Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

AI Sentience in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

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Abstract

Since the post-World War II era, self-conscious artificial intelligence has been a popular trope for economic and social injustice. Within this tradition, Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021) stages the problem of the denial of AI sentience in the service of human self-interest. Ishiguro frames the android Klara's sentience as uncertain, and therefore subject to acknowledgment or denial based on the interest of her human masters, through its positioning as a rewriting of E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman" (1817), the story of a young man who falls in love with an automaton. Both "The Sandman" and Freud's commentary on this text in his essay "The Uncanny" (1919) are embedded in Ishiguro's novel. Ishiguro's story pressures the reader to develop ways to determine whether the titular character, an android named Klara, is sentient. A close reading of the text suggests that we adopt a standard of subjectivity similar to "extimacy," Lacan's interpretation of "the uncanny," to determine the subjectivity or personhood of intelligent machines. Within the novel, it is the android protagonist and narrator, Klara, who most clearly articulates the concept of the subjective uniqueness of all social beings in these terms.

"[L]et's go take a look under the hood… What you don't like are sealed in black boxes. Okay, let's open them. Once we see inside… things get a lot less scary."

– Henry Capaldi, in *Klara and the Sun*

I. Science Fiction, Artificial Intelligence, and the Black Box of Other Minds

Since the post-World War II era, the possibility of self-conscious artificial intelligence has continually haunted science fiction. The idea that machines might become self-aware fascinated many classic science fiction authors, who examined the implications of AI sentience for the safety and self-determination of humanity, as well as for human self-understanding. AI sentience has remained a central preoccupation in contemporary science fiction and film, including the two sci-fi movie series that largely occupy the space of secular fantasies of the apocalypse in the post-Cold War era, the *Matrix* and *Terminator* series. Among other things, this literature provides its readers with an extensive catalogue

of concepts, scenarios, and ethical dilemmas regarding artificial intelligence. As our society is currently in the midst of a rapid advancement of AI technology, it seems appropriate to inquire, as so many science fiction authors have, how our ideas regarding human self-definition and social justice are informed by, and in turn, inform, our understanding of artificial sentience.

One reason for the ongoing fascination with the possible emergence of artificial sentience among sci-fi writers over the past eighty-odd years is certainly its power as a trope for slavery, wage slavery, and other forms of economic and social injustice. This issue has frequently been presented in terms of the creation of a new caste of slaves. African American Studies professor Ruha Benjamin points out that persistent fantasies and anxieties of the enslavement of a presumably unfeeling and unthinking other have marked the discourse surrounding "robots" since Karel Čapek coined the term – derived from the Czech word for "servitude" or "hardship" – in his 1920 play, *R.U.R.* (Benjamin 2019, 55). Within this play, robots are "artificial people" created to be maximally exploited, a new slave caste who work without pay and demand no moral recognition because they are thought to be incapable of emotion or self-awareness, making them the "cheapest" and therefore the "best" laborers (Čapek 2019). While Čapek's robots serve as a metaphor for capitalist exploitation, Benjamin suggests that robot slaves come to represent a persistent fantasy of an infinitely exploitable racialized other in post-World War II America. Benjamin references, for instance, a 1957 article in *Mechanix Illustrated* that promises "Slavery will be back!" thanks to the predicted ubiquity of robot servants in the near future (Benjamin 2019, 56). Benjamin offers this as an example of how the moral atrocity represented by Čapek's robots is frequently transfigured into a fantasy of laborless existence and material abundance through slavery within popular culture in post-World War II America.

Based on similar observations, literary critic Gregory Jerome Hampton explains that "Although the terms 'domestic robot' and 'house slave' may initially appear to be unrelated, they are in actuality synonymous when one begins to interrogate the truth of American history" (2015, 1). Hampton observes that "the uses of rhetoric surrounding proslavery arguments are surprisingly similar to those made about robots as domestic servants," and that "robots are becoming the new slaves of the future," who, "*like the enslaved Africans, occupy a liminal status between human and tool*" [italics added] (2015, xi). This correspondence becomes distinctly unsurprising when we note the myriad ways within nineteenth-century American ideology that the humanity (if not the sentience) of Africans and people of African descent was questioned, cast into doubt, or outright denied. Within post-Enlightenment scientific racism, for instance, the doctrine of *polygenism* (or polygenesis) held that Africans and other non-Europeans were *literally separate species* from Europeans and therefore not fully human, and therefore not worthy of the moral recognition accorded to humans. This doctrine became increasingly dominant within social and biological sciences as the nineteenth century progressed.[1] Within both scientific and popular discourses, enslaved people were customarily regarded as human only in a transactional sense, according to which their humanity could be affirmed or denied according to the perceived needs of society, as well as the desires, moods, or whims of their owners (or white people in general), much like the personhood of androids in post-World

War II science fiction. The recapitulation of the rhetoric of slavery for artificial humans therefore reflects the profoundly ambivalent attitude of masters regarding the personhood of their human chattel.

Robots work so effectively as a figure for economic and social injustice, including capitalist exploitation and slavery, because the emergence of artificial sentience would have profound ethical, legal, and personal ramifications, which would necessarily follow from the recognition of a new category of intelligent sentient beings, especially beings that have been created by humans specifically for the purpose of laboring in the service of human interests, a purpose that, in a multitude of ways, incentivizes humans to accept their supposed lack of sentience as dogma. If there were no such implications, the metaphorical value of artificial sentience in terms of economic exploitation and social injustice would be lost, or at least rendered obscure. Čapek's robots, for example, represent the grotesque exploitation of laborers under industrial capitalism because, in the play, more advanced models turn out to be sentient, intelligent, and capable of human emotions including love; yet they are regarded by their corporate masters as mere tools without sentience, and therefore without needs or rights, who can, for this reason, be exploited without moral concern. In short, Čapek's robots are very much like people, but, like slaves, they are treated as things, in large part due to the self-interest of powerful people and economic entities to regard them and treat them as things lacking sentience. This is the crux of the issue within a large body of science fiction.

Philosopher Thomas Metzinger explains, in basic terms, the possible moral catastrophe of creating sentient beings that are not acknowledged as such:

> Every entity that is capable of self-conscious suffering automatically becomes an object of ethical consideration. If we ascribe an ethical value to such entities, then it does not matter whether they have biological properties or not, or whether they will exist in the future or do today. Self-conscious post-biotic systems of the future, capable of consciously experienced suffering, are objects of ethical consideration. (Metzinger 2021, 62)

As Metzinger emphasizes, there are profound ethical consequences that follow from the recognition that a being is capable of self-conscious suffering, or "negative phenomenal states," regardless of whether it is a "biological" organism (Metzinger 2021, 44).

Philosopher Jakob Stenseke explains the demand of moral responsibility that comes with a recognition of sentience in similar terms in his discussion of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021):

> [E]very sentient being has, at some basic level, a moral status, which means that we have reason to care about it for its own sake… if a being has the capacity to feel pain and pleasure, some non-trivial moral considerations about its well-being become relevant. (Stenseke 2021, 1)

Within the frame of this elemental ethical principle, Stenseke adds a wrinkle of complexity by identifying the "indeterminacy" of whether Klara – the android protagonist and narrator of the novel – is sentient as the cause of her troubling "moral status" (Stenseke 2021, 1-2).

The treatment of Klara raises thorny ethical questions precisely because she is only inconsistently recognized or treated as self-conscious, despite displaying every sign of self-awareness. Literary critics Nancy Jecker, Caesar Atiure, and Martin Odei Ajei also pinpoint the indeterminacy of Klara's sentience – given that Klara might be a "faux person" who "is neither sentient nor sapient" (2022, 16) – as the frame within which questions of Klara's "personhood" and "moral standing" become so troubling within *Klara and the Sun* (2022, 1).

