresting that these electrical feelings are what drive the couple apart. Rick and Iran seem to only read their own bodies and

respond accordingly. Here the emotions, since electric, could act as simulated or fake emotions. This means that Rick and Iran circulate nothing to each other but are unaware of this fact. This renders their communication impossible since the object feelings that they attempt to circulate leave no marks on the other person's body and thereby cannot be interpreted. Therefore, they both interpret the indents left from former interactions rather than the other person's response to them and this is how their communication goes sour, while none of them 'gain' anything from the interaction.

### Reversed anthropomorphism through loneliness: Rick

#### Lack of empathy

The lack of emotional circulation makes Rick less empathetic which results in him seeming increasingly like one of the androids that he hunts. There are a few markers to indicate both that Rick feels lonely and that he rejects friendships. From Rick's point of view, the relationship with his wife must seem parasitic. When he wants to stay content, his wife instead sucks out his happiness and leaves him with loneliness. However, Rick cares only about himself. Iran may act poorly towards him, but at no point does he attempt to empathize with her. When her depression sucks her into a near-sedated state, all he cares about is how "she has nothing to give me" (Dick 76). Instead of feeling worried about his wife being in a state that he formerly referred to as dangerous, Rick only cares about how it affects him. Likewise, he gives Rachel a coldblooded answer when she inquires about human 'retirement': "“What were your instructions,’ Eldon Rosen asked, ‘if you wound up designating a human as android?’ ‘That’s a departmental matter.’ He began restoring his testing gear to his briefcase; the two Rosens watched silently. ‘Obviously,’ he added, ‘I was told to cancel further testing, as I’m now doing. If it failed once there’s no point in going on.’” (ibid. 42). Completely emotionally detached, Rick focuses only on the logistics. His answer is that of a hired hitman, completely professional in his attitude, focusing only on the issues in relation to the test and not on the possible emotional turmoil which is really the answer that Rachel and the reader are looking for. However, this interaction could also be read as two persons that because of their low empathy have no emotions to circulate between each other. Rick is not unaffected by the emptiness of the apartments, which means that there is more than one source of contagion of loneliness. Outside of Iran, Rick lacks social relationships. The relationship with the neighbors is characterized by competition. Instead of congratulating Barbour for his pregnant horse, Rick tries to manipulate him to gift him the foal by calling it immoral to possess two horses when he has none. Rick's work relationships are similarly shallow with Rick rejecting attempts to develop friendship

with him. Likewise, Pris's defense of Isidore elucidates that unempathetic beings lack connective ability: "an emotional acceptance like that – it's everything to him. It's hard for us to grasp that, but it's true" (ibid. 130). Her exclamation alludes to the fact that androids have trouble connecting with others because they are logical, unemotional creatures – they cannot 'grasp' the emotional connection.

Rick rejects circulation attempts from others because he does not see emotions as important. "'Want to know what the Russian police said?' Miss Marsten asked. 'I know that, too.' Her freckled, orange face glowed. Rick said, 'I'll find out from Harry Bryant.' He felt irritable; office gossip annoyed him because it always proved better than the truth. Seating himself at his desk he pointedly fished about in a drawer until Miss Marsten, perceiving the hint, departed" (ibid. 23). From Marsten's glowing face, the secretary wants to circulate the object feeling of excitement to Rick. Rick ignores her – circulates nothing back – until she leaves. This is an effort to avoid disappointment if the gossip turns out to be without merit. In the general sense of Ahmed's theory, objects that are positively laden are taken in and deemed 'mine'. This is the case with, for example, with love (Ahmed 122-143). Holding on to the object feeling of excitement means to imbue the object with affective value. The more affective labor, Rick puts into the object, the more valuable the object becomes. In a general sense, if the love object is lost, the object feeling turns into grief (ibid. 130). If Marsten's story turns out to not be true, then the object feeling would similarly be lost, and the excitement emotion would turn into disappointment. By ignoring Marsten, Rick can spare himself the negative emotion and instead of the affective contagion, he can continue his day with his emotions programmed as he wants.

Naturally, Rick cannot avoid all emotional contagion. As an example, Inspector Bryant reports that one of Rick's colleagues is in hospital from an android attack and the announcement chills Rick. In this encounter, the object of fear of pain is circulated to Rick, since Rick is a bounty hunter who puts his own body at risk. Moreover, Iran transmits loneliness to Rick. This aspect brings forth a new perspective on emotion. Others' attempts at circulating emotion can sometimes be ignored although not all the time.

Rick avoids emotional contagion and becomes empathy deficient this way but in androids, the lack of empathy manifests physically. Temperature is significant in *Electric Sheep*. Androids are perceived as emitting cold air, and this is important since cold is the absence of heat. There is a deficiency inherent in the androids that appears similar to the notion of silence or emptiness (Hayles 174). Where emptiness indicates the very tangible isolation or absence of people, coldness indicates

the absence of emotion. Therefore, it can be inferred that androids circulate loneliness that is transmitted out of deficiency: “Now that her initial fear had diminished, something else had begun to emerge from her. Something more strange. And, he thought, deplorable. A coldness. Like, he thought, a breath from the vacuum between inhabited worlds, in fact from nowhere: it was not what she did or said but what she did not do and say” (Dick 54). As with silence, the coldness of androids takes on an embodied presence as if they were physically emitting cold air. From this quote perhaps the clause about the ‘vacuum between inhabited worlds’ is the most significant as it makes the reader aware of the border-like nature of the android. Moreover, there is a sucking nature to the word vacuum which pulls in the spectator as if Pris was related to the void from Isidore’s apartment. Since the coldness acts as the void, it can be concluded that Pris and other androids are transmitting loneliness.

Androids and humans all feel lonely, a surprise to Isidore who believes that android companionship eradicates loneliness, but the androids cannot connect with the humans since they are also lonely:

“I got various drugs from Roy - I needed them at first because - well, anyhow, it’s an awful place. This’ – she swept in the room, the apartment, in one violent gesture – ‘this is nothing. You think I’m suffering because I’m lonely. Hell, all Mars is lonely. Much worse than this.’ ‘Don’t the androids keep you company? I heard a commercial on –’ Seating himself he ate, and presently she too picked up the glass of wine; she sipped expressionlessly. ‘I understood that the androids helped.’

‘The androids,’ she said, ‘are lonely, too’” (ibid. 119).

The structure of Isidore’s last statement functions as a question to which Pris answers with an unspoken negation and conjunction – the androids do ‘not help ‘because’ they are lonely too. Loneliness exists from the lack of circulation of object feelings. Instances, where this deficiency arises, are the absence of others or the absence of others capable of circulation. In relation to silence, it is the physical absence of people generating loneliness but in the case of the androids, it must be the lack of object feelings to circulate with. Furthermore, if lonely people cannot enter into communion with others, then the relationship between Rick and Iran can similarly be read as unproductive socially because they are both already lonely and therefore unable to relate to each other.

### Dissolving borders

As the novel progresses, the reader is confronted with the possibility that Rick might not be a 'real' human as the boundaries between android and human are dissolved. This is partly due to his low empathy but also because the android comes to act as a boundary figure between the binary of humans and technology. With the progressing dissolvment of reality, Rick relies increasingly on those arbitrary markers of humanness, which is where Rick's obsession with owning an animal comes in. The society of *Electric Sheep* does not actually value animals as more than commodities, but through their involvement with Mercerism animals become symbols of humanness (Vint 112-116), and since Rick possesses no animal, he is free to question his humanity. However even though the animal is an inflated symbol (the animal is an ontologically hollow symbol of humanness since animals can be bought and sold. Animal possession does not really reveal humanness but rather who possesses the most money), it coincides with Rick's progression as a character throughout the novel. Rick begins with only an electric animal which denotes his humanity as simulacra. Moreover, Rick's primary drive is animal ownership, and the animal must be a big one to make up for his lacking humanity. First, he seeks an ostrich, then an owl, and finally a goat, but having no money he lacks the financial means to inflate his flawed identity. The buying of the goat, however, marks a change in Rick's character. His bordering identity that was formerly occluded has become obvious to him, so the drive to prove his humanity is apparent. This same crisis is also what teaches Rick empathy: "I took a test, one question, and verified it; I've begun to empathize with androids, and look what that means. You said it this morning yourself. 'Those poor andys.' So you know what I'm talking about. That's why I bought the goat. I never felt like that before" (Dick 138). The new-found empathy enables Rick to interrogate his inner subject categories and when the android begins to exist on the threshold rather than definitively within the technological part of the technology/man duad, it forces Rick to investigate his own actions. To make up for his character, the goat must be bought, and ironically the more human Rick becomes, the more depressed he feels which further supports that the appropriate affect in the desolate setting is despair. However, Rachel later kills the goat which rids Rick of his inflated identity. Forced to either deal with the symbol as inflated or give up his humanity, Rick chooses the former: "The electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are" (ibid. 191). To retain his humanity, Rick must come to terms with a revision of categories. The symbol of animal ownership loses all meaning because it allows Rick to keep his empathy. If empathy stems from empathy towards all (also electric beings) then Rick still has a symbol of humanity (the frog) and without the size and social status of the animal, it loses its inflation and simulated empathy becomes authentic empathy. The quote also points back to and

ends the circle that was started with the first sentence of the novel about the ‘merry little surge of electricity’, and where the first sentence begins the anthropomorphism of technology, this comment marks the complete dissolution of the borders between man and machine.

As has been mentioned, Rick is a border figure, and therefore I group him with androids – he seems to constantly fluctuate between machine and human. In the storyworld of *Electric Sheep* borders are dissolving which produces a ‘self’ that is fragmented. Consider Mercer’s ambiguous statement: “It is the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your own identity” (ibid. 141). The fluidity of identities in the novel creates a fragmented self that has trouble discerning their own selfhood as well as that of others. With no concrete demarcations, the self cannot connect with others. When the borders between man and machine collapse it is chaotic. The self loses its identity, but it is also positive. Rick might feel lost, but he is also at peace and general empathy has increased because the inflated symbols (animals) are revealed as such which prevents the possibility of ‘buying’ humanity. Thereby, empathy regains its authenticity and instead of loving only some subjects every subject becomes lovable, which by default increases love.

#### Diagnosis: Loneliness

The society of *Electric Sheep* has been diagnosed with numerous different disorders. Most blame capitalism or the anthropological logic which ontologizes the meaningless categories of ‘human’ and ‘android’. What is mutually agreed on is that humans focus their energy into meaningless outputs that prevent them from reaching happiness. This analysis agrees with all these arguments although the focus is placed mainly elsewhere. The society of *Electric Sheep* is one that is lonely, and I will assert that this issue is the most apparent one, as the principal motivation is to avoid loneliness. This is evident from the initiatives that are in place to help people connect with each other such as the empathy box. Moreover, relationships are outsourced to androids when human connections prove futile. Galvan notes that what isolates humans and androids are the cultural constructions that separate them, and this argument is supported by Ahmed who asserts that the individual is allowed to love some subjects but not others (127-129). This restriction is the result of two things: an ideal love can only take such a shape through its approval by others. Other subjects are needed to accumulate value for the loved object and the less approval, the less value is accumulable as the subject must perform this labor themselves (Ahmed 129). This is significant because the ideal object works to accumulate value for the subject; they are elevated by their possessions, and the loved object also builds the subject’s identity (ibid. 128). The culturally

constructed categories prevent humans and androids from connecting with each other for this reason. Rick feels negatively from realizing that he is sympathetic towards androids, and this makes sense because his sympathy and, in the example of Rachel Rosen, desire ‘sticks’ him together with the androids. Loving an android is the admittance of one’s own android nature because love entail identification. There is an irony in how humans are persuaded to travel to Mars as they will receive an android that will act as a carer when androids and humans are not really meant to connect emotionally. In a world where social status is imperative there is no incentive in loving an android because the relationship can accumulate no value for yourself.

