



CHALLENGING HUMAN CENTRALITY AND PORTRAYAL OF NON-HUMANS IN PAOLO BACIGALUPI'S *THE DROWNED CITIES* AND KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *KLARA AND THE SUN*

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Abstract

*This paper attempts to critique humans' position of centrality in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Drowned Cities* (2012) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021), using Donna Haraway's concept of chthulucene. The study interrogates human exceptionalism while critiquing human and non-human relationships. In the novels mentioned above, Klara and Tool are AI and Cyborg characters who are created as a substitute to perform duties such as caretaker for children. Klara and Tool have shared human attributes such as care, emotions, faith, hope, empathy and sacrifice. They are employed as Artificial Friends (AF) to children. This paper problematises human exceptionalism while using the framework of chthulucene and affirmative ethics to highlight flaws in human life. Bacigalupi depicts a society wherein exploitation of youth, environmental degradation, and breakdown of empathy are key issues. Ishiguro portrays a sick child who lives in the company of Klara, an artificial friend. Bacigalupi and Ishiguro's portrayal challenges anthropocentrism. Klara and Tool central characters in the novels are staunch critique of idea of human exceptionalism.*

Keywords

Exceptionalism, Chthulucene, Drowned Cities, Affirmative Ethics, Non-Humans, etc.

Full Article

Introduction:

Paolo Bacigalupi's dystopian novel, *The Drowned Cities* (2012), is set in a future America devastated by war, political unrest, and climate change. As they make their way through the remnants of the once-thriving "Drowned Cities." The narrative centers on Tool, a renegade genetically altered war beast; Mahlia, a war-scarred survivor; and Mouse, an orphan child. Bacigalupi depicts a society dominated by factions and exploited youth, exposing the destruction brought about by ongoing conflict and environmental degradation. By examining themes of exploitation, resiliency, and the breakdown of empathy and morality, Bacigalupi challenges anthropocentrism and the imago Dei through their morally nuanced journey. The novel warns about the ecological and human costs of unbridled violence and environmental disregard.

Kazuo Ishiguro's futuristic speculative novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021) portrays social inequality, the limits of empathy and emotional connection, and the role of artificial intelligence in human society. The narrative centers on Josie, a sick child who develops a strong bond with Klara, an astute Artificial Friend she purchases. The novel employs Klara's viewpoint to examine human emotions, loyalty, and relationships in a society where genetically "elevated" children enjoy societal privilege. The morality of artificial companionship and the role of technology in human life are called into question by Klara's emotional experiences. Ishiguro's story explores themes of



sacrifice, love, consciousness, and the potential benefits and drawbacks of technological progress for humanity.

Theoretical Framework:

The paper uses Donna Haraway's concept of chthulucene introduced in the book *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016) to interpret *The Drowned Cities* and *Klara and the Sun*. The concept of chthulucene means "...made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen—yet" (Haraway, SWT, 55). It means that chthulucene is a functioning, ongoing, and evolving reality and a temporal concept shaped by the relationship among humans, nonhumans and the environment. Further, Donna Haraway defines the relationship between humans and "companion species" as "becoming-with" (Haraway, 13). In other words, chthulucene endows importance on interconnected life and calls away from human-centred thinking, which disapproves of ownership and control over the companion species. Donna Haraway also offers an alternative way for imagining and living out relations in these troubled times. Haraway's richly textured and indistinctly present alter-imaginary of Chthulucene (Neimanis, 516-17). Haraway offers possibilities to imagine a world that is deviant from the precariousness and dangers of climate change. Moreover, this enforces "making-kin" and creates a space called "Terrapolis", which signifies "open, worldly, indeterminate, and polytemporal" (Haraway, SWT, 11). Terrapolis offers free space for "unexpected companions" (Haraway, SWT, 11). Thus, terrapolis is a possibility in the real world itself, which can be built from the world we inhabit.