This insight regarding Klara brings us to what I believe is a second, intertwined reason for the persistent fascination with AI sentience in science fiction: the *inherent indeterminacy* of any judgment regarding the sentience of an artificial being troubles our sense of existing in a stable moral universe. From a personal standpoint, the inquiry into the sentience, consciousness, or self-awareness of AI evades any clear resolution because we can only infer conscious awareness in any other being or object based on its behavior: "We come by our knowledge of other minds in much the same way that we come by our knowledge of objects in the world—by perception" (SEP, "Other Minds" 2023). This is often called "the problem of other minds" ("Other Minds" 2023). We cannot directly experience the consciousness of any other being and therefore must always infer the existence of conscious self-awareness based on reading physical signs. There are no alternatives. Computer science pioneer Alan Turing – often referred to as the "father of AI" because of his seminal work in cryptanalysis during World War II, and the theories of computation and machine intelligence that he developed in the years following the war – recognized the impenetrability of other minds as a barrier to resolving the issue of artificial sentience decisively through a behavioral test. The Turing Test, or "imitation game," is well-known as one of the first attempts to measure artificial intelligence against human intelligence. The purpose of the test was to determine if, under interrogation by a person, the responses of an AI could be distinguished from those of an actual human being (Turing 1950). Turing, however, recognized that the problem of other minds would prevent using a behavioral test to conclusively determine if an AI is sentient, in addition to being intelligent:

> [T]he only way by which one could be sure that a machine thinks is to *be* the machine and to feel oneself thinking… Likewise, according to this view the only way to know if a *man* thinks is to be that particular man. It is, in fact, a solipsist point-of-view. (Turing 1950)

Turing believed that the issue of AI sentience was not likely to be resolved by such a test, at least in favor of AI sentience, because the invocation of solipsism would always be available as an objection (Turing 1950).[2]

While one can imagine increasingly complex ways of evaluating the likelihood or possibility of AI sentience based on behavioral tests,[3] the problem of other minds creates a constitutive indeterminacy that structures discourse about AI sentience as an internal limit; as such, any resolution to the question of whether artificial sentience is real remains speculative on a basic level. It is therefore within the frame of this inherent "epistemic indeterminacy" of the issue (Metzinger 2021, 46), or what synthetic biologist Michael Levin refers to as "the space of *possible* minds" that "our expansion into the enormous range of *possible* embodiments of sentience" will, of necessity, occur (Levin 2024; italics added).

II. The Black Box of the Lacanian Unconscious

The meaning of consciousness, sentience, and related terms within both science and philosophy remains ambiguous, which is widely acknowledged as another barrier to recognizing the likelihood of consciousness in non-humans. Up to this point, I have been utilizing a general definition of consciousness consistent with that of philosopher David Chalmers, who opposes consciousness proper, or the "hard problem of consciousness," to "the easy problems of consciousness" or those "phenomena [that] can be explained scientifically" such as "the ability to discriminate, categorize, and react to environmental stimuli" (Chalmers 1995, 200-202).[4] The "hard problem of consciousness," on the other hand, refers to "the problem of experience" or "the subjective aspect [of] experience," the fact that "there is *something it is like* to be a conscious organism"; "a mental state is conscious if there is something it is like to be in that state" (Chalmers 1995, 201). Examples of conscious mental states include (but are not limited to) "qualia" such as "visual and auditory experiences" like "the quality of deep blue" or "the sensation of middle C" (Chalmers 1995, 201).

My examination of Kazuo Ishiguro's foray into the possibility of self-conscious AI in *Klara and the Sun* will shift the focus from whether an artificial being might be "conscious" or "sentient" in these terms to *whether an AI is a subject in a Lacanian sense*. The purpose of this shift is to lend focus and specificity to the discussion, given the ambiguity of these terms. I employ the notion of Lacanian subjectivity because it operates according to a negative ontology that is appropriate (and necessary, in my view) to the task of placing the black box of artificial minds into the field of what Chalmers describes as "subjective experience" or "consciousness." Philosopher Isabel Millar suggests such a shift in our approach to AI because the discourse regarding sentient AI mirrors "the psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious," which is, in a sense, another black box around which conscious experience coalesces (Millar 2021). Given the structural similarity between building consciousness around the black box of an artificial mind and constructing it around the black box of the (human) unconscious, Millar proposes "we transition from the question *can it think* to *does it enjoy*?" because the ability to "enjoy," in a psychoanalytic sense, attests to the "unconscious depth" that is the condition of subjectivity (Millar 2021). For the purposes of this inquiry, I will focus on the question of whether an AI locates itself within the symbolic order, which is the basic condition of subjectivity as well as enjoyment. This pivot to the question of subjectivity has the potential to give us a consistent logic for determining AI consciousness/sentience, should we choose to continue to use either term. The question now becomes, *is an AI a subject*?[5]

A person becomes a "subject," in Jacques Lacan's account of identity formation in "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function" (1949), when they enter the "symbolic order" of intersubjectivity, the most concrete manifestation of which is language. The initial act of selfhood through which one first thinks of the self as a uniform entity distinct from the larger world occurs even prior to learning language, however, with "the mirror stage," during which one forms "*an identification*, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image." Through this identification with an image – a mirror image within Lacan's *mise en scène*,

which he shares with many psychologists at this time – "the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form" which becomes "the rootstock of secondary identifications" that begin to form once one is able to locate oneself within the symbolic order of language and culture (Lacan 2004, 6).

Because even the seemingly impartial action of identifying oneself with a mirror image requires an act of self-representation, however, any attempt to think of the self as a "totality" is necessarily riven by the act of representation (2004, 6). In other words, even the pre-linguistic and pre-symbolic "I" requires a supplemental image. One is forever irreducible to one's image because the self must remain split between that which is represented and the act of representation, which eludes incorporation into the field of the represented that it generates. The act of representation serves as the "Ground of the totality… which itself cannot be 'Grounded'" (Žižek 1998, 98). Any recognition of the self in the imagined unity of the image is, in this sense, a "misrecognition," masking the "primordial Discord" of the act of representation (Lacan 2004, 6-8).

It is this gap between the act of representation – in its most basic form, the identification with an image in the visual field, or the assumption of the "I" in linguistic/symbolic terms – and the field of the represented it generates that forms the unconscious, in its most basic sense. The unconscious is thus the *aporia* that emerges from and grounds any attempt to think the self as a coherent entity; or, we could say that the unconscious is the black box around which one constructs the self.

III. Klara and the Sun

Many science fiction writers have framed the issue of artificial sentience in terms of whether an AI has an unconscious aspect to its mind, an approach that can be usefully explicated using this framework. Isaac Asimov and Philip K. Dick both frequently define the question of AI consciousness in these terms. Moreover, both authors influence Kazuo Ishiguro's framing of and approach to the issue of AI sentience in *Klara and the Sun*.

In Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (which was loosely adapted to screen in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, 1982), the basic question of whether an artificial mind has an unconscious dimension is raised in the title: if androids dream, then their minds must be shaped by an unconscious, which is to say their minds are shaped by desire.[6] This would mean that they are subjects in a Lacanian sense since the existence of the unconscious is an effect of locating oneself within the field of the Other – the symbolic order – and therefore a condition of becoming a subject.[7] Moreover, this aspect of androids' minds is the basis of their presumed sentience or personhood in the novel. Their implanted memories, their dreams, and their resultant subjectivity are what makes them fundamentally indistinguishable from humans in the story. While Dick attaches the issue of the humanity of his androids to their subjectivity in the sense that they have memories and an unconscious aspect to their minds, this seems like a broad thematic influence on *Klara and the Sun* because it is never mentioned that Klara dreams.[8] A more direct influence can be felt in the fact that the ending of Ridley Scott's movie adaptation, *Blade Runner*, strongly implies that the protagonist, Rick Deckard, through whose view the story is told, is an android, while Klara, an android, is both narrator and protagonist of Ishiguro's novel.