Relationships are outsourced to technology. The subjects of *Electric Sheep* fill their daily lives with tv and the empathy box because there is nothing else to do and only through these media are they truly connected to other people. The Buster Friendly sitcom which perpetually runs in Isidore, and Iran and Rick’s homes features Buster interviewing and playing games with people, and subjects of *Electric Sheep* watch the show because it is socially stimulating. For the same reason, individuals plug into the empathy box. It allows them to “touch other people” (Dick 53), something inaccessible in their lives. Through Rick, Iran, and Isidore the reader perceives the different reactions to this form of outsourcing of relationships to technology with Iran seeking to overcome her emotions by allowing herself to feel them, Rick who tries to avoid feeling, and Isidore who reaches out empathetically. However, none of these attempts work because Earth has reached a sparsity in human emotion in general. As is visible in Rick and Iran’s relationship, people become non-stick surfaces to each other. Since they can program their emotions, they do not need to connect with others in order to feel happiness, and the electrical nature of their emotions means that they circulate nothing between themselves. Moreover, loneliness has become an all-consuming presence in the world that threatens to eat everyone.

The society of *Electric Sheep* faces an insufficiency of positive emotions that can be circulated. The novel presents two options for loneliness. In the first option, the circulation shortage leads to an emotional detachment which leaves humans android-like. Martians fill up their lives with androids who circulate nothing but cold. Androids suck emotions out of people in a void-like manner, but they cannot relate emotionally and are therefore unable to transmit emotions back. Without the circulation of emotions, subjects reach a state of loneliness and within this state they are emotionless. Rick’s loneliness is initially such a product. His job requires him to spend much time in the company of androids and their emotional deficiency sucks out his emotions into a void where the emotions are not reciprocated or transmitted back in any way. Rick also programs his



emotions heavily and the programmed nature of the emotions acts in much the same non-reciprocal manner. His wife, colleagues, and neighbors all attempt to reach him emotionally which means that they transmit emotions to him that he does not requite. This non-reciprocity creates a shortage of emotions that is evident in the suffering of the population both on Mars and on Earth. Furthermore, emotions equate to personhood and as subjects are transformed into ‘non-stick’ surfaces from the use of mood organs or act like voids if they lack empathy, society reaches a point where there are no emotions left, signifying the annihilation of humanity. In the second option, the subject maintains their personhood but is left depressed. Isidore and Iran are both examples of this. Their loneliness is fused with existential dread and is ultimately painful, but neither of them is left inhumane. This type of loneliness is circulatory which is evident in Iran's transmission of it to Rick but since it retains its reciprocal quality it does not leave its subjects without personhood. Rather it leaves them suffering. Moreover, it means that loneliness can stick to subjects from external objects. This raises the question of why positively laden objects do not act the same way and cancel out loneliness. However, *Electric Sheep* features a world that is left in entropic ruin, and with the setting offering only melancholy, characters cannot obtain object feelings this way. This is evident in Rick's final excursion out into the wilderness in his attempt to rejuvenate from solitude. He is faced by none of the romantic landscape (Cloyd 82-85). In the dust-filled wasteland, there are only electrical things.

## Chapter 2: Loneliness lasts all Summer Long

This second analysis is of Brian Aldiss' short story "Supertoys Last All Summer Long" from 1969. There has not been much interest in Aldiss' short stories academically. Aldiss is well-known for several novels such as *Hothouse* (1962), *Greybeard* (1964), and the *Helliconia* series (1982-1985), but his short story "Supertoys Last all Summer Long" is largely ignored unless academics utilize to understand Stanley Kubrick and Steven Spielberg's movie adaptation of the short story: *AI - Artificial Intelligence* (2001). Scholars who mention the short story in this way are John C. Tibbett (2001), Simone Odino (2019), Peter Krämer (2015), and Brian D. Johnson (2016). The movie adaptation and the short story do not have much in common. In the movie, the artificial boy, David, is cloned from a human boy who is in hospital. Android-David exists as a surrogate for the real David who later wakes up and frames android-David so that he is banished from the house. Android-David then goes on an adventure in an attempt to find his lost family again with his toy bear Teddy. The movie is an allegory of Pinocchio. In the end, David meets the blue fairy, and the

fairytale is complete. This was not how Aldiss wanted his story to be told. The focus of the film was too much ‘outwards’ for his taste. Rather “Supertoys” were to him a story about metaphysical questions - one that looked ‘within’ at how all humans are to an extent machines (Aldiss XVII-XIX).

Thorpe is one of the only scholars to not only mention the short story in relation to the movie, although he too involves the movie. In a chapter of the book *Necroculture* (2016), Thorpe explores capitalism in a neoliberal world and argues that capitalist culture valorizes the dead over the living. A robot takeover replaces the living human with a non-living machine, and here he exemplifies with “Supertoys Last all Summer Long” (the title is abbreviated to “Supertoys” from now on) to highlight the replacement of humans with machines. The short story is set in a world of perpetual stasis. It is eternally summer and perpetually beautiful, although the setting is simulated. Parallely, the storyworld is also one of business and new inventions that emptily promise the bettering of the human condition (Thorpe 93-94). According to Thorpe, the continual stasis and speed combine in a capitalist logic, where society is characterized as perpetually moving forward in the shape of new technological inventions, while people are ironically entrapped in an internal present because the individual must keep up with trends and update skills to not fall behind and ‘stay’ where they are (ibid. 94-95).

Cave and Dihal also shortly mention “Supertoys” in their paragraph on artificial families which analyzes works that reflect on what it would be like to have an artificial family member. In relation to this, Cave and Dihal exemplify with Ray Bradbury’s “I Sing the Body Electric!” (1969) which explores the story of a family that owns an android grandmother who performs her role perfectly and whose perfection lies in her non-human ability to not die. Contrarily, “Supertoys” is used to exemplify the opposite, where the artificial David is only a substitution and is discarded as soon as his ‘parents’ are allowed to have a real child.

I will interpret the short story in its own right. I will highlight how Aldiss creates perpetual inertia in the story. The focal point of this analysis will be how the obsession with perfection and beauty functions to repel emotions, thereby disrupting communication, and preventing relationships from developing. Moreover, the ‘humanness’ of Monica has never been questioned. She is often interpreted as an example of a narcissistic mother, but I will argue that her the reader is meant to question Monica’s ontology and that her poor skills as a mother figure dehumanizes her into a android figure or at least nearly.

### A Romantic Garden

The setting is one where the unmoving time in the Georgian mansion contrasts with the high-pace inventions of the engineering sphere (ibid. 93). The Georgian mansion along with the aesthetically beautiful surroundings take the reader back in time and as such the home-setting functions as a time pocket. Furthermore, the mansion along with most of the natural elements is illusory. Flowers, trees, and gravel are carefully selected and cultivated and are not the results of natural growth. What lies outside the whologram is a gray and overcrowded world. It is ugly and futuristic (at least by the standards of the real world), and therefore it contrasts with the garden. The house imitates the Georgian style which is a style period that ran from 1714-1830 and overlaps with the Romantic period. During the Georgian and Romantic era theorists began to separate beauty into different aesthetics. These were termed the 'beautiful' and the 'sublime' (later the picturesque was added). The 'sublime' was awe inducing, the beauty that the viewer felt from the sublime was so grand that some negative affect was felt from it. In contrast, 'beauty' evoked pleasure and was characterized by harmony and balance (Botting 7). Beautiful objects could be small, smooth and delicate and more importantly, beauty was comprehensible to a rational mind (ibid. 26). In the Swintons' garden there are "lovely almond trees" (Aldiss 1) always in bloom and an "impeccable plastic gravel path" (ibid.). The uses of 'lovely' and 'impeccable' invoke associations of perfection and even a kind of serenity. Everything is well-kept; the parts of the garden that are non-artificial are maintained by automatic garden machines. The garden must appear beautiful. From an aesthetic perspective the garden is more beautiful than sublime. From descriptions of the garden as "friendly" (ibid. 9) or 'lovely' it is clear that the garden invokes pleasure rather than terror and awe. The many roses that characterize the garden are also described as 'lovely' and can be plucked with no description of effort, which suggests that they might be without thorns.

The adaption of a Georgian aesthetic is a return in time and has the psychological function of adding feelings of control. "Supertoys" takes place in a world with vast social issues, and in a world where characters desire to control their surroundings and do so with technology. The society cannot control the growing population and the desolation of the world, so they put up wholograms to conceal the issues. However, the illusion is not strong enough that Monica does not still change the wavelength of her windows. The action is masochistic but also evidences that the inhabitants are not deceived by the illusion. Supertoys are invented to manage loneliness in the population, but the loneliness prevails. These issues seem unsolvable and since the citizens lack control over them, they sublimate this lack of control into other areas of their lives. By returning to a past aesthetic, the

subjects of “Supertoys” feel a higher degree of control and ease. In a Georgian time-pocket, one does not have to deal with the current state of the world, these issues can be projected out into the future, and a garden is highly controllable.

### Perpetual inertia

In the world outside of the mansion, new inventions are created, and the new serving-man promises a paradigm shift in terms of innovation: “There have been mechanicals on the market with mini-computers for brains— plastic things without life, super-toys—but we have at last found a way to link computer circuitry with synthetic flesh” (ibid. 3-4). The serving man is more life-like than any other model before, and therefore the invention assumes novelty. It is also apparent from this statement that the “Supertoys” inhabitants conflate life with intelligence. Moreover, Henry’s speech is one of grandeur, and one that promises the vast differences to the new model. However, in addition to a forward-moving presence of novel inventions, the short story is also filled with stasis: “In Mrs. Swinton’s garden, it was always summer” (ibid. 1). This is the first line of the short story, and it reveals an initial perpetuity although a subversive one. The first sentence subverts the expectations of the reader because summer is associated with positive qualities such as warmth and nature in bloom. The reader comes to expect a utopian tale by reading the first line, but as the short story progresses, the tale turns out to be a dystopian one of a world characterized by overpopulation and feelings of loneliness. This subversion challenges the reader and highlights how eternal summer might appear positive but is not necessarily. The stasis of the garden contrasts with the rest of the world and this difference highlights both spheres as polarized extremes.

Perpetuity is further emphasized by the depiction of time. The house is filled with clocks and Monica seems to obsess over time: “Time waited on her shoulder with the maniac slowness it reserves for children, the insane, and wives whose husbands are away improving the world” (ibid. 2). Children and the insane have no concept of time and therefore time stretches out endlessly to Monica. ‘Waited’ and ‘weighted’ are homophones. From the context, it would make more sense for time to ‘weigh’ on Monica’s shoulders to indicate that it is a burden. However, Aldiss wrote ‘wait’ and emphasized a doubleness where time both acts as a burden and indicates expectation. The sentence foreshadows Monica’s wish for a child.

### Deferring love into the future

When Monica first declares that she does not love David, it is a shock to the reader. Not loving one's child is shameful. Especially for mothers who are stereotypically supposed to be nurturing. Here, histories of mothers taking on caregiving responsibilities influence how the subject (the mother figure) is interpreted and the mother's body is read as 'loving' because of these former histories. If the feminine and motherly qualities cannot be read from her body, the subversion of expectations has a double negative effect because the feminine coded qualities are supposed to be inherent in the mother's body and when they are not, love is converted into disgust. The shameful body of the mother must be pushed out of the community. However, the disgust is subverted when the reader finds out that David is an android. To not love an android child is more - if not completely - acceptable and the disgust towards Monica somewhat disappears.

