

Beyond a Strictly Anthropocentric Vision of the Nonhuman: Body Language in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

Lena Crucitti
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Abstract

In the dystopian science fiction novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021), Nobel Prizewinning writer Kazuo Ishiguro gives a voice to a non-human narrator called Klara, an AF (Artificial Friend) who was bought to become the companion of a child called Josie. Through her narration, Klara demonstrates that she has superior observational abilities: she reads people through their facial expressions and gestures, and actively uses her body to communicate. Interestingly, human language, which is traditionally considered as “man’s identifying characteristic par excellence” (Agamben 2004: 37), is relegated to the status of a less efficient communication tool. As I will argue in this article, the questioning of the power of human language and the emphasis on body language as a major means of expression in the novel allow to escape from a strictly anthropocentric stance on the nonhuman.

The novel suggests that going beyond words is a necessity to displace the human perspective in the representation of other forms of being. *Klara and the Sun* features a wide range of different ontological categories: humans (in the traditional sense of the term), genetically engineered humans (children who have been ‘lifted’), traditional animals (dogs, birds, insects, etc.), posthuman animals (drone birds), different generations of AFs (B2s, B3s), etc. My article will approach the novel as a work that does not only blur the boundaries between the traditional categories (animals, humans, machines) but that questions the existence of such groups. Based on Joanna Bourke’s concept of ‘negative zoology’, I will demonstrate that the novel – mainly through Klara’s unique way of expressing herself and understanding the world – promotes the acknowledgement of the radical singularity of every single being, be it what we call a ‘human’ or a non-human entity.