Asimov's classic short story collection, *I, Robot* (1950), also appears to influence Ishiguro's portrayal of AI sentience. In the story "Robbie" (originally published in 1940), Robbie the robot is the best friend and caretaker of Gloria, the child protagonist; Robbie's position within the family clearly foreshadows that of Ishiguro's Klara, who is an "Artificial Friend," or android designed to fill the role of subservient companion for affluent children and teenagers. When Gloria's parents send Robbie back to the factory because they fear her connection to the robot is preventing her from forming relationships with other children, the issue of Robbie's personhood comes to the forefront: when Gloria cries at Robbie's sudden and unexplained absence, her mother tells her that "'Robbie was only a machine, just a nasty old machine,'" to which Gloria replies "'He was a *person* just like you and me and he was my *friend*" (Asimov 2020, 11). Robbie's personhood – or lack thereof – is the central focus of the story, and the implication that Robbie is, in fact, a "person," as Gloria claims, follows from his implied identification of himself within the symbolic order of the family. That is, Robbie is framed as a self-aware creature because of his apparent loyalty toward and affection for his child/friend/master. Ishiguro similarly frames questions of Klara's personhood in terms of her loyalty toward and affection for her human family.

Both of these issues – Dick's framing of android sentience in terms of an unconscious dimension to the mind, and Asimov's framing of the issue in terms of an android's subject position within the family – are given center stage in *Klara and the Sun*. Ishiguro centers the issue of Klara's possible sentience and emotional sapience by writing the story as a *bildungsroman* (a classic form of the novel that follows a protagonist's psychological and emotional development from childhood to adulthood) and by making Klara the first-person narrator of her own life story.

Klara is an "Artificial Friend," or solar-powered android built to be a servant and companion to affluent children and teenagers. Klara narrates the story as, in her final days of life, she sits in a junkyard reflecting on all that she has done, beginning with her earliest memories. Her life begins in an android store, where she is purchased by Chrissie Arthur, a divorced mother in her forties, for her fourteen-year-old daughter, Josie. In this near-future American dystopia, affluent parents face the choice of having their children's intelligence "lifted" or "enhanced" through "genetic editing" – a process that has serious health risks including death – or consigning their children to a life of obscurity and struggle in a world of societal disintegration, depleted economic resources, and cut-throat competition to lead a middle-class life (243). While Chrissie's acknowledged reason for purchasing an Artificial Friend for her daughter is companionship, we discover, as the story progresses, that Chrissie has an ulterior motive as well: Josie is in fragile health from being "lifted," and Chrissie fears that she will die, as her older daughter Sal did, from the operation. She is auditioning Klara to assume her daughter's identity in case of Josie's death. Josie has suspicions of her mother's plan to replace her with Klara, but she never broaches the topic with Chrissie.

Within this emotionally charged context, Ishiguro highlights how attitudes toward Klara's sentience and personhood shift dramatically according to the state-of-mind and needs and desires of family members. This results in a moral flexibility that is built into

Klara's relationship to the family from the beginning, shaped by the fact that she is an object they purchase from a store window. Inna Merloukova observes that Klara's commodity status leads the family to treat Klara "in a utilitarian way" (2022, 662), while Kate Montague notes that, like a domestic slave, Klara is both "worker and commodity" and that Klara lives only "to serve Josie until her use value has expired" (2022, 7). In short, Klara, like all Artificial Friends, is a slave, a commodity/laborer whose status and purpose begins and ends with service to her owners. This status and purpose dictates her design, which includes built in-obsolescence to make room for newer models – a standard feature of technological commodities in a consumer economy – and a limited life span of only a few years, in order, it would appear, that she die and avoid being a burden to the family after her child-owner grows tired of her or moves away from home. In accordance with her commodity status, Klara is neglected once Josie grows older and makes friends. Klara is first relegated to standing in a utility closet staring at a wall when Josie has visitors (2021, 290). This neglect culminates in Klara's exile to a junkyard to die, once Josie has left home (2021, 298). Within this context, it is unsurprising that when Klara's service to the family is regarded as unnecessary, members of the family and their acquaintances often both refer to her and regard her as an appliance, a thing toward whom there is little or no obligation or moral responsibility. One feels this seemingly reflexive, self-serving moral fluidity from Chrissie when she questions Klara's ability to experience emotions or suffering (2021, 90; 97); when Henry Capaldi, the scientist hired to make Klara into a replicant of Josie upon Josie's death, suggests, once Josie recovers from her illness and Klara no longer serves the purpose of replacing her, that Klara be euthanized and dissected for the purposes of science – which he refers to as "opening" her "black box" (2021, 293-294); or in Josie's goodbye to Klara when she leaves home for college, breezily referring to Klara's impending exile and death – "I guess you may not be here when I get back" – and concluding with a remorselessly light-hearted "You've been great, Klara" (2021, 297). Attitudes toward Klara are inconsistent and malleable, and are inevitably shaped, warped, and distorted to serve the needs, interests, and whims of her human masters. If Klara is able to experience self-conscious suffering, much of her treatment is terribly cruel. The story therefore pressures the reader to develop ways to determine if Klara is, in fact, sentient.

Moreover, in literary terms there are many ways, both large and small, that the text holds open the question of Klara's sentience. Perhaps most significantly, Ishiguro carefully cultivates this irresolution by positioning his novel as a rewriting of E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman" (1817), the story of a young man who falls in love with a beautiful automaton that he mistakes for a human woman. Hoffmann's story also serves as the focal point of Sigmund Freud's foray into literary criticism 102 years later in "The Uncanny" (1919). Both "The Sandman" and Freud's analysis of the story are embedded as a palimpsest within the text of *Klara and the Sun*, which revisits "The Sandman" once again 102 years after Freud.

IV. Hoffmann → Freud → Ishiguro

As the "The Sandman" begins, Nathanael, a young boy, is perplexed by the frequent nocturnal visits of Coppelius, his father's lawyer. Nathanael mistakes Coppelius's appearances for visitations of the mythical Sandman, who steals the eyes of naughty "children when they don't want to go to bed" in order to feed his own children, who live on the moon and devour the eyes with their "crooked beaks" (Hoffmann 2008, 87). As Nathanael grows older and realizes that "the wicked Sandman" is, in fact, just an associate of his father, things do not improve (2008, 86). Coppelius, during his visits, appears to Nathanael as an immense man "with a massive, misshapen head" and a phallic "large beaky nose," reminiscent of the beaks on the Sandman's monstrous children (2008, 88). Nathanael, through the wall of his bedroom, hears Coppelius bully and threaten his father during his nighttime visits, which fills Nathanael with "loathing and disgust." Moreover, Coppelius seems to take delight in denying pleasure to Nathanael and his siblings by stealing desserts off their plates when he dines with the family, such that Nathanael "cursed the ugly, unfriendly man, who was deliberately *intent on spoiling our slightest pleasures*" (2008, 89, italics added).

One night Nathanael spies on his father and Coppelius. In a dreamlike state, he cannot tell the two men apart – his father "looked like Coppelius" -- as he witnesses Coppelius forging "human faces... but without eyes" while calling out "'Bring the eyes! Bring the eyes!'" (2008, 90). When Nathanael screams, Coppelius discovers him and threatens to pull out his eyes. Nathanael loses consciousness as his father pleads with Coppelius to spare his son's eyes. Nathanael wakes with his eyes intact, but Coppelius kills Nathanael's father under mysterious circumstances during his next visit.