Monica has extended her love for a child into the future, and this is where the love is maintained rather than with David. In relation to love, one person circulates love and the other returns it. Therefore, love "functions as the promise of return" (Ahmed 131). If the love is not returned, the object feeling converts into grief and since the subject wants to avoid this feeling, they cope by deferring the promise of returned feelings into the future (ibid. 130-131). This means that love does not have to be reciprocated at that moment because the subject adjusts their expectations to be reciprocated later. Moreover, the more the promise of love is extended into the future, the more labor is put into the extension, and the more valuable the object becomes (ibid. 130). From this point of view, Monica and Henry are not allowed to conceive due to the strict population control, and therefore their love for a child cannot be reciprocated so the promise of reciprocation is deferred into the future. The possibility of a child also takes special precedence because of the labor performed in trying to keep the love from converting into grief. This is visible when Monica delivers the news about the child to Henry: "'Yes, my darling, yes, we've won this week's parenthood lottery! We can go ahead and conceive a child at once!'/He let out a yell of joy. They danced round the room." (Aldiss 10). The couple has put extensive value into the idea of a child, and when they receive the news that their love will finally be reciprocated, they compare the event to winning the lottery and dance around with joy. The extensive valorization of a child that David is a surrogate for functions like a constant reminder to Monica of what she does not have, and this is partly the reason why Monica finds it difficult to love David. He is a constant reminder of the failure of return of the love that was promised.

There is an irony in Monica's investment in the future since time is static, as has formerly been described. If time never moves, then the love that Monica defers into the future will never be returned. The setting is one of perpetual summer and inhabitants of the storyworld employ robots that do not age. Here it is significant that David also falls into the futureless category. As an android, he cannot age or develop. This is especially tragic because of his sentience. In *AI: Artificial intelligence*, David outlives the extinction of humanity and is left only with Teddy and the image of the blue fairy. His mechanic body makes him immortal, and it is implied that David will spend his remaining life in suffering because he is programmed to long for a family that is gone. The inability to grow is the tragedy of David's unique position. David's inability to develop is evident in how David cannot finish any of his notes. What is considered human development is digressing from the path laid out by one's personality structure, but David is incapable of digressing from the trajectory laid out by his programming. The unmoving time creates tension from the fruitless perpetual waiting. In the end, Monica and Henry are informed that they may conceive a child, but this human child is never revealed to the reader and the couple ends the conversation with: "We'll see how [David] does before the baby is born" (ibid. 11), which foreshadows that there might be no child because the substitute remains in the house.

Moreover, David is not the biological son of the couple. He is anthropomorphized through his possession of consciousness, and in effect of his status as a non-biological son, he is a metaphor for the adopted child. A normative heterosexual view of love conflates the perception of the successful couple as one that reproduces. This reproduction then produces familial love which is one that collapses space in terms of sameness. Here, characteristics are inherited, and subjects are assumed to be as close in likeness as possible (Ahmed 128). David seems peripherally aware that he is not the result of 'good reproduction' and that this is a bad thing that threatens to separate him from Monica: "DARLING MUMMY, I'M YOUR ONE AND ONLY SON AND I LOVE YOU SO MUCH THAT SOME TIMES" (Aldiss 8, sic). When David declares that he is the one and only son, it seems like a declaration to himself. David is concerned with his ontology which shakes his sense of self and as a way of regaining his identity, he reconfirms to himself that he is 'like' Monica genetically and therefore 'real' through her 'realness'. Moreover, David must state that he is Monica's son because she does not make him feel that he is. The inability to reproduce well becomes a sign that the couple lacks success. "To love and to be loved is here about fulfilling one's fantasy image of 'who one would like to be' through who one 'has'. Such love is about making future generations in the image I have of myself and the loved other, who together can approximate

a ‘likeness’, which can be bestowed on future generations” (Ahmed 129). Since David is not the biological son of Monica and Henry, he cannot return an idealized image to the couple. When Monica offers David the flower and he floats it in his pool, it angers her and her reaction seems disproportionate to the event, especially since David appears very well-mannered for a boy his age. From this, it can be inferred that Monica does not require normal child behavior but perfection which is supported through the title ‘Supertoys’ which hints that Monica does not desire something that is regular. It must be ‘super’.

Since David is a metaphor for an adopted son and represents this dream as failed, it is tempting to say that this is the only significance to the Swintons’ possession of him. However, Monica had David “because she was lonely” (Aldiss 8). The Swintons may want a child for the sake of building a family and David lives with the family to ease the pain of this failed project, but the couple also bought him to not be lonely. This brings forth the possibility of latent objectives. Monica has obtained David to fix her emotional problems and when one considers the metaphorical value of David, this suggests that the wish for children and the result of overpopulation is rooted in how humans have children to make copies of themselves to ensure conversation partners. This argument is then further supported by how the people of Synthank continuously build mechanical friends for the inhabitants of the storyworld.

### Beautifully artificial

Aldiss wanted to question the ontology of humanity and its similarities to machines, he wanted to leave the audience with claustrophobia at the thought of David facing his true nature and the audience to do the same (This scenario is one he wished the movie to display) (ibid. XVII). David is a great deal like a ‘real’ human. He can love and he can ponder his existence. He possesses consciousness, so to this extent he is real. However, David can also be sent to a factory for reprogramming if he malfunctions. The notion of the psychiatrist, here, functions as a link between the two binaries. On the surface level, the psychiatrist appears to help David with his mental state, but he also makes David feel that he is “not real” (ibid. 8), which presumably means that he asks David questions that a programmer would ask. As mentioned, Monica’s ontology has never been questioned academically and this is a shame because the discussion of where Monica fits within the human-machine binary is much more interesting than where David fits within the binary because it is later revealed. To classify Monica as either human or machine is a complex matter and Aldiss alludes to both throughout the story. The most persuasive argument towards the ‘human’ category is

that Monica seems able to conceive a child or at least think that she can. She also possesses subject status as opposed to Teddy and David: “What do we do about *them*?” (ibid. 11). Henry creates a dichotomy between the ‘us’ that includes himself and Monica and the ‘them’ who are separate ‘others’ in the sentence. Teddy and David may not be considered objects linguistically, but they are still discursively constructed as different from him and Monica. Henry is also married to Monica, which further persuades the reader of her ‘humanness’.

However, there are equal indications that Monica is a robot. Everything that is ‘real’ in the short story is also ugly while everything beautiful is artificial. The garden is beautiful but artificial and so is the illusion from the hologram. The conversation between the serving-man and Henry reveals how beautiful things are artificial while ‘real’ things are coded ugly:

“‘How do you like it?’ he asked the serving man.

‘Roses occasionally suffer from black spot.’

‘These roses are guaranteed free from any imperfections.’

‘It is always advisable to purchase goods with guarantees, even if they cost slightly more.’”

(ibid. 9).

When Henry presents the house and garden to the serving-man, the android faultily believes that the roses are real and instantly relegates their value by insinuating that they could be infected with black spot. Henry then alludes to the artificiality of the roses with his note on the guaranteed perfection of the roses – plants cannot be ‘perfect’ if they are not artificial. The people of “Supertoys” are equally beautiful: “An earlier and less sophisticated generation would have regarded them as beautiful people, apart from their eyes. Their eyes were hard and calculating” (ibid. 2). The directors and their wives are beautiful and elegantly slender, but these descriptors are owed to artificial tools. The participants own a Crosswell to keep their figure with no work and they wear face masks to augment their appearance, however, their eyes are not beautiful. The calculating and hard eyes insinuate that the Synthank participants are unsympathetic but also that their eyes are ugly, since they are beautiful ‘apart’ from their eyes. Moreover, the participants wear facemasks that must not cover the eyes of the participants as this would obstruct their vision. The ‘real’ parts of them are therefore coded as ugly.

It is only the past generations that would consider the participants beautiful. In the storyworld they are not considered as such. By contrast, Monica is repeatedly described as beautiful:

“‘I’m sorry your wife couldn’t be with us to hear you,’ his neighbor said.



‘Monica prefers to stay at home thinking beautiful thoughts,’ said Swinton, maintaining a smile. ‘One would expect such a beautiful woman to have beautiful thoughts,’ said the neighbor.

Take your mind off my wife, you bastard, thought Swinton, still smiling” (ibid. 2-3).

Monica is so beautiful that even her thoughts must be beautiful and by contrast to the participants, her eyes are not ugly but rather described as “lambent” (ibid. 2) which connotes gentleness and brightness and is in direct contrast to the negatively laden description of the cold-eyed participants. Moreover, the ‘beautiful thoughts’ comment links the surface state beauty of Monica’s exterior to her interior. When beauty equals artificiality and Monica is someone who ‘thinks beautifully’, Aldiss links her cognitive inside with artificial neural networks. There are other indicators of artificiality in relation to Monica that include how Monica stops completely in her tracks numerous times (for example, when David and Teddy observe her from the window), reminiscent of how a robot would glitch or ‘load’, and when she receives Henry after work, she ‘radiates’ light. This description has some metaphorical value because the light can be interpreted as Monica’s happiness that has been converted from despair (here the contrast from the extreme conversion of emotion creates the light), but in a literal sense, the light could also be understood as coming from an artificial source inside of Monica’s body. Monica is also the only wife not present, and the other directors feel entitled to tease Henry with Monica’s beauty. If beauty did not equal artificiality, the insult would have no effect, but Henry is distressed by it.

As stated, Aldiss presents indications of Monica’s ontology that go in both directions and as such he allows the reader to make their own decision. Monica could be a robot, but it is more significant that she is ‘robot-like’. Androids are often metaphors for certain people or groups. Monica is a metaphor for a bad mother, and for this reason, she is robot-like. By allocating robotic features to Monica, Aldiss (although this might be subconsciously) succeeds in dehumanizing her for her failure as a mother. This means that the ontological categories of the two main characters of “Supertoys” reverse through their minds and actions – Monica is robot-like, and David is human-like. If the reader thinks of Monica as a robot rather than a human, it makes sense why she should find it difficult to connect with David. All analyzed works from this thesis suggest that robots possess emotions, but in general we think of robots as without feelings and abilities to love.

It is counterintuitive that beauty takes precedence over all else in society when beauty also equals artificiality and thereby the non-human. Intelligence is equally valued and together the valorization of these qualities seems to form a surface-oriented and perfectionist society.

Intelligence is an initial human quality that human scientists expand to robots in the hopes that intelligence in androids can solve communicative issues in human-robot relationships: “it is sad to reflect how many millions of people suffer from increasing loneliness and isolation. Our serving-man will be a boon to them; he will always answer, and the most vapid conversation cannot bore him” (ibid. 7). The serving man is not ‘stupid’ like former artificial life forms, and therefore he must be able to ease the loneliness of the inhabitants of the storyworld. Henry and the other directors believe that loneliness can be relieved by ‘always getting an answer’ and by the conversation partner ‘not appearing bored’. However, these assumptions only address surface-level symptoms of loneliness and not the deeper emotional causes. Loneliness can result from a deficiency of quantity of relationships but what Henry suggests is a mechanical relationship where one participant asks and the other answers or listens. Nothing suggests that the serving-man will be able to deepen the conversation or initiate activities. Therefore the “Supertoys” society privileges intelligence over emotions, and from the informative but inappropriate answer the serving-man when Henry asks him what he thinks of his new house, mechanical intelligence cannot replace emotional closeness.

#### How beauty repels

There is a deficiency in the circulation of emotion in the population of “Supertoys” which leads to loneliness. The inhabitants of the storyworld believe that this deficiency stems from a lack of intelligence in conversation partners but this is not the case. Subjects in “Supertoys” repel emotions because they arrange themselves and augment their appearances to look beautiful: “Monica Swinton, twenty-nine, of graceful shape and lambent eye, went and sat in her living room, arranging her limbs with taste” (ibid. 2). Monica’s shape is graceful, and she arranges it carefully. There is no repeated description of this action, but Monica organizes her body even though she is alone in the house, and while it underscores the beauty and elegance of her character, it also emphasizes the importance of always appearing beautiful. Aldiss has detailed the appearance of the characters’ bodies in general. The bodies of the people of Synthank are described as elegant and: “Some of them wore plastic face-masks popular at the time” (ibid. 2). Plastic masks augment the appearances of the people at the luncheon, and at least with the contemporary understanding of plastic, this material is rigid. Since the storyworld features a futuristic setting, the facemasks may have more plasticity than the non-bendable material of today, but since the reader is not informed of this

development, the most likely scenario is that of an inflexible material that hides the expressions of the wearer.

