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Rajesh Bharvad
Shri Govind Guru University, Godhra, India

Matter Matters: (Cloned) Humans as Infrastructure in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

ABSTRACT

The article contextualises Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* within the evolving concepts of new materialisms. It examines how the writer narrates humans as infrastructure, parallelly analysing material interaction between them. I argue that the cloned subjects exemplify the material and relational co-existence with infrastructures. The article suggests that matter, through the material memory involving intersubjective agentialism (nonhuman enmeshments), forms human subjects. It also unravels how the emotional paradox, correlating matter with emotion, describes matter as a life force for human clones and indicates simultaneous pointlessness. In other words, the paper analyses the agential interaction between humans and matter sabotaging the myth of independent subject formations and acknowledging how matter shapes human subjects. In this process, the article uncovers how humans can co-exist as equal partners in a co-constitutive world, recognising the vitality of matter as an essential step towards a sustainable future.

Keywords: infrastructure, matter, new materialism, *Never Let Me Go*, posthumanism.

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INTRODUCTION

Matter is often treated as passive and ineffective in the Anthropocentric vision of the world, creating an apparent dichotomy between humans and nonhumans. Recent negotiations have taken a post-Anthropocentric stance, identifying how matter interacts with us and shapes our internal (thoughts) and external realities (bodies). In this paper, I argue that matter actively participates in human interactions, modifying and controlling human subjects' physical and psychological actions by sabotaging the old dichotomies of a world filled with material disparities. This approach recognises matter not as "fixed and given nor the mere end result of mere processes" (Barad, *Meeting* 137) but as having "a vitality intrinsic to materiality as such" (Bennett xiii), and dissolving the unified segregation between humans and nonhumans. Ishiguro allows us to identify such intersubjective enmeshments involving human consciousness to recognise the material vibrancy of nonhuman things. Keeping this in view, the paper evaluates Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* in two aspects: the first part of the argument focuses on how humans and matter interact/intra-act with each other, while the other part presents how the cloned humans perform material roles assigned by humans, invoking ethical and empathic considerations in the debate.

In the novel *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro creates a world in which humans, (cloned) humans, and nonhumans (materials) create unique material eventualities or, in Karen Barad's terms, "intra-active possibilities" (*Meeting* 33) of mutual correspondence between humans and nonhumans. For Barad, intra-action develops through mutually constituted human and nonhuman agencies (ibid.). During the intra-active participation, matter exerts power over the human subjects, denying humans' Anthropocene claims of absolute control over nonhumans. She argues that individual agencies do not exist independently but emerge through intra-action between human and nonhuman agencies. Here, Barad accepts relational distinctions between agencies but denies their absolute distinction regarding individual separateness. In other words, intra-action unfolds mutually entangled entities that exist only as active parts, constituting each other's identities. Akin to Barad's intra-action is Jane Bennett's thing-power, which points to the vitality and vibrancy of matter. As Barad's intra-action, while acknowledging the active power of matter, focuses on mutually shared entanglements between humans and nonhumans, Bennett's thing-power enlists ways matter exerts its power on humans, drawing a parallel between humans and nonhumans. Bennett argues that "thing-power gestures toward the strange ability of ordinary, man-made items to exceed their status as objects and to manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the

outside of our own experience" (xvi). While Barad's intra-action involves constitutive powers emerging through intersubjective agencies, Bennett's thing-power brings forth the vibrancy from matter. Both complement and supplement each other in assuming matter as an active agent, shaping the realities of the world. Drawing on this theoretical framework, the paper investigates the relationship between humans and the material world in *Never Let Me Go*, identifying how (cloned) humans interact (intra-act) with other normal humans and infrastructural material forms.

The paper's emphasis on materiality in the infrastructural selves of the human clones builds upon and expands the current critical threads established by numerous scholars of the novel. As one of the most popular works by Ishiguro, the novel has garnered significant interest among readers and critics of contemporary literature. Many scholars have identified the dystopian vision in Ishiguro's novel, while others have focused on the empathetic and emotional aspects of the narrative. Critics such as Leona Toker, Daniel Chertoff, and Gabriele Griffin treat the novel as a dystopian vision of a dark future, and this perspective dominates the critical discourse on the text.