Coppelius vanishes after the death of Nathanael's father, but years later Nathanael becomes convinced that he has returned in the form of an Italian oculist named Giuseppe Coppola who sells spectacles, barometers, and spyglasses in front of Nathanael's college lodging. Coppola advertises his wares by announcing "'I 'ave beautiful eyes to sell you, beautiful eyes!" (2008, 105). Nathanael becomes distracted from his feelings of continued persecution at the hands of Coppelius/Coppola when he falls in love with Olympia, the daughter of his college physics professor, Spalanzani. Olympia comes to displace Nathanael's fiancée, Clara, as his romantic interest. Olympia has "beautifully molded features" (2008, 108) but eyes "that seemed to him oddly fixed and dead" (2008, 106), until he looks at her through a spyglass purchased from Coppola, at which point Olympia's eyes seem to come to life; through the spyglass, she appears to be "gazing at him yearningly" (2008, 108). When Nathanael visits Spalanzani's house intent on proposing marriage to Olympia, he finds Spalanzani fighting Coppola for possession of Olympia, who turns out not to be Spalanzani's daughter, but an automaton made by Spalanzani with eyes made by Coppola, who is now revealed to be the same man as Coppelius. Coppelius beats up Spalanzani and runs off with the body of Olympia, leaving only her "bloody," detached eyes behind on the floor (2008, 114). Coppelius again disappears, and Nathanael declines into madness; Nathanael later commits suicide by throwing himself from a tower during his final encounter with Coppola/Coppelius.

With this story, Freud finds rich ground to practice his art. Although "The Uncanny" is a relatively short piece, he brings something close to his entire psychoanalytic arsenal to bear on his analysis.[9] There is obviously a lot in Hoffmann's dark reimagining of a fairy tale to appeal to a psychoanalyst. At the center of Freud's interest in the story is Hoffmann's use of doubling to blur the line between self and other, as well as the distinction between the animate and inanimate world. Indeed, doubles proliferate within the story. Nathanael's father is confused with Coppelius, who not only serves as an evil double of his father, but is also a lawyer, representing the law (of the Father). After the death of Nathanael's actual father, Coppelius spawns another double, Coppola. Spalanzani also emerges as a sort of benign father figure after the death of Nathanael's father, and, like Nathanael's actual father, Spanlanzani is overwhelmed and defeated by Coppola/Coppelius. Moreover, Olympia, the automaton, doubles Nathanael's flesh and blood fiancée, Clara. Beyond being suggested in a general way – Nathanael's romantic interest transfers from Clara to Olympia, then back to Clara – Hoffmann emphasizes this equivalence when Nathanael dreams of Coppelius stealing "Clara's lovely eyes" (2008, 102), which is followed by Olympia's "bloody eyes," provided by Coppola/Coppelius, being left behind when he runs off with her body (2008, 114). The Olympia/Clara correspondence is underscored by the fact that Olympia, an automaton, would have no blood. It is as though she has become an actual human at the exact point that Coppelius absconds with her body.

Following a lengthy etymology of the term "unheimlich" – translated into English as "uncanny" – Freud frames his investigation by asking how "the seemingly animate doll, Olympia" contributes to "the incomparably uncanny effect of the story." Quoting Ernst Jentsch, Freud "singles out 'doubt as to whether an apparently animate object really is alive, and conversely, whether a lifeless object might, perhaps, be animate'" (qtd. in Freud, 2003, 135-136).[10] This inquiry leads Freud to examine the meaning of the double in terms of developmental psychology, distinguishing two types of the uncanny in terms of both cultural and personal development. The first type, its original form, is the only kind that exists for "primitives" and "children," and is defined by "wish fulfillment" (Freud 2003, 154).[11] It is an expression of "primordial narcissism," and, in this initial stage of development, the double is welcomed as "an assurance of immortality." This "primitive phase" of the uncanny is "surmounted," yet persists into adulthood alongside a second form of uncanny. This development occurs when the child can "perform the function of self-observation and self-criticism [and therefore] exercises a kind of psychical censorship … [that] we know as the 'conscience'" through the introjection of paternal prohibition. The child, at this point, has internalized the commands of "an authority," and, as such, their mind becomes split between the conscience itself and "the rest of the ego," which the conscience now "can treat… as an object" (Freud 2003, 142).[12] With this development, the double is "eject[ed]… from the ego as something alien" due to a "defensive urge" to expel from the ego that which is judged unacceptable by the conscience. The double becomes a vehicle on which to project or displace, and thereby repress or sublimate, the unacceptable aspects of the ego. It becomes a repository of the abject. With a literary flourish, Freud concludes that "[t]he double has become an object of terror, just as the gods become demons after the collapse of their cult" (143). The double is now "the uncanny harbinger of death" (142).

Through the process of ego formation, the double is marked by a deep ambivalence as the epistemological limit of the self. It embodies both the fantasy of personal immortality (as a narcissistic extension of the self) and the inevitability of death (as the abject other). More fundamentally, it marks the uneasy boundary between self and other. In Lacanian terms, the double, as a manifestation of the uncanny, embodies "the alienation of the self within the field of the Other" (Lacan 2004, 271) because it marks the primal "aporia" – the split between ego as judge (conscience) and ego as object – of the emergence of the Freudian ego (272). Lacan's term for this core of Otherness around which the subject forms is *extimité*, usually translated into English as "extimacy" or "the extimate." The extimate is "something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me" (Lacan 1992, 71). Mladan Dolar explains that "the extimate is located where the most intimate interiority coincides with the exterior and becomes threatening, provoking horror and anxiety. The extimate is simultaneously the interior kernel and the foreign body; in a word, it is *unheimlich*" (Dolar 1991, 6). The extimate has two dimensions within the topological space (interior/exterior) of the self that it instantiates. First, it appears as the shadow of the subject within the symbolic realm, where it manifests itself as the *objet a* (Dolar 1991, 6) – here, in the form of the double; second, as the "extroverted interiorization," the extimate core of the self, the trace of the Other around which one's subjective being inheres (Millar 2021).

Ishiguro introduces important thematic resonances of "The Sandman" into *Klara and the Sun* through his allusions to the story, both direct and indirect. He fully exploits the deep ambivalence embodied in the automaton, Olympia, who marks the boundary between self and other and the animate and inanimate worlds, to define the character of Klara, whose role as the potential double of or replacement for the terminally ill teenager, Josie, places her in the uneasy symbolic territory of the uncanny. As the potential double of a human teenager, Klara's presence calls into question the very existence of "the human heart," an excessive something that defines each person as individually unique (Ishiguro 2021, 215). Equally uncertain is whether Klara herself has an "interior" existence. This questioning varies from casting doubt on whether Klara has emotions – as when Chrissie, Josie's mother, declares "It must be nice … to have no feelings" (97) – to questioning whether Klara is self-aware in a way that demands recognition of her moral status – as when a friend of the family asks Klara how she ought "'to treat a guest like you. After all, are you a guest at all? Or do I treat you like a vacuum cleaner?'" (143), an episode that foreshadows Klara's exile into a closet alongside the family's appliances, where she is largely forgotten when Josie grows beyond the need for her companionship (290). Finally, in an ironic twist, Klara is the only character who is able to articulate a cogent understanding of subjectivity as a form of social existence that affirms the unique value of every person. Within Klara's formulation, a person cannot be duplicated or replaced, even by an exact copy, for their extimate core makes them symbolically and affectively unique.