One of the biggest issues in the storyworld seems to be overpopulation and therefore it is ironic that loneliness is an issue as well. However, the inhabitants seem unable to connect with others, and this stems from a distaste and negation towards unpleasant emotions or surfaces. The reader encounters this issue from Monica and David who find it difficult to communicate with each other. Moreover, David struggles to share and recognize negative emotions generally: “MY DEAR MUMMY, HOW ARE YOU REALLY, DO YOU LOVE ME AS MUCH” (ibid. 8 sic). David writes numerous messages to his mother without finishing any of them, but if one were to guess the continued message it could be ‘do you love me as much as daddy?’ or ‘do you love me as much as a real son?’. Both would be ‘no’, as Monica does not love David, but all of the messages start cheerfully and end as soon as David reaches emotions that are of more consequence than those cheerful ones at the surface about the nice weather or Teddy’s help. David is worried about his humanity and about his mother’s love for him, but he has no way of expressing this. There is a pervading sense in “Supertoys” that things that are ‘ugly’ such as negative feelings or appearances are eliminated. They do not disappear – even if David cannot express his emotions, these are still there, and so is the grey and overpopulated world outside of the Swintons’ garden – but they become invisible like the illusion from the whologram.

Subjects are surfaces from which object feelings travel and stick, and emotions also “shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over time” (Ahmed 4). However, if subjects arrange and augment their bodies into different shapes than natural ones, they do not account for the histories and former actions that past object feelings have left on them. Settings and people in “Supertoys” are therefore left without indentations from former object feelings because they are altered, and people’s bodies are reshaped both mechanically (by arranging their bodies to appear graceful) and aesthetically (by augmenting their physical appearance). These rearrangements of bodies place the bodies in weird positions and make it difficult for other subjects to ‘read’ them adequately. When Ahmed infers that objects shape the surfaces of bodies, what is meant is that the feelings are visible on the body and can be read by others. However, if a body is rearranged to appear more elegant, then the object feelings cease to be visible. This is even more apparent in relation to the face masks that directly hide the authentic facial expressions of the wearers. These augmentations then erase the histories of bodies and incapacitate the reader from circulating adequate object feelings to the subject. Monica communicates some of her negative

affect that she feels towards David to David, but he finds it difficult to communicate back because Monica ‘body language’ is invisible. Their communication then breaks down and David tries to hide from Monica rather than having one-sided conversations with her. When there is communication between subjects where one or both wear a façade, they cannot circulate the right object feelings and development becomes unattainable. The situation is comparable to hiding one’s true feelings behind a smile. The society of “Supertoys” is a dystopia where most of the population suffers from loneliness. They attempt to fix this issue by creating their own conversation partners. The inhabitants want children to have someone who is like themselves that they can talk to, and they build intelligent technology to substitute human connection. None of these measures fix the root issue, however. The attempts at avoiding the aftermath of a world devastated by overpopulation and technological development motivate people to beautify the world and themselves with filters but these filters also repel emotional connection and any attempt at building a fruitful relationship.

### Chapter 3: Klara and Loneliness

This last analysis of *Klara and the Sun* from 2021 by Kazuo Ishiguro is not as extensively researched as *Electric Sheep* partly due to its age and partly because *Electric Sheep* has reached a level of fame that makes it canon for SF readers. Still, it is a novel that has been reviewed by some scholars, as opposed to “Supertoys”. Researchers center their interpretation around themes of emotions, posthumanism, othering, personhood, capitalism, and literary devices. Othering is explored by observing power relations between the different groups that the novel presents. Banerjee (2022) and Süt Güngör (2022) accomplish this by comparing the AFs with slaves or the undervaluation of non-lifted kids with the eugenics movement, but the theme of othering has also been explored in a more general sense (Simonetti 2023 and Sun 2022).

Sahu and Karmakar (2022) explore the novel posthumanly, arguing that *Klara and the Sun* showcases that social robotics are meant to fail at the project of imitating humanity. Ajeesh and Rumini (2022), and Du (2022) misalign with this interpretation and contend that the novel is instead about offering a new and more positive view of AI where social robots are not devoid of emotion, while other scholars such as Meija and Nikolaidis (2022) position themselves neutrally, preferring to revel in the ambiguousness of the possible dissolving boundaries between human and machine.

The discussions of posthuman boundaries bleed into further issues of personhood. Klara is designed to emit empathy and yet confusion arises about whether to address Klara as an object or a person (Sahu & Karmakar 2022). According to Du (2022), Klara gains a sense of personhood in the

reader's mind because of her affective labor. In fact, Klara's love for Josie transcends that of her mother due to its selfless nature, and for this reason, Du believes that the novel's contestation is to treat all benevolently whether robot or human and, in this sense, she infuses Klara with personhood. Steneke (2022), similarly takes up the conundrum of personhood and reaches the conclusion that whether Klara has personhood or not is not a readily answerable question that can be checked into a 'yes' or 'no' box.

This notion of personhood to Klara becomes problematic and discussible because of its implications in relation to capitalism. The affective labor of Klara brings into question the ethics of commodification of such affective labor in a capitalist society. The commodification of affective labor is a theme that Du (2022) speculates about, while Süt Güngör (2022) explores capitalism in a Marxist sense, arguing that the society of *Klara and the Sun* is one that presents a divide between 'lifted' and 'unlifted' kids (kids with superior and inferior genes) that is ultimately rooted in capitalism. Montague (2022) aligns more with Du and Süt Güngör in her reflection on capitalism as one that deems some bodies disposable. This task, she argues, is accomplished linguistically by using euphemisms. Stacy (2022) has also reflected on the literary devices although hers is an outlier compared to other articles as she takes up none of the abovementioned themes and focuses solely on linguistic devices in their invocation of postmodernism.

Emotions such as love and empathy, or loneliness are themes that most articles reflect on to some degree, although loneliness is the most relevant for this paper. For scholars like Mejia and Nikolaidis (2022) the function of loneliness as an emotion that Klara cannot grasp in the novel is to inform the reader of Klara's inability to perfectly imitate social dynamics between humans. Du (2022), Sahu and Karmakar (2022), Monague (2022), and Stenseke (2022) only mention loneliness to summarize the novel. Ajeesh and Rukmini (2022), and Süt Güngör (2022) delve a little deeper into the loneliness theme and consider it an existential issue. Mabrouk (2022) presents the most elaborate interpretation of how loneliness works in the novel. Loneliness is a delayer – it is the feeling that must come before the reunion of people, and loneliness or her perception and observations of it anthropomorphizes Klara. While I agree to some extent with this conditional perspective on loneliness, I regard loneliness as more painful and destroying. However, Mabrouk also utilizes the novel as a cultural artifact – as a prism from which to reach new understandings of human emotion in a technologized world. By comparing Klara to the use of real-world social robotics, they speculate about what the continual outsourcing of technology will do to our relationships. Technology is meant to enhance life although it also steals away from our mental

health. Screens fill more and more of our daily life and replace the time we spend in the company of others. “After all, social skills are like other skills in life. You have to practice them to get better” (Mabrouk 463). The point that Mabrouk makes is that technology disrupts the time that we spend with others, which ultimately isolates us.

This is an interpretation that I agree with. While loneliness is not a theme that other scholars have paid much attention to, Mabrouk has done just this. However, as was the case with Dorovic (2022), there is no description or justification for interpreting certain characters as lonely. Mabrouk, moreover, offers a different type of analysis that is concerned more with the culture of social robotics and less with loneliness in SF or the function of loneliness more clearly in the novel. The analysis is more culturally minded than literary and contributes in this way. I hope to add to the existing literature by commenting on notions of care work, replacement/obsolescence, and social interaction. Under the theme of social interaction, I will reflect on love which has been done before but I will also reflect on rejection and how rejection mechanisms as well as isolation factor into loneliness and how loneliness moves among bodies in the novel.

#### Newer models and abandonment

*Klara and the Sun* is filled with fear of replacement. As Klara stands in the store window, she notes that the AFs (artificial friends) that pass by might not want their children to notice the newer models (herself and Rosa (another AF) because the sight of ‘newer’ and ‘better’ could result in their obsolescence. Klara in turn fears that she will be replaced by the newer B3 model that enters the market a little after her. The storyworld features a society where technological development has rendered the non-modified homo sapiens obsolete in the workforce outside of a few examples such as Josie’s mother and Melania the housekeeper. Paul, Josie’s dad, is an example of someone who has been superseded in their work:

“I really do wonder if it’s worth it. You hanging on this way.’

‘I’m not sure I understand. What is it I’m hanging onto?’

‘Goodwins. Your law department. This whole...world of work. Your every waking moment determined by some contract you once signed.’

‘Please let’s not go over this again. I’m sorry about what happened to you, Paul. I’m sorry and I’m still angry. But I keep hanging on, as you put it, because on the day I stop, Josie’s world, my world, would collapse.’” (Ishiguro 212).

When the reader encounters Paul for the first time, he appears bitter, and his bitterness manifests selfishly in how he attempts to persuade Chris to give up her job despite its inherent value. Paul was downgraded from a top position where he felt valued for his potential and talent. This means that his self-confidence has suffered. He tries profusely to appear happy and in control despite the decline in material comforts, happiness, and self-importance. The figure of Paul functions as a representative of those who are obsolete. Obsolescence is a great tragedy for the people who encounter it, and these people are not necessarily emotionally equipped to handle their loss without taking it out on other people as collateral.

On the outskirts of the story, the reader is informed about a 'community' that Paul is a member of and that Helen brashly claims is a fascist ensemble. Paul contends that his community has "no aggressive agenda beyond defending [themselves] should the need arise" (ibid. 257) to which Helen recounts "It's just that you did say you were all white people and all from the ranks of the former professional elites. You did say that. And that you were having to arm yourselves quite extensively against other types. Which does all sound a little on the fascistic side..." (ibid. 258). Conclusively, the changes to the society have not only affected the inhabitants on a personal level. Society is spiraling into polarization which is resulting in rising militant tensions. What group is positioned as 'other types' is never stated clearly but the reader can infer that these 'others' are people of color from the working or middle class, since this group would encapsulate what is opposite the white professional elite that Paul is a member of. This would indicate a classical conflict between classes and races – one that is present in reality but seems to be pushed to extremes in the storyworld. Süt Güngör suggests that the social relations between 'lifted' and 'unlifted' individuals deteriorate because both groups fear obsolescence (Süt Güngör 1531), and I will add to this by stating that competition between groups will drive people apart. In competition, individuals are isolated because the objective is to be better than others to win. In such a relationship, subjects become enemies rather than friends. The subject must not show vulnerability because this could be used against them and there are no breaks because there is always the fear of falling behind. As is the case with Paul's 'community', opposition towards a group can link together the opposed sides as is also the case in team sports, but interrelationships across groups become unachievable. When people are separated into groups it shrinks the number of lovable subjects because some subjects are 'stuck' together while others are separated from the subject.

The situation regarding Paul's community is similar to the way that Ahmed considers hate groups. Subjects are 'stuck' together through their shared love of an ideal object. This ideal object is

both for the hate groups and for Paul's community some version of a society which no longer exists. The subjects that 'stick' together are subjects that share their ideality and, in that sense, share a likeness. In the case of Ahmed's hate groups, the shared likeness is whiteness since the ideal object is a conservative version of the 'nation' (Ahmed 129). In relation to the 'community', the shared likeness is that the members of the 'community' "all came down the same road" (Ishiguro 213). Here the 'stickiness' comes from the shared obsolescence of a similar career or working environment. The ideal object of the community is never specified, but since Paul and the other members of the community feel self-important about their former place in society, their ideal object must be a nation or society where they will once again be in a high-ranking social position. Since the love of the ideal object can never be returned (the society that that the community desires does not exist), subjects "[take on] the quality of the object" (Ahmed 130). This is done to compensate for the grief of losing the object (ibid.). By taking on the quality of the ideal object, the members can 'raise' themselves to a higher social position metaphorically through their love. To develop a relationship with someone from an opposing group or outside the community is a betrayal of the ideal object because the subject must love others that can return the ideality (ibid. 129) and to love opposingly is to not love the ideal object enough. This hints to some of the requirements necessary to stay in the group. Groups with a shared ideal object usually require that subjects love the ideal somewhat equally. The 'community' is a violent group, so commitment must logically be a requirement for the group to avoid whistle-blowers. The sharing of the ideal object was what enabled the 'sticking' together so it makes sense that subjects should become 'unstuck' if one stopped viewing the loved object as 'ideal'. The subjects who refuse to take sides or show the required amount of love for the ideal, fall outside of groups and risk loneliness from having little or no subjects available to form relationships with.