Deviating from such dystopian visions, Robinson Murphy advocates for "castration desire," which signals "the other-oriented relationality" to move from more to less and suggests how castration—the renunciation of the phallic self—can lead to the greater good in the world (760). Here, castration desire refers to the selfless act of donating organs to other humans for the betterment of humanity. Similarly, Martin Ryle considers this novel a utopian vision, endorsing a sacrificial self rather than an ego-centric capitalist self to support an empathetic worldview. Both Murphy and Ryle advocate renouncing self-centred gains in favour of greater goals and noble causes for humanity. To achieve this, Ryle rejects ego-centric, capitalistic selves in favour of sacrificial selves (57), and Murphy proposes castration desire as a selfless act. Karl Shaddox argues that the novel can be easily considered a sentimental novel aligned with the abolitionist literature of the 18th and 19th centuries (448). For Sebastian Groes, the novel serves as a means to explore the complexities of empathy against the backdrop of the global crisis, including the COVID-19 pandemic (3). David Peplow et al. offer a discourse analysis of empathetic and sympathetic responses from a group of readers regarding their reading of *Never Let Me Go*. Here, the critics examine varied responses to emotional connections among human clones and identify "the familiar conceptual metaphors underlying emotion representations" in the novel (44).

The latter interpretations deviate from emotional sensibilities and the other-oriented critique, as they focus on other novel ideas. Thom Dancer examines multiple complexities of the paradoxes of relatability in the novel,

identifying "ethical and political implications" (155). Anne Whitehead, on the other hand, connects the act of reading with "empathy, caring, and the healthy society" (56). Keith McDonald notes autobiographical traces in the novel's metafictional narrative (75). Rachel Carroll recognises queerness in the nonnormative sexuality of the cloned humans, marginalised by the heteronormativity of normal humans. For her, Ishiguro's clones represent a heterosexual identity as a unique case of a disempowered and marginalised section within the larger framework of a dominant heteronormative society (60). Drawing on Arthur Kroker's theory of "body drift" in the analysis of *Never Let Me Go*, Carmen-Veronica Borbély questions the idea of cohesive and unified notions of body, exposing bodily vulnerabilities posed by nonhuman environments and dehumanised conditions of human clones (n.pag.). Despite identifying bodily connections with nonhuman environments, Borbély does not systematically underscore possibilities of mutual modifications and dynamic reconfigurings between humans and nonhumans.

While Carroll describes a nonnormative heterosexual identity in the characters, and Borbély identifies dehumanisation through the concept of body drift, Kelly Rich interprets the human clones through their infrastructural roles. Rich considers this novel an interesting example of the relationship between humans and the surrounding infrastructure (632). For her, the novel presents the case of infrastructuralism as a state-sponsored agency that produces cloned humans as material resources for the rest of humanity. Rich identifies material conditions in the novel, but she overlooks posthuman material conditions, which interrogate the relationship between humans and matter through her anti-Anthropocene stance. She is right when she claims the influence of material surroundings on humans, but this influence can be better analysed through critical insights offered by new materialisms. The material reading of the novel investigates how humans connect with the material world and indicates the power of matter in this interaction. Discussing infrastructural entities without material considerations cannot lead to holistic awareness, as the interconnected world of matters (humans and nonhumans) requires us to recognise their vibrancy and active participation. Such awareness is crucial to the ecological balance required for a sustainable future, as harming one section of the interconnected world of vibrant matter can eventually harm humans (Bennett 13). In line with these arguments, the paper elaborates on Kelly Rich's infrastructuralism, offering both supplementary and polemical negotiations on her analysis of the text. While the paper borrows the idea of infrastructuralism from Rich, it extends it further through multiple materialities of both human and nonhuman bodies. In doing so, it highlights material interaction (intra-action) and equates all living and non-living entities as vibrant matters (thing-power) that independently enact material forces while adhering to complex interconnections.