V. Clara → Klara: Coppelius → Capaldi

One finds a direct reference to "The Sandman" in the titular character's name, Klara, an echo of Hoffmann's "Clara." While, in Hoffmann's story, Clara is a human doubled by Olympia, an automaton, in Ishiguro's rewriting Clara has switched positions with her double. Ishiguro's Klara is an android purchased by the parents of an ailing teenager to study the teenager's behavior and "learn" her mind, so that Klara's mind can then be transferred to an android duplicate of the human teenager's body (211). Thus, Klara is now a potential android double of a human. Clara's identity has been displaced onto an artificial human, Klara, and it is now Clara's/Klara's indeterminate sentience and personhood that troubles the line between human and machine. With Ishiguro's displacement of Clara's human identity onto an android, the unsettling resemblance between human and automaton is fully assumed as a defining characteristic of Klara, placing her definitively in the symbolic territory of the uncanny (not unlike when Olympia the automaton apparently becomes human in her last scene in "The Sandman"). The name Klara resonates on a broader historical level, as well. The meaning of Clara/Klara, "light," can be taken to refer to "enlightenment" or to the Enlightenment, a meaning that is reflected in the title of the novel, *Klara and the Sun*. The internal reference of the title – to Klara the android's animistic worship of the Sun, which she regards as a god to whom she offers sacrifices and asks favors – reinforces this link to "The Sandman," given Hoffmann's focus on the occult connection between technology and the supernatural forces presumed to be banished or surmounted by the rational world view of the post-Enlightenment era. In *Klara and the Sun*, as in Hoffmann's tale, the dark and occult past is only hubristically imagined to be surmounted since the gods and monsters of the premodern past are destined to haunt modern technology. In "The Sandman," the automaton Olympia becomes the site of struggle between Nathanael and the mythic Sandman. Far from liberating Nathanael from his Oedipal struggle with the Sandman/ Coppelius, the remarkable technology represented by Olympia, an artificial person, merely becomes the new field of struggle for possession of the object, which is won by the mythic monster/primal Father. In *Klara and the Sun*, while the sun powers Klara's batteries, it does not rationally enlighten her, but is instead taken to be a powerful god, which is a common "AF superstition" (2021, 287).[13] The mind of the android is possessed by a sun god.

Klara appears to spontaneously assume the existence of a god and interpret the world in terms of the mysterious plan of this god,[14] which requires her to offer sacrifices and prayers in exchange for favors. This leads literary critic Nicole Simonetti to observe that "the Sun resembles the Lacanian big Other" (Simonetti 2023, 318); indeed, the apparently monotheistic sun god of Klara represents, like real-world monotheisms, perhaps the most literal-minded way of locating oneself in the field of desire of the (big) Other. Therefore, while Klara's sentience might remain in question, her subjectivity is clear-cut. Interpreting God's mysterious desire – or fully assuming the desire of the Other – becomes, for Klara, the key to unlocking the hidden truth of the world, happiness, and one's purpose. Which is to say Klara not only locates herself within the field of the desire of the Other but does so in one of the most characteristically human ways.

Also evocative of "The Sandman" is Henry Capaldi, who builds androids to sell to grieving parents as replacements for their deceased children. Capaldi's name not only sounds similar to that of Coppelius/Coppola but is a play on the meaning of the original names: Coppola/Coppelius is derived from the Italian *coppa*, meaning "eye socket" (Hoffmann 2008, 403n), while Capaldi is derived from the Italian *caput*, meaning "head." Given that Capaldi's name echoes the name of the malicious double of Nathanael's father who steals children's eyes to place in the eyeless, metal faces he forges, it is not surprising that Capaldi emerges as a sinister character; nor is it surprising that the symbolism of eyes and eyelessness remains potent in *Klara and the Sun*. The lifeless android bodies in Capaldi's laboratory are an unmistakable reference to the grotesque, eyeless faces forged by Coppelius. Capaldi's "portrait" of Josie – his term for the android body that will replace Josie upon her death once Klara's mind is implanted into it – is not eyeless, but its vacant eyes, described by Klara as lacking the ephemeral "kind smile" (2021, 201) of human Josie's eyes, suggest the "fixed and dead" eyes of Olympia (Hoffmann 2008, 106), the automaton with whom Nathanael falls in love. With this reference, we can see beyond the resonance with Hoffmann's story to Freud's reading of eyelessness in terms of symbolic castration, for Olympia's lifeless eyes only come to life when viewed through the lens of the spyglass provided by Coppola, representing the Law of the Father (Coppelius/Coppola is, after all, both a lawyer and the father's obscene double), or the field of the desire of the Other. The question that is posed in *Klara and the Sun* seems to be if Klara's mind, when implanted into the android body-double of Josie, will grant the "portrait" the ephemeral subjective gleam that characterizes Josie's eyes and distinguishes the android body from the real Josie (Ishiguro 2021, 205). Moreover, the impression created by Josie's android body-double neatly evokes both types of Freud's uncanny: while the android body promises Josie immortality as her "continuation" (2021, 205), it is simultaneously "the uncanny harbinger of death," both in the sense that it is there to replace Josie upon her death and in the sense that it is haunted by an indefinable yet essential difference between itself and the human it duplicates (Freud 2003, 142).

Ishiguro's most persistent development of the motif of eyes is through the frequent narrative focus on the precise mechanics of Klara's way of visually constructing the world. This issue becomes most palpable when Klara experiences stress, anxiety, or mechanical malfunction, which causes her to temporarily lose her ability to organize visual stimuli into a coherent vision of the world. In these moments, her vision devolves into an abstract grid full of boxes that eventually resolve into recognizable objects. At other times, Klara perceives bizarre, monstrous creatures based on her inability to recognize boundaries between objects, as when her vision combines two people and a dog walking in close proximity into "a large creature with numerous limbs and eyes," which resolves into separate creatures through what seems – in terms of her description – to be a form of asexual reproduction through binary fission: "as I watched, a crack appeared down its center … it divided itself" (Ishiguro 2021, 214). Klara's way of seeing frequently has a profound estranging effect. The most ordinary things appear irreducibly alien, underscoring a complex process by which an android – or a human – resolves an infinitude of visual stimuli into a comprehensible vision of the world. Such scenes strenuously

emphasize the fact that the narrator is an artificial person and perception is a mechanical process for her. When confronted with the literal process through which an artificial intelligence mechanically receives stimuli and constructs her vision of the world from these stimuli, the reader experiences alienation from Klara.

Such scenes "evoke the uninterpreted sense data that analytic philosophers... posit as the foundation of empirical experience" (Hoekema 2022, 45). In doing so, these scenes invite us to recognize the constitutive strangeness of the world, which our senses reduce and shape to fit our comprehension. These scenes simultaneously allow us to evade this recognition by attributing this process of the reduction of the boundless data bombarding the senses and its subsequent transformation into the qualia constituting conscious experience to Klara's otherness as an artificial person. The alienating effect achieved by highlighting the fact that Klara is a machine and her perceptions are mechanistic is thus another aspect of the story that lends itself to analysis in terms of Freud's second type of uncanny, created by the projection/ displacement of the rejected parts of one's ego onto the double, who, in this case, is the android other. Freud's linguistic analysis demonstrates that the meaning of *heimlich* – defined as "belonging to the house, not strange, familiar... homely" (2003, 126) – merges with its antonym, *unheimlich* (translated into English as "uncanny") – that which is "unhomely," "foreign," or "mysterious" (129). In a fundamental sense, the (mis)recognition of that which is foreign within the home, or that which is other within the self, is responsible for the estranging effect of the uncanny.