In addition, it emphasises that terrapolis grows from the complexities of the real world, challenging the idea of escaping to a new future. Haraway says that "[t]errapolis is rich in world, inoculated against posthumanism but rich in com-post, inoculated against human exceptionalism but rich in humus, ripe for multispecies storytelling" (Haraway, 11). Terrapolis goes against the posthumanist focus on the end of humanity or a technological future in which cyborgs and artificial intelligence will take over. She presents 'com-post' as a metaphor to emphasise that we should focus on our life that is earthly, messy, interconnected, and entangled in the cycles of decay and renewal. Haraway claims that multiple species are companion species. For Haraway, companion species help refuse human exceptionalism without invoking posthumanism (Haraway, 13). In "human-animal worlds, companion species are ordinary beings-in encounter in the house, lab, field, zoo, park, truck, office, prison, ranch, arena, village, human hospital, forest, slaughterhouse, estuary, vet clinic, lake, stadium, barn, wildlife preserve, farm, ocean canyon, city streets, factory, and more" (Haraway, 13). Thus, Haraway suggests that humans co-evolve with plants, animals and nonhuman species.

In *Klara and the Sun*, the central character, Klara, an Artificial Friend, is designed to serve as a companion to children, supporting them through their transition from adolescence to early adulthood. Her role is to provide emotional and social companionship, assisting their development until college. According to the researcher, she is analyzed as a substitution for the traditional notion of companion species within the chthulucene framework. Klara is situated along the more expansive web of life while highlighting human limitations and vulnerabilities. She contributes to foregrounding the interconnectedness of all beings by destabilising the hierarchical distinction among humans, nonhumans and nature. Her portrayal "radically nonhuman agents might emerge from our technological practice" (Thomsen and Wamberg, 82). Klara may be viewed as a metaphor of threat to human relationships. Klara attempts to live with other humans in the terrapolis, makes efforts to ingrain human attributes, and presents human flaws. "The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each



other in a thick present” (Haraway, 1). Haraway worries about AI like Klara replacing humans in the terapolis may create horrendous situation when humane principles are undermined. Therefore, it demands human attention to the idea of forming multispecies relationships to rupture human-centred hierarchies. Rethinking Klara’s role in chthulucene as kin further extends her role as an entangled one that challenges human exceptionalism through her emotions, such as care, loss, and companionship.

Firstly, Ishiguro portrays Klara as a co-existing AI who may take over humans. Klara may become a threat when she replaces humans in terms of kin-making. Klara’s humane side may be seen when she feels sad after looking at a dead beggar and his dog. For instance, Ishiguro portrays, “I felt sadness then, despite it being a good thing they’d died together, holding each other and trying to help one another. I wished someone would notice, so they could be taken somewhere better and quieter” (Ishiguro, 37). Hence, Haraway’s idea of chthulucene and kinship is crucial to understanding the relationship between children and Klara. Haraway further mentions, “[g]rief is a path to understanding entangled shared living and dying” (Haraway, *SWT*, 39). Humans and nonhumans are entangled in shared experience through the interdependence of life and death. Thus, Klara’s reflection on the death of the beggar and dog reveals her ability to empathize with the pathetic living beings.

Moreover, Klara notices children with Artificial Friends when they pass by the store. For instance, “the AFs outside did all they could to take any route other than one that would bring them past our store, because the last thing they wanted was for their children to see us and come to the window” (Ishiguro, 15). It depicts the nonhumans’ desire to exist in the world with dignity. These emotions in AFs first show a bond they have with their owners. Secondly, these emotions align with Haraway’s critique of human exceptionalism, where humans treat nonhumans and the environment for their benefit. Klara symbolises the system wherein people are categorized into hierarchies of values. For instance, Klara is an Artificial friend designed to be a companion to children, but when children grow, they leave their AFs as trash, as happened when Klara said in her own words, “I was with Josie all the time. Until she went to college” (Ishiguro, 304). It presents the double standards from the side of humans who treat nonhumans as tools rather than kin who are ‘becoming with’.