The society of *Klara and the Sun* is one that is on the outskirts of political conflict, a result of the dissolving structures. The talents, qualifications, and other knowledge resources that people have spent their lives acquiring suddenly have no value, and for characters like Paul, the obsolescence signifies a demarcation. Paul and others that used to occupy an elevated social position in society will not accept their downgraded status which is why he is willing to fight "if another group won't respect [them], and what [they] have" (Ishiguro 258). From this statement, Paul invokes the former position that he used to occupy – others should 'respect' him. From the latter clause, Paul emphasizes resources. He and the other part of the former professional elite possess something that others want or at least do not respect, but the desired object is left



ambiguous to the reader. Since Paul mentions respect, the desired object does not have to be concrete but could be qualifications or skills that position the group above others hierarchically, at least in their own eyes. However, he could also point to material goods that he and his peers possess because of their former status and monetary resources. The dissolvent of former hierarchies places people in a transitional flux state, where some try to hold on to their former status while others attempt to equalize conditions.

However, it should be noted why some humans have been rendered obsolete in the storyworld. While some hierarchies dissolve and render parts of the elite obsolete, new hierarchies arise between the ‘lifted’ and the ‘unlifted’ (Sun 5). Banerjee argues that Klara and Rick share a similar ‘otherness’ since one is deemed an object and the other is deemed genetically undesirable (21). If you have not received gene editing, most colleges are unavailable to you and people regard those who are ‘unlifted’ with pity and distance:

“‘Seems so bright too. Such a shame a boy like that should have missed out.’

‘I wouldn’t even have known,’ another voice said. ‘He presents himself so well. Is that a British accent he has?’

‘What’s important,’ the food blending woman said, ‘is that this next generation learn how to be comfortable with every sort of person’ (Ishiguro 77-78).

Genetic editing is not an old practice in the novel, which is clear because none of the adults have undergone it (why many have also become obsolete), but despite this, there are already ‘othering’ structures in place that deem those without genetic enhancement ‘worse’ than those who have. This is clear from the ‘every sort of person’ statement which positions Rick as an ‘other’ to the ‘lifted’ children and the ‘I wouldn’t even have known’ statement that illustrates that the mothers regard Rick with awe or dread as if he had an infectious disease. Both statements demonstrate how an unlifted child is positioned beneath the faculty of others and regarded as less. The mothers also regard Rick with pity – he has ‘missed out’ and that is a ‘shame’.

The cost, if any, of genetic editing is never clarified in the novel. Certain circumstances allude to an expense, such as how everything surrounding ‘lifting’ seems expensive like the online tutors and the possible medical bills should the child become ill from the procedure. Josie, the ‘lifted’ child whom the reader follows in the novel is also a part of the upper class which is evident from how her mother can employ a cleaning lady and buy her an expensive social robot. Furthermore, it is implied that the tutors who are employed to prepare children for college are private tutors since they are named ‘home-tutors’. The expense of a private tutor would add to the

cost of ‘lifting’ further. Even if ‘lifting’ was free, the cost of medical bills or private tutoring would be too great an expense for some; especially if one factors in the difficulty of obtaining a job. Therefore, the divide between ‘lifted’ and ‘unlifted’ children is one of rich and poor, and the lifting project excludes inhabitants from higher education and opportunities for happiness, just as it isolates them (Süt Gögür 1526).

Rick feels excluded from the ‘lifted’ kids. The new genetic hierarchy is mediated through language in an exclusionary way that isolates both the ‘lifted’ and ‘unlifted’ individuals. The ‘lifted’ children ostracize Rick by speaking to him in the third person: “‘Why doesn’t he eat his chocolate?’ Missy said. ‘He’s just holding it.’” (Ishiguro 84). This comment makes Rick appear as a spectacle and it excludes him from the others as someone who must be different and incapable of holding up social decor. However, the ‘lifted’ children feel isolated from the incentive to keep up a façade of perfection. As a ‘lifted’ individual one holds an elevated social position, but this position is always vulnerable and can be overtaken by a more capable individual. In a society that discards individuals for ‘upgraded’ versions, humans fear replacement, so the posthuman individual must always appear perfect. The need for perfection to not be superseded make the ‘lifted’ individuals turn a perfected image outwards (Sun 2-4): “people often felt the need to prepare a side of themselves to display to passers-by – as they might in a store window – and that such a display needn’t be taken so seriously once the moment had passed” (Ishiguro 96). Josie is described as having the ability to ‘change’, meaning that she is not always authentic outwardly. Her social position of status is more favorable than Rick's and yet she is the one who attempts to maintain a facade just as all her guests are.

The social issues surrounding obsolescence drives loneliness partly in *Klara and the Sun*. A great proportion of the population of the storyworld have left the workforce against their will and this has led them to lose material and social resources and has established new hierarchies among the obsolete. However, the remembrance of past resources leads some people to reject these new hierarchies, and this polarizes society. Other hierarchies are established as well between the genetically modified and those who are not. These hierarchies create a chasm between groups and isolate them from each other. However, the constant fear of obsolescence also isolates in a global sense. Individuals who fear obsolescence are forced into competition with others which drives these people apart. Instead of working together, subjects begin working against each other to win the competition and stay in the workforce. However, this tension is constant as new technology is constantly developed and the individual must maintain their competitive position. Obsolescence is a classical theme when one takes it out of the context of the workforce. We like to believe ourselves

unique and special to the people in our inner circles because if we are not then we can be replaced by someone better. Klara is concerned that she will be replaced by a newer model and the 'lifted' kids feel that they have to perform so that someone else will not take their fragile position. In a society where anyone can be replaced, it becomes difficult to forge relationships because these are perpetually vulnerable to outsiders. This is particularly evident in relation to Klara's task of replacing Josie. We think of a child as irreplaceable to their parent, yet Chris is willing to do just this if she dies.

When there is willingness to 'upgrade' genes, society is implicitly saying that the individual who is not 'perfected' is not as valuable. As a result of this, all the relationships that the novel portrays are broken. Both Helen and Chris are divorced and both women have a somewhat strained relationship with their children – there is a sense that something about the conditions of the world is isolating characters from each other. Chris is impacted by the loss of importance of human uniqueness when Paul loses his job because a robot is better at it than him. Helen might have lost her job as an actress for similar reasons. Both women are also impacted by the implications of their children's potential transhuman accession if they elect to edit their genes. Their worlds as well as all other inhabitants' are filled with the knowledge that the subject must be 'more' than themselves – they must be a perfected, augmented individual to secure resources that were formerly given. When subjects do not feel that they are enough in themselves, they do not feel that they are enough for others either. Therefore, a transhuman individual, although essentially an 'upgrade' version of themselves, is one that has lost its uniqueness.

### Robots as social prosthesis

Klara is a robot “designed to compensate for human imperfection” (Sun 3) and as such I will argue that she acts as a social prosthesis, making humans perfectly social. I root this understanding in history where artificial servants have been viewed as prostheses with the potential of becoming proxies if their human creators lacked wisdom (LaGrandeur 1). Sociality has received the status of currency in the isolated society of *Klara and the Sun*. To enter college the individual must possess social skills:

“‘Sure you do, honey. It’s not enough just being clever. You have to get along with others.’  
 ‘I know how to get along with others, Mom. Just not with this crowd.’ ‘This crowd happens to be your peer group. And when you get to college, you’ll have to deal with all kinds. By the time I got to college, I’d had years of being alongside other kids each and

every day. But for you and your generation, it's going to be pretty tough unless you put in some work now. The kids who don't do well in college are always the ones who didn't attend enough meetings." (Ishiguro 73)

Social skills are not a formal requirement for college entrance, but they are necessary to be successful. In the storyworld, friendships are no longer effortless, but a skill that must be trained by going to 'meetings'. This is also where AFs and other social technology come into the picture. Social technology acts as prostheses and the outsourcing of friendship to an AF is normalized to a point where children are expected to possess one, as if children are incapable of connecting with others on their own: "A child like that, with no AF, would surely be lonely" (Ishiguro 12). The society of *Klara and the Sun* perceive technology as necessary to mediate social connection. One of the boys at Josie's meeting has a 'pet object' in his pocket that functions to soothe. However, while some essential social functions have been outsourced to technology, this same technology does not socialize the children who are still lacking in social skills and overall empathy. In the analysis of *Electric Sheep*, I found that lack of circulation generates loneliness and low empathy, and this is the case for the children of *Klara and the Sun* as well.

In relation to the toy dog, I am employing the understanding of technology in a broader Aristotelian sense. LaGrandeur's interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy regards slaves and other 'tools' as technological prosthetics to a human owner. La Grandeur exemplifies this with the account of the pilot of a ship who employs slaves to row, thereby mobilizing the ship. In effect of the motion of the ship by command of the pilot, the slaves, and ores become an extension of the pilot (LaGrandeur 9-14). Danny (the boy at Josie's meeting) keeps his object in his pocket and uses the same pet object to 'extend' his social capabilities thereby rendering the object a social prosthesis. Klara is similarly asked to accompany or offer social support to the characters of the novel in situations where she becomes an extension of the social capabilities of the character. She must extend Rick's social capabilities in his conversation with Vance and during the fight between Josie and Rick, Klara is appointed to deliver Josie's drawing to Rick, and in the encounter, she acts as a mediator between the two. During the encounter, there is a degree of manipulation since Klara circulates emotions, as a proxy, that are not the ones of Josie. It is Klara and Rick's assessment that Josie should be the one to apologize. However, Josie holds on to the object of anger because apologizing would mean that she had to take responsibility for her actions and take on the object of the pain that she has caused Rick - to recognize his pain and grant it the status of an event in the world. When Josie sends Klara instead of herself, she extends herself outwards, but by using Klara

as a proxy for herself she is also outsourcing the difficult emotions to Klara. It is only Josie's intention for Klara to deliver the letter and not for her to do emotional labor for her, but the result is the same. Klara appropriates Rick's pain and neutralizes it to sadness: "I agree Josie's words were sometimes unkind" (Ishiguro 158). She acknowledges Rick's feelings and tells him what he wants to hear. Thereby, she neutralizes Rick's feelings by elucidating the emotions that Josie hides or that a more sympathetic person would feel (that Josie said what she did because she is afraid of losing Rick). The outsourcing of difficult feelings to technology is also prevalent in relation to Chris who requests Klara to 'continue' Josie for her.

Artificial servants that take the place of their creators or human masters is one of the most prevalent themes of robot-featured stories (Hermann np). The difference between them and *Klara and the Sun* is that it is the 'master' (Chris) who employs the artificial servant to become the proxy. Chris wishes Klara to live Josie's life just as Josie would have, continuing all her relationships, even love interests. The scenario is Pinocchio-like with Chris promising that Klara can be a 'real' girl (Mabrouk 456) (The Pinocchio narrative is in general a typical trope in robot stories. It was also present in *AI: Artificial Intelligence*). There is much to say about the ethics of such a request but that must be a subject for future research. Here, as in the former example, a character attempts to outsource difficult emotions to technology. Instead of feeling grief for a lost object of love, Chris faultily attempts to copy the object. The first copy is poorly made (a bereavement doll), but this is not the reason why Chris cannot love the Sal AF. Labor and time must be invested into the object for it to acquire an affective quality (Ahmed 127) and this cannot be transferred:

"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" (Ishiguro 338).