From the beginning of *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro narrates the interconnections between the material world and humans. Hailsham, a building where cloned children are raised and educated, constantly floats in the narrative of real experiences and through memories. It is vital to see how a building, as a material construction, interacts/intra-acts with humans throughout the novel. Contrary to the Anthropocentric stance that terms material things as passive and stagnant, the novel unwittingly typifies the material agents, such as Hailsham and other infrastructural elements, as active participants that form human/cloned subjects. Hailsham, an intra-active agent or the thing-power, complicates the boundaries between humans and nonhumans (non-living) by reevaluating them in their intersubjective interactions involving enmeshments between humans and nonhumans.

Posthuman viewpoints offer a different angle to comprehend Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, in which the writer demonstrates how infrastructural entities deliberately designed by humans become intra-active enmeshments that resist ontological boundaries between living and non-living entities. This is a different way of seeing the entities as ontologically connected yet physically separate, as the infrastructural, intra-active agents constantly reconfigure the identity of human subjects. Such discursive practices between infrastructural entities and the human subjects, enabled by dynamic intra-activity and thing-power, redefine and resituate the respective boundaries.

The material influence on (cloned) humans is a result of the intentional design of normal humans to shape exploitative strategies of dehumanisation, as they keep (cloned) humans as infrastructural resources for medicinal purposes. The novel reveals how intentional material practices control and shape (cloned) humans' internal and external realities. Although these material practices are intended to control (cloned) humans, the material influence on the characters is both intentional and unintentional, as material reconfigurings are outside humans' control and outperform human intentions. Through exploitative material strategies, normal humans exploit infrastructural resources of (cloned) humans, but the same matter, for example, Hailsham, also forms lasting bonds that they pursue throughout their short-lived existences.

THE "THING-POWER" OF MEMORY

In this section, I argue that matter enacts performativity on human subjects through memory. Drawing on Barad's intra-action and Bennett's thing-power, I argue that nonhuman matter or things influence humans

through their active interaction with humans mediated by physical contact and memories. Infrastructural matter, such as Hailsham, does not always require physical conditioning, as memory aids the roles of the material agencies. Material memory of Hailsham as an active agent permeates the entire narrative and affects the behaviour of human clones, as it becomes thing-power for Hailsham. The memory of Hailsham aligns with Bennett's claim that a nonhuman entity can make a difference and shape the course of events. Carroll also points out that memory is indispensable in shaping identities (62), but the critic does not recognise how the memory of Hailsham as an actant co-constitutes the characters' identities. Kathy's dilemma in the novel gives testimony to this material memory when she states, "There have been times over the years when I've tried to leave Hailsham behind, when I've told myself I shouldn't look back so much. But then there came a point when I just stopped resisting" (Ishiguro 4–5). Kathy's inability to resist her memory suggests how the material world controls human bodies.

In the material interaction between infrastructure and humans, memory goes beyond nostalgic references, serving as an emotional attachment that helps the clones demonstrate their humanity. Carroll endorses such emotional attachments as essential aspects (62), but fails to explore how the material actants, in addition to their emotional bonding, enact the reconfiguring of the cloned bodies. This agential reconfiguring of the material bodies of subjects and objects depends on what Barad claims to be the ongoing material interaction (intra-action), disavowing the determinate boundaries between the material entities (*Meeting* 171). In this case, such material reconciliation between humans and nonhumans can be referred to as intersubjective agentialism, where mutually dependent active material agents have inseparable or indeterminate boundaries through which matter exerts its force on other material (human) bodies. This intersubjective agentialism results from a reconfiguring between subjects and objects, which are interchangeable in "the material-discursive boundary-making practices" (*Meeting* 93). Therefore, memory brings cloned humans and the nonhuman material world together without hierarchy, during which reconfiguring occurs.