However, portrayal of Klara as an entity exposes the fundamental flaw in humans. They preoccupied in the wake of technological advancements, which encourages scope to rely on artificial companions to fulfill basic needs. AFs are employed as a kin to take care of children at home so that people can work. Therefore, Haraway urges, “Outside the dubious privileges of human exceptionalism, thinking people must learn to grieve-with” considering shared grief a solution to shared mourning across species and entities (Haraway, *SWT*, 38). This entangled grief and mourning leads to an obligation to recognise the shared loss vis-a-vis environmental destruction, species extinction, and sufferings of nonhumans. Thus, Klara has human traits and becomes a replacement of humans. Nonetheless, her depiction as an epitome of companionship reflects the commodification of care and companionship wherein nonhuman entities are designed and assigned roles based on their utility.

Secondly, Klara, an Artificial Friend, is programmed to observe and understand the society around her. The store manager remarks about Klara in a conversation with her: “Of all the AFs I looked after, you were certainly one of the most remarkable. You had such unusual insight. And observational abilities. I noticed it right away. I’m so glad to hear it all went well. Because you never know, even with abilities as remarkable as yours” (Ishiguro, 304-05). The manager’s words indicate that Klara has unique intelligence, like humans with observational abilities and is endowed with agency. As a result, it disrupts the belief of human exceptionalism that humans are the only ones with intelligence and agency. Hence, it signifies that Klara’s intelligence is



relational and independent. She learns and shapes herself according to the requirement of humans. Klara's portrayal might be compared to machine learning as she processes and interprets the world based on human data.

Klara enhances interaction competencies by analysing and internalising human behaviour. She internalises human behaviour and enhances her competencies by way of observation of human methods of interaction and understanding behaviour patterns. Haraway says, "[l]iving-with and dying-with each other potently in the Chthulucene can be a fierce reply to the dictates of both Anthropos and Capital" (Haraway, *SWT*, 2). It reflects Haraway's view of living and dying as an act of resistance against the dominant forces of human exceptionalism and capital-driven exploitation. Klara's observation skills made her equal to human beings, breaking the boundaries between humans and nonhumans. It is a step toward recognising nonhumans but still within the boundaries of Earth and without invoking an endangered future. When purchased as a friend, she eventually goes beyond the limits of being a mere object. She starts to observe instead of controlling. She tries to develop a relationship of kin while being embedded in the societal system. Thus, Klara underscores her limitation as her understanding remains confined to the data she encounters, raising questions about whether her perceived intelligence and emotional depth are genuine or just a mere simulation of human expectations.

Thirdly, Klara tries to value weakness and vulnerability. She observes, "At the same time, what was becoming clear to me was the extent to which humans, in their wish to escape loneliness, made man oeuvres that were very complex and hard to fathom," (Ishiguro, 113)—reflecting the relationality between her growing consciousness and human society. Her realisation of human loneliness resonates with the entangled nature of all existence. Human loneliness is a consequence of disconnection from the nonhumans and environment, invoking the need for 'making-kin'. Here, Klara herself becomes a metaphor for human loneliness. Her duty as an artificial companion can be interpreted as a product of human attempts to engineer connections to mediate their emotional needs. It mirrors Haraway's critique of human exceptionalism, suggesting that humans should look for multispecies kinship rather than far-fetched solutions. Haraway says, "The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present" (Haraway, *SWT*, 1), challenging the biological kinship and advocating for multispecies kinship which extends beyond humans and includes animals, AI, ecosystems and other entities which exist. This kinship would lead to an entangled environment where humans would not have to face loneliness, whereas a stable, nurtured, negotiated environment could be developed.

Additionally, Klara's belief in the Sun as a nurturing entity reflects something which goes beyond human epistemology and is not a grand narrative but a practice of attunement to the rhythms of life. It becomes a way of learning that is not human-centred but shaped by her entanglement within the environment and atmosphere in which she grows up. She becomes a perfect example of multispecies existence where she learns from humans and the environment and helps others, a stark critique of human exceptionalism. Her connection with the Sun can be seen as the human refusal to acknowledge the entanglement among "companion- species". Klara, thus, serves as a symbol of endeavours which humans never did to make a bond with the environment.