What makes Josie irreplaceable is not her in effect of herself but rather the time and labor spent on infusing her body with love. When the human characters (Chris and Mr. Capaldi) believe that she can, it is due to a posthuman logic about human insignificance. Contemporary society has seen a shift from anthropocentrism and Western humanism that view humans as unique and special to a posthuman and transhumanist ideology that claims the opposite (Ajeesh & Rumini np). This view is mirrored by the characters in this instance. Since there is nothing inherently unique in humans, their essence must also be transferable to other objects such as machines. This is also why Capaldi

informs Chris that: “The second Josie won’t be a copy” (Ishiguro 233), but there is some irony in this statement since ‘a second Josie’ would exactly indicate a copy (a second version). This means that Capaldi is both confirming and negating his own ideology and this uncertainty about the transferability or uniqueness of the novel remains throughout although most scholars affiliate with one or the other.

The effect of emotion outsourcing is that characters do not learn to tackle difficult or negatively laden emotions. This is the situation for both Chris and Josie. In a situation where Josie should have lost her friend from holding on to anger instead of accepting fault that could convert guilt to forgiveness, her technological prosthesis mediated the situation for her and circulated the necessary object feelings for her. In the case of Chris, even if Klara becomes a proxy for her daughter, she is effectively a social prosthesis for Chris. This would make Klara a potential border figure to separate Chris from her grief and act as an extension of Chris’ social capabilities since Chris would not have to suffer the negative emotions of grief. In effect of Klara’s robotic nature, she cannot exist for herself, which makes her exist for Josie’s relations and especially Chris. This means that she remains a prosthetic device even if she superficially received the legal status of ‘human being’.

### Rejection

Relationships are at the forefront of *Klara and the Sun* as the novel speculates on what makes some relationships work while others end in pain or rejection. There is an overall sense of loneliness throughout the novel and while this is partly due to the isolation that ill children experience, this is not the full picture. The humans in the novel that possess social technology are less sympathetic and seem more socially handicapped, such as the ‘lifted’ children at the meeting. In relation to AFs, there is an added issue in the unequal power hierarchy that does not make a reciprocal relationship possible. AFs can be discarded, thrown around a room, and most significantly they have to obey their masters, which means that they are not allowed to circulate appropriate emotions to the children as these emotions could cause the child pain. The question then arises about the effects of socialization by an entity that cannot reject.

With *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro does not repeat the classical tale of evil robots (Du 555). The robot main character, Klara, vastly outperforms her human relations in both empathy and self-sacrifice. It is significant to the story that Klara is not human, and this factor shapes the narrative voice that is limited and somewhat dispassionate (much like the main characters of Ishiguro’s *The*

*Remains of the Day*), which contrasts with the plot that offers death, obsolescence and the potential of Klara overtaking Josie's life. Klara's robotic nature means that the novel unfolds slowly with the readers gaining increasing knowledge about the world in Klara's pace (Meija & Nikolaidis 303). Therefore, the novel becomes a growing-up story as Klara ages and gains wisdom during the progression of the story. The reader's access to knowledge is completely shaped by Klara and her perception of the world. "As a machine, she sees the world through image-classification algorithms, which calculate the possibility of an object in an image and then localize this object by enclosing it in a 'bounding box'. So, Klara constantly breaks the world into a grid" (Mabrouk 456). This makes the world appear as a Paul Klee painting (A famous painter who painted mostly squares) and adds to the overall world-building (ibid.). In other novels of Ishiguro's that scholars compare *Klara and the Sun* to (*Never Let Me Go* and *The Remains of the Day*), the narrative voice is that of a human (although Kathy from *Never Let Me Go* is a clone) and the limited point of view adds a layer of personality to these characters because they have agency as humans, which means that if information is withheld, it is because they deliberately exclude information. This is not case for *Klara and the Sun* to the same extent. Although Klara claims to possess many feelings, she still has robot status and as such is not expected to harbor hidden desires or feelings. However, there are some instances where such expectations are debatable. Returning to the aforementioned scene when Chris offers Klara a relationship with Rick if she continues Josie: "That boy. Rick. I can see he's something to you. Don't speak, let me speak. What I'm saying is that Rick worships Josie, always has done. If you continue Josie, you'll have not just me but him" (Ishiguro 237). Chris evidently is under the impression that Klara will be persuaded by the promise of love in exchange for Josie's 'continuation'. She offers both herself and Rick as payment, and in her statement that 'I can see he's something to you', she presents to the reader a novel perspective on Klara's personality that indicates hidden feelings for Rick that Klara has not disclosed. This opens up the possibility that Klara has hidden desires that she deliberately hides from the reader because the feelings are unsympathetic (Rick is Josie's boyfriend so Klara is not supposed to like him). However, there is also a possibility that Chris anthropomorphizes Klara and project hidden desires onto Klara whose own interest in Rick is solely for his importance in Josie's life.

Klara's dissimilarity to a human and by extension other AFs' is what drives the poor socialization of the 'lifted' children. The relationship between Klara and Josie is clearly reciprocated but as an AF, Klara and other robots are programmed to care for their children and are not equals to them. Moreover, the friendship that is the core incentive of the AF is only obtainable

through the child's perception of them as such (Steneke 5). Therefore, some form of personhood or perceived of autonomy is significant in the relationship between the child and the AF. Klara's personhood is deliberated both by characters in the novel and by scholars outside of the novel. Inside the novel, Klara receives linguistic subject status ('I') instead of object status ('it') (Saha & Karmarkar np), but there is some speculation as to whether she should be addressed as a guest or a vacuum cleaner (Ishiguro 162). Saha and Karmarkar argue that Klara is an "ontologically hollowed object" (np) and that true reciprocity in relationships between robots and humans is impossible. Robots are bound to, at some point, reveal their uncanniness (Saha & Karmarkar np). However, this paper finds this view to be a reduction as it places no emphasis on Klara's internal world. Klara possesses consciousness and a rich internal world just as she has the faculty of rational thought and Theory of Mind (Steneke). Steneke considers the aspects of moral status and agency in relation to an inwards and outwards perspective of Klara. In relation to these he considers if she is a moral agent and if she possesses moral status. Moral status indicates sentience – a being that is cared about solely for its own sake. Others try not to hurt a being with moral status and attempts may be made to help the being achieve pleasure. A moral agent is able to consider moral aspects of right and wrong and the notions is also linked to autonomy, to think of a being as a person or a moral agent, they must be considered to possess the ability to make their own choices (ibid. 1-2). From an inside perspective of Klara, she possesses both moral agency and status and should, if only this perspective were to be considered, receive personhood. From a transhumanist perspective Klara is a sentient AI and falls on level 5 in terms of sentience which also makes her eligible for personhood.

However, there are complex reason rooted in economic factor as well as the pre-existing perceptions of androids and robots that hinders others from perceiving Klara as a person (Steneke). Scholars such as Mejia and Nikolaidis (2022), Sahu and Karmarkar (2021), and Sun (2022) strongly disagree that Klara has personhood, but what makes *Klara and the Sun* different from the other novels is that the story is narrated through Klara. Both *Electric Sheep* and "Supertoys" are third person narrators, and although the narrator in "Supertoys" is attached to David, the perspective is not internal, and as such the reader receives only limited information about David's inner world. Contrastly, Klara tells her own story, the reader has access to her emotions, and it is due to these emotions that it becomes difficult to think of Klara as 'just' a robot. When others see Klara from the outside, however, she appears more as an advanced Teddy Bear (Mabrouk 463).

From this, it can be inferred that AFs do not receive personhood even if there is some indication that they should receive this legal status. Furthermore, this means that friendships



between AFs and humans are not equal, which is not necessarily condemning to a friendship although it might strain it. More condemning is the lack of autonomy to reject the other in case of wrongdoing. Klara has a mind of her own and the autonomy to execute the excursion to the barn where she meets and talks to the sun as well as her elaborate plot to destroy the coatings machine even to elicit help from intelligent others in the shape of Paul. However, she never strays off her core objective which is to care for Josie (Steneke 6-7). Klara's autonomy is somewhat limited by programming, but these limitations still offer her a degree of free will (ibid.). It is an issue that the AFs lack the autonomy to reject their children because it reduces the AFs to toys and in effect, not real companions.

The reader is informed peripherally of the condition that most AFs live under. A girl who tries to initially buy Klara has many other AFs already, and some AFs are stored away in cupboards. Similarly, at Josie's meeting some of the guests attempt to throw Klara around like they do with their own AFs:

“‘Just throw her over. Let's test her coordination.’

‘She ain't your AF, Scrub.’ Danny's hands were still tight around my elbows. ‘You need to ask Josie about something like that.’

‘Hey, Josie,’ Scrub called. ‘It's okay, right? My B3, you can swing her right through the air, lands on her feet every time. Come on, Danny. Throw her over onto the sofa. She won't get damaged.’” (Ishiguro 86-87).

AFs are viewed as toys and therefore Scrub attempts to convince Josie to let him toss Klara through the air by appealing to the low risk of external damage. There is no regard for Klara's internal state in his treatment. It is also significant that the mode of use is not the supposedly intentional one which is to ward off loneliness. Moreover, although not all the children attempt to manhandle Klara, only Josie is concerned about Klara's feelings, and this treatment seems to repeat itself in all instances where the reader is introduced to a child-AF pairing. AFs are manhandled and disregarded. Only Klara seems to be used as she is intended to be. The AFs are sold and treated as objects and for this reason, true friendship does not arise between the children and their robots. Because Klara is not a human subject and because she is a somewhat dispassionate narrator, the reader can sometimes only interpret her emotions (assuming that the reader believes she is capable of affective states) through deduction. Josie states that Klara does not like to be manhandled and Danny's grip is described as ‘tight’. Yet Klara does not possess the agency to refuse her treatment. Children who rely on technology for relationships are not socialized to function properly in social

situations and as a result, all the ‘lifted’ children seem socially handicapped. Josie displays poor social skills (towards Rick) because of the object feelings that the other children circulate and which ‘stick’ to her, and this is partly what makes Josie ‘change’.

The desired quality of social robotics is a design that allows the human user to never feel rejected or hurt but will still appear as human as possible. Here the issue is oxymoronic because humans desire an entity that is both with and without autonomy (Cave & Dihal). Klara is not in a position to ask the boys not to throw her which means that she cannot circulate appropriate affect to the boys. In this case, the adequate object feeling might be anger or fear, and if this was circulated, the boys would see that their eagerness or happiness was converted by Klara into negative object feelings, and the boys would discover themselves to be the sources of the indents left by the body of Klara from the negative affect. There is a possibility that the boys would learn empathy from discovering their role in others’ pain.

The relationship between an AF and a human child is one where one party circulates appropriate object feelings but the other only circulates positively laden object feelings back. Constant access to a relationship is a human desire (ibid.108-109) but love requires affective labor for the object to be infused with love. There is no example in the novel that any of the ‘lifted’ kids perform affective labor in their relationships with AFs. Instead, they valorize mechanical features such as athletic and vocal abilities, and when Josie presents Klara’s more internal observational ability to act as an intermediate category, the response is an unemotional “okay” (Ishiguro 89) whereafter the speaker attempts to administer a test of this feature which functions to quantify the ability. Contrarily, Klara’s observational skill factors into her qualitative social ability. The lack of affective labor infused into the AFs incapacitates these from building a reciprocal relationship with their owners. Children are not socialized by the social robots because they are technological others that can be disregarded.