Discussing Ishiguro's previous foray into human cloning in *Never Let Me Go* (2005), Steve Garlick observes that Ishiguro's clones evoke the "experience of the uncanny" because they "confront" us with "something that cannot be consciously known within our existing epistemological paradigm" (2010, 146). Of course, to the extent that clones conjure the uncanny, they simultaneously enable and sustain our epistemological paradigm. Descriptions of Klara's visual perception make Klara seem robotic, mechanical, inhuman, a mere machine whose perceptions and decisions are determined by algorithms that are not within her control. A basic element of human reality – existing in a world of physical causation, a web of efficient causes that are determinative of every thought and action – can then be displaced onto the automaton. In *Klara and the Sun*, the android is our uncanny double, onto which we have projected/displaced the irresolvable problem of our own sentience and free will, only to find them returning to us to disrupt any sense of the stability or confidence in our self-definition of what it means to be uniquely human, somehow irreducible to the physical universe to which we reduce everything else, including AI, no matter how capable they become.

The uncanny aspect of Klara bursts into the foreground when Josie's family visits Capaldi's laboratory to view Josie's "portrait," or android body double. Capaldi insists that his androids are not mere copies of the children they mimic, but the children themselves. Capaldi tells Chrissie, Josie's mother, "The new Josie won't be an imitation. She *really will be Josie*" (2021, 205), asserting the "second Josie won't be a copy. She'll be the exact same" (207-208), "a continuation of Josie" (205). Encountering resistance from Josie's parents regarding this claim, Capaldi frames his response in abstract and metaphorical but

ultimately secular terms, as an issue of "the human heart," the mysterious, subjective something that defines each person as unique and irreplaceable (215). Capaldi argues that as long as Klara resembles Josie and shares "Josie's impulses and desires," she will be the same as Josie:

> "The trouble is, Chrissie, you're like me. We're both of us sentimental. We can't help it. Our generation still carry the old feelings. A part of us refuses to let go. The part that wants to keep believing there's something unreachable inside each of us. Something that's unique and won't transfer. But there's nothing like that, we know now. *You* know that. For people our age it's a hard one to let go. We *have* to let it go, Chrissie. There's nothing there. Nothing inside of Josie that's beyond the Klaras of this world to continue. The second Josie won't be a copy. She'll be the exact same and you'll have every right to love her just as you love Josie now. It's not faith you need. Only rationality. I had to do it, it was tough but now it works for me just fine. And it will for you." (207-208)

With this philosophy, Capaldi emerges as a profound rewriting of Coppelius for the postmodern age. Hoffmann's Coppelius is a manifestation of a Freudian primal Father who deprives Nathanael of pleasure in order to claim all enjoyment for himself. Slavoj Žižek describes this aspect of the primal Father as the "obscene superego" (2008, 83) or the "obscene… figure of the Father-of-enjoyment" who sustains "the illusion that there was at least one subject… who was able to enjoy fully" (1998, 23-24).[15] By playing this role, Coppelius enables Nathanael's subjectivity, both by sustaining the myth of the possibility of full satisfaction through possession of the object-cause (since the obscenely appetitive primal Father is presumed to experience such enjoyment) and by providing Nathanael with "the subject's impossible relation to the object-cause of [his] desire" (Žižek 1998, 6). As Todd McGowan explains, obstruction of access to the object-cause is necessary to create and sustain desire, for "eliminating the barriers to enjoyment would eliminate the source of enjoyment" (2016, 30). Coppelius blocks access to the object, thereby both supporting the "perpetual movement of desire" and obscuring "its rootedness in missing the object rather than attaining it" (McGowan 2016, 33). In short, by denying Nathanael access to the object-cause of desire, Coppelius affirms the existence of the object-cause and its uniqueness as the irreplaceable/impossible thing that creates and sustains Nathanael's desire. In this sense, Coppelius, terrifying as he is, nevertheless enables Nathanael's subjective existence. Capaldi, on the other hand, denies the very uniqueness of the object-cause of desire, and in this sense proclaims it illusory, negating its existence. For Capaldi, the object that compels our desire is simply an object in a world of objects, any one of which might replace our object-cause provided it is identical. In Lacanian terms, Capaldi denies the cut of the Real. That is, he denies the unconscious dimension of the mind, the subjective excess that enables desire and sustains the subject. In Capaldi's formulation, human Josie is merely one of a potentially infinite series of Josies, a simulacrum of Josies, each exchangeable for any of its duplicates. For Capaldi, a perfect copy of a person is identical to its original. In this way, Capaldi appears to declare the end of subjective uniqueness and with it, subjectivity itself.

Capaldi, by performing this supreme act of abnegation of subjective uniqueness, speaks through and against not only Coppelius but other Romantic-era literary figures that grapple with the inheritance of the Enlightenment. Katie Fitzpatrick notes that Capaldi is an incarnation of the "mad scientist" (2021, 37); in Capaldi, we find distinct echoes of Victor Frankenstein, who, to console himself for the death of his beloved mother, attempts to unlock the secret of immortality by animating a monstrous creature constructed of human corpses. While Ishiguro strips his story of the grotesque body-horror of either *Frankenstein* (1818) or "The Sandman" (1819), he creates a figure more monstrous than those imagined by either Mary Shelley or Hoffmann. With Capaldi, an amalgam of Frankenstein and Coppelius has metamorphosed into another specter of the Enlightenment, Laplace's demon (1814), an intellect that, fully understanding the laws of the universe, reduces existence to pure physical determinism, and for whom "nothing would be uncertain, and the future just like the past would be present before its eyes" (Laplace 1954, 4). For Capaldi, all things are ultimately reducible to their material reality. He has eliminated the distinction between humans and automatons not by acknowledging sentience in artificial intelligence but by reducing humans to the web of physical causation to which artificial intelligence has been traditionally reduced. Moreover, Capaldi successfully convinces both of Josie's parents to accept this view, at least provisionally, as they agree to the plan to replace Josie with Klara in the case of Josie's death. Following Capaldi's speech, Chrissie urges Klara to "learn Josie in her entirety" in order to "pull ... off" the switch of android daughter for human daughter (2021, 211).

Of Josie's parents, it is Chrissie who first contacts Capaldi to create the "portrait." We realize, at this point in the story, that Chrissie has been surreptitiously auditioning Klara for the role of Josie since she and Josie purchased Klara; before deciding to purchase Klara, Chrissie asks Klara to imitate Josie's walk (44). In the course of Chrissie's conversation with Capaldi, we further discover that Chrissie had attempted to replace Josie's older sister, Sal, with an android after Sal's death, a few years prior. Capaldi interprets Chrissie's hesitation to follow through with the plan to replace Josie not in terms of Chrissie's violently ambivalent emotions regarding the possibility of replacing her daughter with an android – apparent in Chrissie's treatment of Klara, which swings between confrontational hostility and coddling – but as a fear that Klara is not sufficiently technologically advanced to make the switch convincing. He tells Chrissie,

> "What we did with Sal is no comparison. We've been through this, Chrissie. What we made with Sal was a doll. A bereavement doll, nothing more. We've come a long, long way since then. What you have to understand is this. The new Josie won't be an imitation. She really will be Josie. A continuation of Josie." (205)

Chrissie swings between expressions of a desire for reassurance that the scheme to replace Josie will work and (sometimes) vehement denunciations of both Klara and Capaldi when they reassure her that it could work. Her mercurial treatment of the key players in the plan expresses a powerful ambivalence regarding the possibility of successfully replacing her daughter with a "duplicate."