Fourthly, Klara represents a black canvas that absorbs human pain. For this reason, Haraway says that "it matters how kin make kin" (Dow and Lamoreaux, 481). "Kin are already connecting in unexpected ways that rework the boundaries of the biogenetic, forming new kinds of biological diversity through breast milk, blood, and reproductive technologies" (Haraway, 482). This means that kinship is not just biological; it can be formed through care, technology, and shared experiences. The developed technologies make kinship fluid, where unexpected connections can rework boundaries, creating a new form of biological relationships. Klara is a



manifestation of a mythological deity who is sent to earth to restore humanity. She ironically encourages humans to prioritise the nonhumans and the environment through actively engaging in the same process. For instance, Klara thinks about the coating machine that “[t]he Coatings Machine had been making its awful Pollution, obliging even the Sun to retreat for a time” (Ishiguro, 116), reflecting how Klara perceives the world. She constructs meanings casually and differently, even when she does not understand pollution in relation to humans. Klara thinks that it creates problems for the Sun, where the Sun is a symbol of nature. She critiques human exceptionalism by looking at the problems of society, such as pollution. According to the researcher, it counts as her effort to become kin by trying to point out the issues present in the world. However, she symbolises the humans’ inability to protect their belongings, their environment where they lived, grew up and died. Klara, according to the portrayal by Ishiguro, is a threat which might come true in the near future by replacing human bonds with artificial ones. She might become a kin in the near future beyond her functionality. However, this possibility raises a critical question of the need for technology, underscoring the ethical and existential concerns surrounding artificial companionship.

Lastly, Klara is a reflection of the death of innocence. She learns through her interactions that the world is transactional and faith is not enough. She grows just like human children, with care and companionship. For instance, she is trained by the Manager of the store, who tells her own interpretation of events just like a parent teaches their child human values. Haraway states, “staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings” (Haraway, *SWT*, 1). Haraway attempts to request individuals to embrace the messy and complicated present of the world. She tries not to focus much on the nostalgia of the past or obsess over the future. Thus, Chthulucene calls for a reorientation in how we engage with existence and responsibility. Haraway, urges individuals to dwell on the complexities of present and ongoing relationships. Although Klara does not perceive time as humans, she tries to exist in the immediate, observing and responding to the world around her. She stays within the trouble, trying to make meaning in the present. When the Manager tells her that she did a good job at Josie’s house by saying, “I’m sure she barely knew the meaning of loneliness with you there” (Ishiguro, 304), Klara replies, “I believe I gave good service and prevented Josie from becoming lonely” (Ishiguro, 304). Klara’s reply reflects her understanding of the role she played as a companion, where she helped to prevent Josie from becoming lonely. She shows the attributes such as care, hope and friendship in her relationship with Josie. She did not think of the past or got lost in worries about the future. It critiques human exceptionalism by showing Klara’s one-sided care for Josie, a metaphor for a nonhuman relationship. Josie does not seem to recognise Klara as a companion in return.

Nevertheless, Klara seems to accept her obsolescence. She does not even try to extend her lifespan or fight for survival. She accepts being discarded mirroring cycles of life and death rather than a transhumanist quest for technological immortality. While she embodies qualities traditionally associated with human identity, such as empathy and relationality, her artificiality underscores the increasing commodification of these very traits. Her ability to demonstrate human traits raises a critical question for humanity, which has historically failed to accord due importance to entities who require it for the creation of a sustainable future. Ishiguro depicts humans and Klara in contrast, where humans are machines and Klara, a human with deeply ingrained emotional intelligence. This serves as a critique of humanity’s failure to uphold ethical responsibilities, suggesting that an artificial entity’s ability to care may, paradoxically, highlight humans’ moral and ethical deficiencies.