In the novel, Kathy's memory reveals such intersubjective agentialism, implicating an intra-active relationship between cloned humans and the material world, such as Hailsham and the Cottages, allowing matter to shape and alter her body. Memory allows for the survival of Hailsham even after its extinction, and through memory, it continues to shape the human clones and is a constant reminder of their infrastructural status. In the material interaction, Kathy's memory eliminates the myth of individual separateness with determinate boundaries. Memory becomes instrumental

in allowing the infrastructure to control the cloned subjects in the novel. Through memory, Kathy keeps the longing for Hailsham alive and searches for Hailsham in other nonhuman entities, seeking its replacement. For instance, a misty field, a large house, and poplar trees become reminders of Hailsham (Ishiguro 2). For Kathy, Hailsham remains a perpetual longing as it is both an origin and an end: "If I drive past one [of those pavilions] I keep looking over to it for as long as possible, and one day I'll crash the car like that, but I keep doing it" (ibid.). This is where Hailsham, while preparing human clones for their infrastructural roles and constantly reminding them of their material status, forms material longings and lasting bonds that defy the original intentions of the exploitative strategies of normal humans.

(CLONED) HUMANS AND MATTER

Human clones, raised at Hailsham, are prepared as human infrastructure to be made available for other humans. Their short-lived existences end after three or four donations of their body parts. They are intentionally made infertile to keep them as lifelong resources for other humans. While they cannot form bonds and sexual relationships with normal humans, they are encouraged to develop emotions and engage in unregulated sexual relationships among the clones. Uninhibited sexuality is an easy distraction from their otherwise pathetic role of being a donor. Further, it contrasts with their infertile bodies, as they assume their material roles and perform the tasks of their dehumanised bodies, while prohibiting the unnecessary emotional baggage of parenthood and distancing them from normal humans. Ishiguro describes infrastructural sexuality as nonnormative and shows how clones are trained to keep their distance from normal people. Human clones' sexuality is devoid of emotional complexities, commonly found in normal people's lives, and they treat sex as an ordinary activity, just like eating and drinking (Ishiguro 82). Kathy describes this infrastructural sexuality that considers the possibility of diseases due to sexual activity: "If, say, they were telling us how we'd have to be very careful to avoid diseases when we had sex, it would have been odd not to mention how much more important this was for us than for normal people outside" (ibid.). Kathy recognises that their sexuality is different from that of normal people as their infrastructural sexuality is in contrast with both human and (living) nonhuman normative conditions, and it allows them to assume ironic heterosexuality without any possibility of reproduction. Therefore, it is obvious to acknowledge, as Carroll argues, that sexuality for human clones becomes an expression without any social meaning and does not lead to

social integration (66). In a typical human society, sex is often associated with love, marriage, social commitments, and reproduction. Ishiguro, on the other hand, establishes the clones as infrastructural resources, focusing on the materiality of human bodies.

At Hailsham, they are shielded from the knowledge that they are groomed for organ donation. This safeguarding is necessary for the healthy development of future organ donors. Such a deceptive environment develops through education and attractive surroundings. The physical infrastructure endorses Barad's intra-active agency and Bennett's vibrant matter, as ponds, pavilions, fences, and dormitories help build meaningful exchanges among the clones, inviting them to a safe refuge from the bleak future that awaits outside.

While Rich rightly takes note of this infrastructural semblance that keeps them protected, she overlooks the dynamic involvement of the matter that constructs temporary meanings and modifies the subjects. She acknowledges that "Hailsham gives their students a sizable superstructure of meaning-making values, practices, and places, either to forestall or repress their knowledge of their infrastructural purpose" (635), but does not recognise the material force of intersubjective agentialism, which makes fundamental changes among the cloned humans. Such material understanding allows for an alternative way of observing the objects surrounding us, allowing us to explore vibrant matter's intrinsic vitality, acknowledging what Bennett calls "matter-energy" as a vital force that affects human bodies that come in contact with matter (56). Bennett provides multiple examples of things having potential for matter-energy, such as food, trash, and metals, which represent powers in "human mood, action, meaning, agenda, or ideology" (x). By narrating humans' experiences and identities shaped by nonhuman environments, Ishiguro's novel portrays several examples of matter-energy in the mattering incidents between humans and nonhumans.