Paul, Josie's father, expresses a much more direct hostility toward Capaldi and the plan. He deeply resents Capaldi's claim that his daughter can be "continued," or duplicated, by an automaton, but ultimately finds himself unable to dismiss this as the rational view:

> "I think I hate Capaldi because deep down I suspect he may be right. That what he claims is true. That science has now proved beyond a doubt there's nothing so unique about my daughter, nothing there our modern tools can't excavate, copy, transfer. That people have been living with one another all this time, centuries, loving and hating each other, and all on a mistaken premise … When they do what they do, say what they say, it feels like they're taking from me what I hold most precious in this life." (221-222)

Considering *Klara and the Sun* is dedicated to blurring lines between human and artificial intelligence, it is apposite that only Klara articulates a coherent dissent to Capaldi's view. When Josie recovers from her illness and Klara is relieved of the possibility (or burden) of leading her life as Josie's replacement, Chrissie and Paul appear to forget about the issue of whether Klara would be "the real Josie" or merely a "copy," while Klara, understandably, remains fixated on the issue (207). Artificial Friends are apparently designed to live only a few years, presumably in order to die around the time that their teenage owners move away from home, at which point their function of servitude/ friendship is over and their purpose within the family comes to an end. (Also, since this is America in the near future, we can assume that planned obsolescence and deliberately limiting the lifespan of commodities continues to be a strategy to drive consumption.) When Josie leaves home for college, Klara is literally put out to pasture with the other mechanical detritus of consumer culture, sent to a junkyard full of broken and obsolete machines which Klara refers to as "the Yard" (298). As Klara sits in the Yard during her "slow fade" (294) – the term for gradual android death – she has a chance encounter with the manager from the android store where she began life. Capaldi's claim about the nonexistence of "the human heart," his claim that any sense of human uniqueness is illusory, continues to preoccupy Klara as her life fades, and she attempts to explain the central predicament of her brief life to the woman:

> "Manager, I did all I could to learn Josie and had it become necessary, I would have done my utmost. But I don't think it would have worked out so well. Not because I wouldn't have achieved accuracy. But however hard I tried, I believe now there would have remained something beyond my reach. The Mother, Rick, Melania Housekeeper, the Father. I'd never have reached what they felt for Josie in their hearts. I'm now sure of this, Manager (…)
>
> "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." (302)

Here, Klara adopts the conventional metaphor of inside/outside to describe the boundary between self and other, only to deconstruct this metaphor. Klara, in her own terms, evokes extimacy in the sense of "intimacy exteriorized" (Millar 2021) where the intimate core of Josie's being – that which makes her "special" and unique and irreplaceable – is not "inside of Josie," but outside of her, in "those who loved her." According to Klara, the definitive core of Josie exists within the field of the Other's desire; it is the trace of the Other around which Josie's subjective being inheres. It is this mark of Otherness that is definitive of Josie's subjectivity. Josie's extimate core is the thing which Klara could never duplicate, even were she to become an exact copy of Josie.

Klara affirms that what makes Josie unique does not result from any literal uniqueness in terms of either her physical body or her personality. Josie's body can be reproduced, as can the mind and emotions produced by the physical entity of the body, for a person's appearance and personality can be duplicated with rapidly increasing accuracy in the world of this novel. Yet, as Klara clarifies, subjective uniqueness exists separately from literal uniqueness. Klara perceives that it is hard to imagine her uncanny presence as a duplicate daughter would have satisfied Josie's parents. In a very basic sense, Klara's Josie would always be a reminder of the death of Josie. On an even more fundamental level, their acceptance of Klara would be premised on the rejection of all subjective uniqueness. As the infinitely exchangeable object substituted for the irreplaceable object-cause, Klara's Josie would attest to the impossibility of love because her very presence would negate that which made Josie special to her parents.

Conclusion

In *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro examines the persistent American fantasy/nightmare of the continuation of slavery through humanoid robots. As a "commodified robot" Klara's function is to provide unpaid domestic labor; more specifically, "affective labor… the production and manipulation of affect" (Du 2022, 552). Much like "the servant in the house," Klara is "conscripted to be friend, confidant [and] nanny" for her child owner (Hartman 2021, 233). Klara is "expected to be grateful" and offer "sacrificial devotion" as "her duty and sole reason for existing" (Hartman, 234), a requirement that Klara fulfills throughout the story, perhaps most notably when she sacrifices her cognitive capacity and risks her life (through allowing fluid to be drained from her neck) to provide an offering to the Sun, in the effort to persuade the Sun to cure Josie of her illness. Finally, like a domestic slave, Klara's "lifetime" is equivalent to her "labor time" (Hartman, 233). She is not only left to stare blankly into space or at a wall (sometimes in a utility closet alongside other appliances) when she is not needed for service, but ultimately left to die in a junkyard after her now teenage owner leaves home for college and no longer needs her. Much like a domestic slave, Klara's "liminal status between human and tool" shapes the moral ambivalence of her human owners toward her personhood, which they can inconsistently affirm or deny as mood and circumstance dictate (Hampton, 2015, xi).

Beyond its efficacy as a metaphor for exploitation based on class as well as race and gender, Ishiguro's dissection of the moral inconsistency and habitual cruelty with which humans treat their android servants pressures the reader to determine the likelihood that Artificial Friends are sentient and capable of self-conscious suffering, and thus whether android servants/slaves demand moral recognition as intelligent, sentient entities. The issue of whether Klara is sentient opens into an inquiry of whether there is any property or quality of humans that cannot be duplicated by an intelligent android. Capaldi, the creator of android clones of human children, asserts that although there is a desire "to keep believing [in] something unreachable inside of each of us. Something that's unique and won't transfer," that in fact "there's nothing like that" (Ishiguro 2021, 207). Capaldi reaches the conclusion that there is nothing unique in any human that can't be duplicated by an android, nothing in the human mind that cannot be duplicated by an android mind. There is no essential difference between a human intelligence and an artificial intelligence.

Capaldi's creation of an equivalence between human and android is made at the expense of rendering people infinitely reproducible, infinitely exchangeable for their duplicates. In other words, if Capaldi's vision were to be realized, it would reduce children, or any other cloneable person, to the status of a commodity, not just in the sense that the person could be purchased (as Klara, Josie's intended clone and duplicate, is purchased), but in the sense of the commodity's boundless equivalence and exchangeability. This duplicability directly appeals to the uncanny in Freud's first sense, which develops when a child's "primordial narcissism" leads them to perceive the double as "an assurance of immortality" (Freud 2003, 142). Of course, Capaldi's replicants would simultaneously carry with them Freud's second sense of the uncanny since the presence of the android clone would always attest to the death of the human child, so the parents' relationship to the double of their dead child would most likely be haunted by melancholia, a term frequently invoked to describe the emotional tenor of Ishiguro's work, in the psychoanalytic sense of an unacknowledgeable loss.[16]

It seems appropriate that only Klara, the android who troubles the line between human and artificial intelligence, is able to mount a cogent defense of human individuality that resists Capaldi's attempt to commodify human beings. Klara, unlike any of the human characters, comes to understand that the subjective uniqueness of humans is a separate issue from their literal uniqueness, for their subjective uniqueness is found in the extimate core of their subjectivity. The source of this subjective uniqueness will therefore elude Capaldi, no matter how many "black boxes" from Artificial Friends he opens (Ishiguro 2021, 293). Moreover, she arrives at this position through a recognition that "the unconscious" element of "the psyche is precisely what exceeds the imprisoning effects of the discursive demand to … become a coherent subject" since it is this aspect of the self that exceeds the demands of any possible discursive power to define and limit one's subjectivity (Butler 1997, 86). It is also ironic and terribly melancholy that Klara articulates her defense of individuality in response to the commodification of humans while affirming Josie's individuality, not her own. Klara does so as she awaits death in a junkyard, having been tossed away by Josie and her family because Klara is, in the end, regarded as a thing, and this is what you do with things when they no longer serve their purpose.