The second novel taken for analysis is Bacigalupi's *The Drowned Cities*, wherein Tool, a bioengineered being, is also known as a "monster" (Bacigalupi, 8). The novel begins with a scene wherein Tool is chained inside the prison. He tries to run away from prison. He somehow "had the key in its hand" and runs away from the clutches of guards (Bacigalupi, 8). The tool has some extraordinary capacities for performing tasks. For instance, Bacigalupi portrays, "[H]e moved with a speed that would have exhausted a human being within minutes" (Bacigalupi, 9). Hence, it shows Tools' extraordinary skills acquired from technological advancements. When the guards see Tool, they look at him disgustingly and say, "It's no demon. Just meat and bone, same as us, even if it is an augment. You tear it up, you shoot it enough, it dies (Bacigalupi, 5). It dismantles the idea of human exceptionalism by equating the body organs of humans and nonhumans. It also reinforces the idea of violence as a leveller of the vulnerability of humans and nonhumans. Here, Guard's attempt to define Tool as just bone and meat presents the dominating nature of humans. Although Tool has extraordinary capacities, the guard's statement can be seen as a denial of potential uniqueness. Additionally, it presents the flaws of humans, who consider themselves to be of sole importance. The guard's statement presents humans as being in charge of shooting the augment. It presents the flaw of humans who do not attempt to act responsibly. Tool is treated as a product made for human use, presenting the hierarchy of humans over nonhumans. This demystification of Tool underscores the paradox of human progress wherein innovation becomes a mechanism for self-destruction rather than ensuring collective well-being.

Nonetheless, Bacigalupi's portrayal offers a poignant evaluation of humanity and societal structures. The discussion of selling blood while it is still fresh underscores the pervasive capitalist ideology, wherein human attributes such as empathy and sympathy are rendered inconsequential. Haraway's *Chthulucene* challenges human exceptionalism by breaking down the division between human and nonhuman worlds (Paulson), emphasising multispecies entanglement; the comments made by guards challenge human exceptionalism by equating Tool with a human. Tool's portrayal may be viewed as a threat to humanity, manifesting humans' inability to deal with technological advancements. Bacigalupi illustrates how these advancements have escalated to a point where humanity has engineered its potential destruction under profit-driven motives.

In addition, Bacigalupi portrays Tool as a servant, pet, machine and has ability to think, reflect and survive. He challenges the control of humans by operating beyond human assumptions and resisting the idea that he exists solely for human purposes. For instance, Bacigalupi depicts, "He was better than that [animal]. He hadn't survived this long by thinking like an animal. Panic and mindlessness were his only enemy, as always" (Bacigalupi, 20). Hence, Tool makes rational decisions like humans. Tool may be viewed as a creation that serves humans purpose. Haraway argues, "Becoming-with, not becoming, is the name of the game; becoming-with is how partners are, in Vinciane Despret's terms, rendered capable" (Harawat, SWT, 12). "Becoming-with" refers to supporting one another in becoming capable, not being alone. Becoming-with is a new way of being together. The relationships among each other shape it. Tool's existence becomes a metaphor for human failures concerned with ecological aspects, ethics, technological, and political affairs. These failures give Tool a way to adapt beyond human limitations. Even when trying to escape from the prison, he encounters an alligator trying to cut Tool into pieces; nevertheless, Tool reflects that "This dumb beast is not your enemy" (Bacigalupi, 20). Tool criticises the human tendency to blame nature rather than acknowledge shortcomings by claiming that the alligator is not the enemy. It can be conceived from the statement that Bacigalupi presents him not only as a war machine and someone trying to take over the world but also as someone with free will, strategy, and self-awareness beyond human norms, challenging human exceptionalism.