There exists also the complication that AFs may circulate disingenuous object feelings to their owners. Some AFs are treated deplorably, yet their programming prevents them from reacting correspondingly. Steneke argues that Klara’s “programming seems to prevent her from prioritizing her own subjective suffering in relation to others” (8). This does not signify that AFs do not possess negative thoughts about their owners, but they might be incapable of expressing them overtly. When Chris implies that Klara has no emotions, Klara answers her with: I believe I have many feelings. The more I observe, the more feelings become available to me” (Ishiguro 111). Klara states that she feels many different things. Most human feelings are negative feelings. If one

considers the basic human emotions: disgust, anger, surprise, fear, happiness, and sadness (“Our Basic Emotions”), only happiness is a positive emotion. This increases the likelihood that Klara or other AFs could feel negatively about their owners. However, when Klara is still in the store, she witnesses a fight between two taxi drivers: “I tried to feel in my own mind the anger the drivers had experienced (...) I tried to find the beginnings of such a feeling in my mind. It was useless, though and I’d always end up laughing at my own thoughts” (Ishiguro 22). Klara finds it difficult to feel anger, and although this emotion might have been learned later. AFs might not be capable of feeling anger, and this is why they do not respond to unfair treatment.

However, there are plenty of examples that Klara or other AFs feels negatively in relation to their owners. When Klara spots an unhappy AF-child pairing she discovers that the owner’s rejection of the boy AF makes him look weary. She also attributes loneliness to Rosa when she is at her second visit to the sun. For her inner eye she: “saw the lonely woman sitting by herself in Mr Vance’s diner, unnoticed even by the Diner Manager, pressing her forehead against the window towards the dark street outside, and it occurred to me how very much the woman resembled Rosa” (ibid. 302). When the manager visits Klara during her slow fade, the reader learns that Rosa did not have a good relationship with her owner and therefore it is significant that Klara in her clairvoyant-like manner attributes loneliness to Rosa. This implies that Rosa did not feel positively about her owner. It is possible that AFs are programmed to be incapable of feeling anger towards their children as an Asimovian preventive method against a robot-riot, but they may be capable of other negative affect. Ahmed does not account for simulated affect, but this does not mean that such a phenomenon does not exist. AFs are androids and with their mechanical bodies, it is possible that they can simulate emotions on a different scale than humans. Inauthentic circulation might have no effect if there is no unmasking of the fact. This is especially true since emotions are non-ontological (Ahmed 6). If emotions contain no substance, inauthentic emotion circulation might be possible with no consequence for the subject. However, unmasking could provoke an experience of uncanniness that would render it difficult for the subject to continue the interaction (Sahu & Karmarkar np) which could explain the number of disregarded AFs. In *Electric Sheep*, emotions had a similar quality of simulation, although these emotions were circulated between people, in both stories the object feelings stem from an electrical apparatus. This opens up the interpretation that children and AFs circulate nothing to each other, and therefore the child will gain nothing from the relationship and remain lonely.

### Love and loneliness

Josie survives her illness and goes on to form successful relationships with others before leaving for college. This means that at least some of the ‘lifted’ children succeed in developing social skills despite their initially poor performances. However, as the children become young adults, the house is frequented with visits from Josie’s friends which makes Klara move into the closet to not be in their way. As the children age, they stop playing with their AFs, and therefore they stop outsourcing affect and maintaining their non-reciprocal relationships. While the novel ends with various unresolved conflicts such as brooding conflict and AI fear, it ends on a happy note in this regard. Moreover, Josie and Klara’s relationship is reciprocal. Josie cares about Klara and her internal states: “do you mind if Klara and I go up to my room for a minute? Klara just loves to watch the sunset and if we don’t go now we’ll miss it” (Ishiguro 62). Risking reproach from her mother, Josie asks if she and Klara can wait to have dinner because Klara loves the sun.

No character ever states that they are lonely, yet the emotion permeates the story. Klara is built to ward off loneliness and therefore she perceives the world through a loneliness lens. As she gains knowledge, she comes to understand the complexity of loneliness as well as the inevitability of it: “Perhaps all humans are lonely. At least potentially” (ibid. 288). Loneliness is existential in its quality. It cannot be escaped, and this condition of life explains the use of social robotics to ward off the potential deficiency in companionship. The quote also implies that loneliness is pervasive. All characters are if not lonely, potentially lonely. Loneliness is an embarrassing feeling in the novel. Josie refuses to be described as lonely and her and Rick argue about the loneliness of their mothers:

“doesn’t your mom mind not having friends?”

‘She has friends. That Mrs Rivers comes all the time. And she’s friends with your mum, isn’t she?’

‘That’s not really what I mean. Anyone can have one or two individual friends. But your mom, she doesn’t have society. My mom doesn’t have so many friends either. But she does have society.’

(...) ‘It means you walk into a store or get into a taxi and people take you seriously. Treat you well. Having society. Important, right?’” (ibid. 144).

The underlying implication is that one is better and has better social skills by having friends. Neither of the mothers is part of many friendships, but Chris has ‘society’, according to Josie. However, Helen is a deflated and jobless actress, while Chris successfully holds on to her job.

People around the two women only respect one, and the reason why loneliness is attributed to Helen is because of Helen's social status which is not that of Chris's. Certain object feelings are attributed as inherent in certain people because of their place in the world (Ahmed 6), and this is why Helen must be judged as poorly social while the same is not the case for Chris.

Loneliness emerges from lack of circulation, but the characters in *Klara and the Sun* have access to friends with heightened states of empathy. However, since the AFs exist as technological others, they can only counter loneliness if their child decides to socially construct their value as a subject. Since the 'lifted' children do not perform the affective labor to valorize and construct the object as 'loved', love does not arise to convert loneliness into happiness. Similarly, there is the risk that the AFs circulate simulated affect which the children will gain nothing from, but this can also be avoided as long as the child regards the AF as a person. In fact, to prevent loneliness the subject must attribute the negative affect to the AF in similar fashion to Josie who is able to ward off loneliness thanks to Klara. *Klara and the Sun* features a world infiltrated with isolation because children are confined to their homes for educational and health purposes. There are also more robots that overtake jobs and as such, working adults lack colleagues, while the fear of obsolescence rages. This unease prevents humans from connecting with others for concern of others taking advantage of their vulnerability or weakness. Furthermore, the incipient hierarchies that shake the society operate to separate people into 'lifted' and 'unlifted', and former white professional elite and the opposite. These group divisions fragment and split people from divergent groups, which is evident in Rick and Josie's relationship, and Paul's relationship with the others. However, *Klara and the Sun* posits a silver lining which is that love can fix these divisions because it can convert loneliness into happiness.

## Discussion/Conclusion

This discussion and conclusion will expand on what it means to be alone and if this is always negative. Next, I will consider how loneliness is depicted in each text and what function these depictions serve. With this insight, I will condense loneliness as it functions in SF as much as possible to answer my thesis question on how loneliness functions in SF.

### Is it always bad to be alone?

*Electric Sheep*, "Supertoys", and *Klara and the Sun* all showcase different ways of being alone outside of loneliness or isolation. A subject can choose to be alone, and this selected reclusively is

not portrayed negatively. This is interesting for several reasons. The societies of the different storyworlds are all deficient in companionship. In *Klara and the Sun*, social relationships hold a certain status – being socially capable is to ‘not be behind’. This is not the case for the two other texts, although empathy, which is a decidedly pro-social quality, is highly promoted in *Electric Sheep*. One might ponder why there are still characters that elect reclusiveness despite how deficient and therefore potentially valuable relationships are. Is there something to gain from being alone if it is voluntary? In my analysis my focal point was the mechanics of loneliness (isolation is included here although it was not the main focus) but I never examined the neutral or positive outcomes of characters spending time by themselves. This section will discuss self-elected reclusiveness and its results.

In *Electric Sheep*, Rick attempts to find solitude in nature, although the experience seems to isolate Rick more than rejuvenate him. He appears to undergo character development from the experience, but it is debatable if this transformation is genuine. Rick ventures off into the wild:

“Once, he thought, I would have seen the stars. Years ago. But now it's only the dust; no one has seen a star in years, at least not from Earth. Maybe I'll go where I can see stars, he said to himself as the car gained velocity and altitude; it headed away from San Francisco, toward the uninhabited desolation to the north. To the place where no living thing would go. Not unless it felt that the end had come” (Dick 180).

There is a hopefulness in Rick's comment about seeing the stars. However, the narrator observes that the north is desolate, uninhabited, and connected with death. The wilderness that Rick encounters in the north is not the ‘ideal nature’, untouched by humans that was meant to act as site for solitary reflection in the Romantic era. Rather it is shaped by culture, and therefore it cannot act as a means of escape from human influence (Cloyd 84). During his time in the wilderness Rick undergoes character development – he acknowledges the worth of electrical lives and falls into a peaceful sleep. All of this suggests rejuvenation from wilderness although the experience does not fit the criteria of a typical Romantic, solitary experience since there is no escape from human influence (ibid.). Solitude by my definition, is the positive, intentional experience of being alone. However, Rick never expresses unambiguous positive affect from being alone. In fact, there is no such example among the selected texts. The narrator's reflections in the quote suggests that Rick wants to die because he is going where others have gone to die, but Rick's comment about the stars implies that he expects a positive or peaceful death. Rick's positive affect in connection with the expectation of the reclusive action along with the Romantic undertones of the event makes me

categorize the event as a solitary, or at least an attempted solitary experience, but I also recognize that the experience itself could appear more like isolation, especially because Rick calls multiple people to avoid feeling alone.

The wild is completely desolate, everything is dead and therefore there is nothing to impress upon Rick. However, this also allows Rick to reflect. The body holds the history of former impressions left by former object feelings (Ahmed 6). In a social situation, new object emotions are circulated, and these leave new impressions, but they do not necessarily allow the subject to inspect their own body and the impressions left by others. One of the issues in Rick and Iran's relationship is that the couple disregard former histories, and this affects the object circulation between them. When the subject is alone, they have time to interpret the impressions left by others. As Rick interprets the impressions left on his body, he realizes that he feels defeated. He has lived without empathy for others but in the end, he reaches the conclusion that one should have empathy for all, and this indicates character development.

However, Rick's character development also seems unreliable. His first thought when he finds the toad is how much money it will bring him, and when he expresses that electrical beings are alive too, it could be an act of self-preservation, since it was the prospect of toad ownership that made Rick leave the wilderness. The disappointment might be too great and therefore Rick might infuse the toad with value so that his experience and the fact that he left the wilderness behind was not in vain.

In *Klara and the Sun*, the limited view hinders the reader from encountering characters alone since Klara must be present for the reader to receive information about the occurrence. This means that states of reclusivity must be narrated out in retrospect by a character or they must happen to Klara. Klara finds herself alone in different scenarios. One is when she meets with the sun and the other is when she moves into the utility room. These two instances of aloneness are in many ways opposites. When Klara meets with the sun, the scene is filled with the presence of others even though no-one else is present. One might consider the sun a being the way that Klara does and then Klara ceases to be alone. Klara also imagines the presence of another AF, which hints that she has found the living space of Chris' Sally AF, but since the sun is not considered a person or being generally and since Klara only imagines the presence of the AF, this paper will classify her as alone. It is important to note that Klara does feel some negative affect from the situation. For example, her shadow looks "like a tall thin tree ready to break in the wind" (Ishiguro 182). Klara feels anxious due to the request she will make, but her affect cannot be characterized as loneliness

since Klara does not consider herself alone and since the feelings do not emerge from seclusion. The episode is religious in tone. Klara performs several ritual-like actions such as sitting on a chair and thinking out the conversation with the sun because speaking directly would be too brash. Other instances where she finds herself alone are when she moves into the utility room or when she has her slow fade in the junkyard. Both are mentioned only to let the reader know that time has passed, so they are never ‘special’ occasions, only a means to move the plot forward.