Klara and the Sun offers an insightful model for ethical coherence regarding potential AI subjects. Klara, whose subjectivity is clear because she locates herself within the field of the Other, has the precise quality that we use to recognize human beings as social creatures, or subjects. More impressive in terms of fictional commentary on the issue of AI sentience or personhood, Klara recognizes a person's existence within the field of desire of the Other, which forms the extimate core of the self, as the basis of a person's individuality. Extimacy is the thing "within" and simultaneously "outside of" a person that resists all attempts at reducing that person to their symbolic representation or discursive determination; it is the subjective excess that cannot be reproduced. It is the thing that makes both an individual human and an individual android irreducibly unique.

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Notes

[1] Cultural historian Robert Young documents the emergence and increasing influence of the doctrine of polygenism in nineteenth-century America and Europe in considerable detail in *Colonial Desire*. Young notes that within "debates about race ... before the American Civil War... the two main contesting positions were named 'monogenesis' and 'polygenesis,'" with monogenesis, the view that all humans were a single species, representing the commonly held Biblical understanding of the creation of humankind (1995, 9). Young notes that by "mid-century... this view [monogenesis] was increasingly challenged by those who promulgated what was described as the new scientific theory of race ... polygenism" (66), which held "that different races were different species" (9). Young argues that polygenism, when combined with the theory that different races represented different stages of evolution, resulted in "the dominance of racial theory so widespread that it worked as an ideology" (64).

[2] For a discussion of the suggestive fact that Turing's scenario involved whether or not a computer program could fool an interlocutor into believing it was a woman as reliably as a man could fool the same interlocutor into believing he was a woman, see the chapter titled "What Can I Know?" in Isabel Millar, *The Psychoanalysis of Artificial Intelligence* (2021).

[3] Currently, tests to measure AI sentience, such as the General Language Understanding Evaluation, are universally utilized by corporate developers of advanced large language models (Dinh 2022).

[4] Regarding the "easy problem of consciousness," Chalmers comments, "Of course, 'easy' is a relative term. Getting the details right will probably take a century or two of difficult empirical work. Still, there is every reason to believe that the methods of cognitive science and neuroscience will succeed" (Chalmers 1995, 201).

[5] Nancy Jecker, Caesar Atiure, and Martin Odei Ajei argue that the relevant criteria for determining Klara's "personhood" should not be "sentience"; rather, her "moral standing" as a person should be "based on ... relational qualities and pro-social virtues," in accord with the West African "ubuntu ethic" (2022, 1). Using quite a different conceptual framework than mine, this argument is similar in that it shifts the focus of AI "personhood" from sentience to social relationships.

[6] Dreaming is also given as the first evidence of robot sentience in Čapek's *R.U.R.*, discussed in the introduction.

[7] In Lacanian terms, the big Other, or just "Other," is an alternate term for the symbolic order, and is distinguished from the small other, or just "other," which assumes the more conventional meaning (Evans 1996, 132). In Western monotheisms, God acts as an imaginary supplement of the Other, which is to say that belief in God shields one from conscious awareness of the *aporia* of the self and the corresponding inconsistency of the symbolic order. God therefore names a strategy for locating oneself in relation to the symbolic order. For Klara, the sun, from which androids draw energy and sustenance, seems to assume the role of such an imaginary God, which I cite below as one form of evidence of her subjectivity.

[8] Although at the end of the novel, during Klara's "slow fade" – the equivalent of android death as her hardware gradually breaks down – she becomes preoccupied with organizing her memories: "I have my memories to go through and place in the right order" (Ishiguro 2021, 302). Perhaps this is Ishiguro's android equivalent of dreaming?

[9] Mladan Dolar, in his Lacanian reading of "The Sandman," takes the fact that Freud employs "the entire panoply of psychoanalytic concepts: castration complex, Oedipus, (primary) narcissism, compulsion to repeat, death drive, repression, anxiety, psychosis, etc." as evidence that "the uncanny ... is the pivotal point around which psychoanalytic concepts revolve, the point that Lacan

calls object small a" (Dolar 1991, 6). That is, he claims that the uncanny becomes Freud's foundational concept and equates it to Lacan's *objet a*.

[10] Perhaps it should be noted here that "the uncanny" is therefore an effect of the psychological irresolvability of the "problem of other minds," in Freud's analysis.

[11] For Freud, as for most of his intellectual contemporaries, ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, which is to say that the development of the individual follows the same phases as the development of "primitive" cultures into civilizations. "[W]e have all… been through a phase corresponding to the animistic phase in the development of primitive peoples," Freud writes in *The Uncanny* (2003, 147). Here, it seems notable that Freud's theory not only equates non-European peoples to children – an omnipresent feature of post-Enlightenment racism – but implies that it would be impossible for a person from a "primitive" society to form a conscience. It seems notable that this conclusion, which he never explicitly states, would contradict his analysis of the emergence of society through the establishment of cultural prohibitions in *Totem and Taboo* (1913).

[12] Freud imagined this process of the introjection of paternal authority as a repetition of the original sin of Freudian mythology: literally ingesting the primal Father in an act of cannibalism. In *Totem and Taboo*, he writes that the "violent primal father had surely been envied and feared [by] … each of the brothers. Now they accomplished their identification with him by devouring him and each acquired part of his strength" (Freud 1946, 183). That is, the introjection of paternal authority is a symbolic repetition of a literal act of cannibalism.

[13] Nicole Simonetti notes that because Artificial Friends recharge their batteries by facing the sun, "Klara's faith in the Sun could be linked back to her human-designed programming in such terms as a necessary measure to guarantee her survival" (Simonetti 2023, 319). This idea is implied from the beginning of the story. While describing her earliest memories in the first paragraph of the novel, Klara anthropomorphizes the sun, explaining how she "would see the Sun on his journey" (Ishiguro 2021, 3), and interprets events that she witnesses outside the store window in terms of "the Sun and his kindness to us" (Ishiguro 2021, 8).

[14] Here, we get another echo of Asimov's *I, Robot*: in the story "Reason," a robot named Cutie independently develops a religious explanation of his existence.

[15] While the Father-of-the-Law denies access to the object-cause of desire, the obscene Father-of-Enjoyment (or obscene superego) correspondingly claims all surplus enjoyment which he denies to the subject for himself. The obscene superego is suffused with unlawful pleasure. Žižek derives this idea from Lacan's observation that the superego, which instantiates and upholds symbolic law through interdiction, is simultaneously "'an obscene, ferocious figure' which imposes 'a senseless destructive, purely oppressive, almost always anti-legal morality'" on the subject (Evans 1996, 201). For Žižek, the emblematic figure of the obscene superego is a "divinity demanding sacrifices" (2008, 83).

[16] In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud defines melancholia as resulting from "the loss of an object that is withdrawn from consciousness, unlike mourning, in which no aspect of the loss is unconscious" (2005, 201). Within this definition, melancholia is closely related to the uncanny, for in "the melancholic" personality "we see how one part of the ego presents itself to the other, critically assesses it, and, so to speak, takes it as its object" (2005, 207). In other words, melancholia lays bare the process through which the uncanny is created when the conscience forms through the introjection of paternal prohibition, resulting in the mind splitting between the conscience itself and "the rest of the ego," which the conscience now "can treat… as an object," with the uncanny as a sort of residue of that which is unacceptable to the conscience (Freud, 2003, 142).