Further, Tool transforms into an autonomous entity that persistently compels human beings to reevaluate their deeply ingrained perception of nonhuman subjects as mere instruments of



utility. By doing so, he destabilises anthropocentric assumptions of human centrality. He becomes the embodiment of the philosophical inquiry into the nature of life, prompting continuous reflection on the criteria by which personhood, sentience and its moral consideration are ascribed. In a conversation with Mahlia, he says, “I am not your dog” (Bacigalupi, 173). This rejects the idea of ownership, domestication and control over himself. He directly challenges humans’ tendency to see other beings, such as nonhumans and the environment, as things to be owned, controlled or exploited. He dismantles the boundaries between humans, nonhumans, and the environment through his intelligence, autonomy, and strategy- qualities that are specifically reserved for humans. His statement becomes a powerful assertion of autonomy, which he uses to reclaim his agency against human control. It aligns closely with Haraway’s chthulucene, which endows nonhumans with autonomy. Haraway says, “The partners do not precede the knotting; species of all kinds are consequent upon worldly subject- and object-shaping entanglement” (Haraway, *SWT*, 13). It means we all influence one another through our connections; nothing exists in isolation. These complex, shared relationships give rise to species and identities, not vice versa. It implies that humans, animals, plants, and other species interact with each other and have connections with everything around them. They altogether shape and influence each other in chthulucene. Thus, Tool becomes a species that is entangled with other existing species. His attempt at denying his use as a tool reflects the flaw in humanity, which uses him for profit in situations such as war. Thus, Bacigalupi’s portrayal of Tool suggests the loss of human control over the future, presenting irreversible consequences.

Furthermore, Tool runs from warlords because he does not want to be part of any violence, but the army chases him to return him to duty. For this reason, the army enters the town and starts burning it to seize Tool. To avoid the violence, the villagers run away in terror. Mahlia worries and asks Tool to save people. Tool does not help them when he says, “This is not my war” (Bacigalupi, 179). This moment becomes crucial because it highlights how Tool does not see himself as part of human conflict by asserting his will to survive. It can arguably be said that Tool challenges human exceptionalism by showing a lack of interest in fighting wars that serve human interests. Further, Tool asserts, “I neither started this war where your kind tears one another apart, nor did I choose it. I carry no burden of guilt” (Bacigalupi, 179). Tool, a posthuman entity, denies responsibility for violence caused by humans; Tool’s take on war challenges human exceptionalism. Therefore, moral dissociation from the conflict emphasises how chaos and devastation result from humans’ interests. Moreover, his refusal to participate in war serves as a mirror reflecting human flaws. By abstaining from the conflict, Tool exposes the human tendency to engage in violence and conflict.

Portrayal of Tool depicts a survival-driven mindset, which implies seeking acceptance in a world that does not value him. Depiction of Tool suggests that whatever humans think to be right and wrong depends upon their biases, led by their interests, whereas Tool ignores them. He has stayed strong by not letting these biases affect him. For instance, he says, “If I cared for human approval, I would have been dead long ago” (Bacigalupi, 184). This statement can be interpreted as a denial of human-centered thought. His denial of human approval implies that one should live in relation to a larger web of life, not just human society, and that living for the approval of other people is constricting—even dangerous. As Haraway favours entangled ways of knowing and being, she also emphasises on thinking with the world rather than above it, engaging with all other creatures and entities that have been overlooked. Tool, a posthuman subject, rejects human-centred approach and instead tries to create a space where he is not a slave of human demands.

In addition, Tool, a posthuman entity, is an example of how humans can recognise and co-exist with the companion species. For instance, Mahlia questions why Tool stays to assist her when she is struggling and immobile. He merely responds that he has his own motivations. But he