These examples from *Klara and the Sun* and *Electric Sheep* showcase that being alone can elicit different feelings for the subject and can set personal development into motion. From not having others to circulate object emotions with, the subject is able to inspect the indents left on their body and trace their histories. This allows the subject to gain an understanding of themselves or what they want to do. Klara reflects on the potential loss of Josie, which is made up of former circulated object emotions from Josie and her relations and she learns how she wants to tackle the potentiality of the loss from her reflection. This strategy is acquired by making the issue one with a manageable solution. Klara will destroy the cootings machine and then the sun will make Josie well. Both for Rick and Klara there is a religious aspect which is enabled by being alone. This means that being alone, although not always pleasant, can have positive and transformative outcomes. Loneliness can both exist in a degenerative form where the lonely subjects lose their social capabilities or their humanness altogether, but if being alone, is a choice this can cause the subject to undergo transformation. It is also significant that nature seems to be the herald of the personal development in both examples which suggests that nature can act as the stage where this development takes place, although such an idea must be explored in further research.

### Silence

In both “Supertoys” and *Electric Sheep*, silence acts as an indicator of loneliness. Silence becomes a beast in *Electric Sheep* and Monica is surrounded by silence in the mansion: “She heard the sheer weight of silence in the house, with a different quality of silence pouring out of every room” (Aldiss 6). Like in *Electric Sheep*, silence has a bodied presence in “Supertoys”. It ‘weighs’ a certain amount and can ‘pour’ out of rooms. Therefore, it can also be inferred that silence has a certain ‘stickiness’. David and Monica are the loneliest characters and the ones that spend the most time inside the mansion. Silence ‘sticks’ to them from the different rooms and leaves them feeling lonelier. Silence is not a presence in *Klara and the Sun*, and loneliness does not ‘stick’ to people from settings. This is because the storyworld setting is not desolate and destroyed as in the other



texts. Therefore, there is still ‘something’ to gain from the environment. This is exemplified in the scene where Klara communicates with the sun. Nature is not dead as opposed to the settings of the other texts; it has a presence and therefore it does not act as a void.

### Hierarchies

All texts also feature some kind of hierarchy. *Electric Sheep* features various hierarchies meant to identify the extent of humanness in a person. Empathy and the quantity and quality (size) of one’s animal(s) decide how human one is. However, these are manipulable. Animals can be bought, and not all humans are empathetic. Moreover, there are other invisible hierarchies such as intelligence which determines the number of human rights one has, so intelligence is an unspoken criterion of humanness. In “Supertoys” there are hierarchies between real and unreal as well as between beautiful and ugly. In the short story, ‘beautiful’ is positioned over ‘ugly’ while ‘real’ is positioned over ‘artificial’, but real things are ugly and artificial things are beautiful which is paradoxical. There are two possible ways to explain this: humans do not realize their affinity with what is ‘real’ or there might be a taboo surrounding artificial things. On one hand, only David ponders the nature and value of ‘real’ things, and he is an android child, so humans might not be aware that they are biased towards ‘real’ objects. On the other hand, Henry’s reaction to his colleagues’ comments about Monica could suggest that it is not polite to point out the electric nature of others’ possessions just as it is impolite to remark that a neighbor’s animal is artificial in *Electric Sheep*. In *Klara and the Sun*, there are hierarchies between different social classes, genetic hierarchies, and feeling hierarchies. The obsolescence in the workforce has created multilayered hierarchies between people who still have jobs and those who do not as well as hierarchies between the different jobless groups. There are also hierarchies between ‘lifted’ and ‘unlifted’ children, and between those who can display pro-social behavior and those who cannot. In all texts, hierarchies separate groups from each other or they move individuals into different groups. Since the groups are allocated a distinct set of resources and are positioned ‘above’ or ‘beneath’ others, hierarchies limit the number of lovable subjects that someone can interact with. When there are power imbalances as is the case between androids and humans in the stories, androids are not in a position to display their authentic emotions and therefore, humans do not develop emotional connections with them. Then they act either as voids or they simulate affect. The relegation of certain subjects as ‘lower’ also means that these subjects become for all and either only have each other or become pariahs. Moreover, the differentiation of allocation of resources means that some subjects are denied access to social

institutions such as how Rick is denied access to college and therefore also the potential relationships, he would form there.

### Intelligence

The ‘chickenheads’ must not reproduce or immigrate to Mars. In general, they are cast out by society and as such have no access to social contact. Similarly, Henry speaks brazenly of the intelligence of the serving-man. It is because of his intelligence that he is so valuable: “It seems like a paradox that in this day and age we can create life but not intelligence. Our first selling line, the Crosswell Tape, sells best of all, and is the most stupid of all” (Aldiss 3). The speech is meant to elicit laughter in Henry’s audience, but it also communicates the importance of intelligence. David is alive but has no rights and things that are alive can readily be made, so ‘aliveness’ holds no real value. Intelligence, however, is difficult to build into a robot and the “Supertoys” society is convinced that greater intelligence will solve the loneliness issue – lonely people can befriend robots. In *Klara and the Sun*, intelligence holds immense value as well. The plot revolves around Josie’s illness which is caused by genetic editing to make her more intelligent, or as intelligent as her peers. Parents risk their children’s lives because lacking that mark of ‘upgraded’ intelligence inhibits the individual from access to educational institutions and thereby future employment just as it isolates you and positions you ‘beneath’ those who are ‘lifted’. In all texts, intelligence is positioned ‘above’ human uniqueness. Isidore who possesses the most empathy of all characters is ostracized due to his lack of intelligence. In *Electric Sheep* and *Klara and the Sun*, there is a certain bar which characters must surpass to access resources. This arranges people in groups of desirable and undesirable as well as secures a homogenous population. This is also why some researchers have read these works as commentaries on the Eugenic Movement.

### Image

In all texts, there is an isolating factor stemming from having to portray a particular outward image. Rick and Iran must lie to their neighbors about the electric sheep, and thereby the neighbors become individuals with whom they must perpetuate a façade, and they miss the opportunity to develop a friendship. In “Supertoys” the inhabitants wear facemasks to conceal their flaws and use technology to hide unpleasantness. Similarly, the ‘lifted’ children are constantly anxious about keeping up a perfected image of themselves. In all examples, humans turn into non-stick surfaces. Their inauthenticity make others unable to read their bodies and therefore they circulate the wrong objects

which renders relationship development impossible. In all texts it is also significant that the means of hiding imperfections is with technology which in all instances becomes prosthesis to the subject. Animal ownership function as an outward symbol of the owner's humanity, but when the animal is electric, mechanics become an extension of the 'self'. Tiresome emotional labor is outsourced to AF's and pet objects who manage the emotions in the owner's place. The wearers of facemasks literally use technology as an extension of their body just as electrical tapeworms are pieces of technology that live inside the stomach. These are bodily augmentations that the society normalizes. In *Klara and the Sun* and *Electric Sheep* there are social sanctions connected with not living up to norms and these social rules might not be achievable without technology – the social sanctions of not owning an animal are too dire in *Electric Sheep* just as others look down on those who are not socially capable enough in *Klara and the Sun*. In "Supertoys" beauty and slimness are so socially valuable and universal that social sanctions, even if not mentioned, are likely here too. The versions of people that the reader encounters in the three different texts are all 'normal' in their own world, but to the reader they are technologized or 'perfected' humans. They might not all possess body augmentations, but they depend on and outsource their actions to the respective technology of their storyworld.

### Androids

All texts feature androids, and these androids are all the most sophisticated pieces of technology to exist in the storyworlds. In *Klara and the Sun*, the people Klara encounters recognize her as an android but in the other texts androids are indistinguishable from humans. This is important for various reasons. The android figure functions as a technological other. Its role is to act as a metaphor for different oppressed groups of people, but its presence is also highly technological. In all texts, the androids can be read as parts of some oppressed group. The androids are used as different kinds of slaves, the supertoys could metaphorize adopted children, and Klara is a care worker. This is important because androids have no access to social relationships on their own terms and are as such isolated. However, the subjects that exploit the androids gain nothing from the relationships, which is evidence that relationships cannot be forced. Androids are also highly technological but also highly human in their storied form. For this reason, they function well as border figures between the binaries of human and machine and all texts portray androids to question what it means to be human. Since loneliness is such an important theme in the stories, they communicate that loneliness is a part of the human condition.

### Loneliness in a technological world

The three different texts represent vastly different aspects of loneliness. In *Electric Sheep*, loneliness originates from settings and from androids. Since the world is desolate and empty, silence and emptiness function as loneliness embodied. These descriptors remind the subject constantly of the absence of people and therefore loneliness can ‘stick’ to a subject from the setting. Androids also function as empty vacuums that suck out the emotion of the people they encounter. The result of this is an empty and barren world, void of happiness where the remaining people have almost nothing to circulate outside of despair. In “Supertoys” loneliness is the result of subject’s obsessions with surface states. Everything must appear perfect on the outside, and this leads humans to display inauthentic surfaces to each other. Just as in *Electric Sheep*, the result is that humans become non-stick surfaces to each other. Since the bodies of others are placed behind masks both figuratively and literally. They cannot be adequately interpreted by others and therefore the wrong objects are circulated. In *Klara and the Sun* loneliness is potential in every human. Children are isolated from each other because they are ill and receive their education through oblongs. Adults are afraid to be superseded and rendered obsolete which causes people to stop feeling unique and important in the world and to each other because someone better can always materialize. Since emotional work and friendships are outsourced to technology, humans do not learn to manage their emotions, and since AF’s must not reject but may feel negative affect when they are mistreated, they circulate simulated affect to their humans. In all of these examples it is the case that people become ‘unsticky’ and in all texts, technology has some role in this. Technology in all texts take a role as a mediator between people. It acts as a non-penetrable surface that prevents characters from touching others, but it also becomes something that characters add to their personalities and bodies. In effect they merge with technology either metaphorically or literally. This dissolves the border between the human and the machine and transcends the human into a trans- or a posthuman individual. This paper suggests that friendship cannot be forced and that it is the unobstructed connection without ‘things’ in between that produces friendship. In all the texts relationships also only work if both parties perceive the other as a person. Both Monica and Rick struggle, at least initially, to see androids as persons and this is why their relationships with them do not develop. However, Josie regards Klara as a subject with their own mind and wishes that diverge from her own and their relationship works.

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## Abstract

This study explores the effect and function of loneliness in science fiction through the works of: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) by Philip K. Dick, “Supertoys Last all Summer Long” (1969) by Brian Aldiss, and *Klara and the Sun* (2021) by Kazuo Ishiguro. The subject of loneliness will be considered through the lens of Sara Ahmed’s emotion theory as it is described in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014). The paper will also include relevant theory on androids and transhumanism just as it will define loneliness in order of categorizing characters accurately as lonely. From this framework the analysis will be divided into three chapters to focus on one text at the time. In all analyses loneliness will be regarded as lack of emotion circulation which is theorized from Ahmed’s emotion theory since she does not account for loneliness. Thereby the theory will be used in a more general sense. The analysis on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Will examine how loneliness sticks to people from empty settings and how it moves between people. The analysis will also focus on how hierarchies, emotion cultures, and the dissolving borders between human and machine contribute to feelings of loneliness. The second analysis regards the short story “Supertoys Last all Summer Long” and examines themes of time, beauty, and artificiality and how they contribute to loneliness. The last analysis on *Klara and the Sun* explores loneliness through obsolescence, emotional outsourcing, rejection, and love. These analyses lead to a discussion that compares the three works while also discussing if it is always bad to be alone. The thesis shows that loneliness is complex and attaches itself to people in a myriad of ways. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* the primary ways for loneliness to ‘stick’ to people is from empty settings wherefrom it spreads among people and through androids who function as voids for emotions to be sucked into. In “Supertoys Last All Summer Long” it is inhabitant’s obsession with outwards appearance which turns people into ‘non-stick’ surfaces and renders it impossible for them to circulate emotions to each other. In *Klara and the Sun* all humans are potentially lonely from the obsolescence culture which renders individuals non-special, but children are also lonely from the unequal relationships between Artificial Friends and their owners that are marked by simulated and insufficient circulation of affect. Conclusively, this paper cannot make any large claims about loneliness in science fiction in general, but it can still make conclusions on selected works, and it may be a steppingstone for others to do further research.