quickly rejects the idea when she makes fun of him for paying her back for saving his life (Bacigalupi, 262). Tool demonstrates that he belongs to a different way of living when he assists Mahlia without adhering to the human logic of debt or obligation. This way of being prioritises connection and coexistence over human concepts of ownership, hierarchy, or repayment. He acts in a web of interwoven life where survival and care are shared rather than exchanged, not because he is noble or human. It shows that he is not simply a part of human narratives but has his own reasons, motivations and goals, which challenge human assumptions of hierarchical relationships. His relationship with Mahlia exists beyond simple human expectations and can be seen as an example of shared entanglement rather than obligation, as Haraway emphasises. It echoes Haraway's idea of "Chthulucene as an orientation toward taking the past seriously while remaining committed to 'ongoingness'" (Shotwell, 146). It means that while remaining dedicated to our shared survival and intertwined futures with all beings, the Chthulucene exhorts us to confront the wrongs of the past. It's about living accountable in the here and now and remembering responsibly. Tool cannot become a companion species, but its efforts to act like the same present the failure of humans who have failed to recognise the companion species living in the world.

Lastly, Tool in *The Drowned Cities* is treated as a tool of war. As in Chthulucene, "Our responsibility is to respond ethically, not in terms of individualised agency and based on intention, will and free choice (which would be a liberal notion of agency), but in terms of the generative dynamics of human and nonhuman agency" (Murriss, 16). Haraway says that we shouldn't consider responsibility to be limited to one person's actions (such as those motivated by their freedom or will). Instead, we should behave morally by realising that our actions occur within these interconnected, shared systems and those humans and nonhumans have an impact on one another. Therefore, responsibility entails acting in these relationships with wisdom and kindness rather than acting on one's initiative. It means that humans, as they are embedded in more than the human world, have to be responsible for how they treat other humans, nonhumans, animals, and the environment. The sustainability of multispecies focuses on the peaceful coexistence of humans and companion species. When Colonel Glenn Stern catches Tool, he tells him, "I propose to hire you, proper. You will forge my war effort into something more than this wasteful detente. Something that can cleanse the Drowned Cities" (Bacigalupi, 395). Stern says that he wants to hire Tool to make his war stronger, more effective, and powerful enough to destroy the Drowned Cities completely. Here, Stern positions war as necessary and a natural force rather than being accountable for the horrendous acts. The premise of Stern's pitch is that humans alone determine morality, purpose, and war—a traditional exceptionalist fallacy that Tool, as a posthuman entity, consistently dispels. Colonel Stern instrumentalises war as a natural process and asks Tool, an enhanced being, to help him win the war rather than acknowledge the entangled ways of living. Therefore, his use of Tool to create chaos in the world can be seen as a selfish nature of humans who never really cared about the world.

Humans were never really responsible enough to make the world a better place, as for Haraway, 'response-ability' is the core of staying with the trouble (Haraway, *SWT*, 12). It can be seen as a shared and situated responsibility among humans and nonhumans. But all humans do is to use other beings as resources for their own development. Thus, Tool may be viewed as an embodiment of Chthulucene in Haraway's terms, who disapproves of human exceptionalism. Nonetheless, he also becomes the embodiment of the threat to human society. As an engineered being, Tool is neither human nor animal, but he exists beyond traditional categories of human perceptions and assumptions. Tool becomes a living rejection of the idea that nonhumans are mere tools for human use. Tool's portrayal shows how human creations can pose threats to society.



Conclusion:

Tool and Klara become a staunch critique of idea of human exceptionalism by challenging the assumption that only humans possess morality and emotional depth. Tool, even though engineered for violence, displays autonomy, reasoning and a sense of being. It defies the creator's intentions for his use. Moreover, Klara's selfless love, empathy, and sacrificial behaviour blur the line between programmed and authentic care, raising questions about what makes love authentic and pure. Tool's defiance and Klara's silent observation present the reader with non-human viewpoints that are incredibly relatable. The book demonstrates how qualities like compassion, loyalty, and the quest for identity—all of which are frequently thought of as distinctively human—can manifest in synthetic or hybrid entities. This undermines fixed boundaries between people and other species. Ultimately, Klara and Tool force us to reconsider our role in the world by demonstrating that worth, emotion, and intelligence are not unique to human biology. By doing this, they strongly argue against the central myth of human superiority.

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