In the novel, matter-energy becomes a guiding and compelling force which, through the material surroundings, prepares them to be healthy and willing donors. It is noteworthy that matter-energy, as part of human designs, enacts both humans' exploitative strategies of dehumanisation and matter's independent reconfiguring that creates a meaningful interaction between humans and their surroundings. Here, independent reconfiguring refers to matter's powers that defy humans' intentions to perform dehumanising tasks. Ishiguro narrates exploitative strategies at the beginning of the novel, when Kathy mentions how they are required to be physically fit, requiring them to undergo routine medical tests to monitor their physical growth (Ishiguro 13). To further ensure safety and well-being, they are only selectively exposed to the external world, and

the authority also prohibits the clones from practising unhealthy practices such as smoking (67). Here, matter-energy relates to collaborative practices between infrastructural settings, other nonhuman surroundings, and human actions.

Devoid of normal cultural/familial upbringings, they are nurtured in a boarding school with books of literature, geography, music, and other educational tools. In this case, education becomes an agency that develops readily available human clones for society to consume. For instance, they are taught role-playing activities to prepare them to communicate with the external world. Kathy demonstrates how such "Culture Briefing" involving role play activities arouses both excitement and anxieties: "These were classes where we had to role play various people we'd find out there—waiters in cafés, policemen, and so on. The sessions always got us excited and worried all at the same time, so we were pretty keyed up anyway" (108). These practices do not approve of their status as human beings, and as Carroll suggests, they remain "less than human" (59). Normative communication and behavioural practices, i.e. the exchange system at Hailsham, add to their status as an infrastructural identity, allowing them to express their identity and buy exciting items made by other clones. Such material practices involving cloned subjects allow the intersubjective agencies to eliminate the boundaries between the cloned humans and the nonhuman entities. Intersubjective agencies involve ontological connections between matter and humans, in which matter, through matter-energy, interacts, controls, and shapes human bodies. While matter, as an actant, becomes an active participant in this intersubjective interaction, it also supports Barad's claim that "'environment' and 'bodies' are intra-actively co-constituted" (*Meeting* 170).

Kathy's experiences with the intersubjective agencies of the environment at Hailsham are notable as she claims that the Exchange system impacts the cloned subjects, and their respect is proportionate to the level of creativity of the things being exchanged by the clones (Ishiguro 16). This meaningful activity, at least for the human infrastructure, is not without traces of irony as the motive for this program is not to encourage creativity among the cloned humans but to ensure that they have emotions or, in Miss Emily's words, when Kathy and Tommy visit her to request the deferral, "we did it to prove you had souls at all" (255). The art gallery project and the exchange system were checkpoints to learn whether they had souls. Groes also identifies this paradoxical empathy among the guardians as they seek psychological relief in their attempt to foster creativity among the clones through such activities (9). Here, government agencies employ guardians to observe and oversee the experimentation, which includes various means of apparatus such as infrastructural resources, furnishing/not furnishing

information, and providing training to the clones. The guardians allow the clones to recognise their infrastructural status and ensure that they develop their emotional sensibilities through the Exchange program and creative expressions for the Gallery. The material influence, as mentioned earlier, is an outcome of humans' machinery, but matter is not confined within humans' actions, as it supplements their intentions of confining the dehumanised world and surpasses them in the actual outcomes of constructing temporary meanings in their lives.

Furthermore, the nonhuman machinery at Hailsham re-examines boundaries between cloned humans and normal humans. For instance, the boundary between observer (guardians) and observed (clones) is not based on their inherent qualities, but it "is differently articulated depending on the specific configuration of the apparatus and its corresponding embodiment of particular concepts to the exclusion of others. That is, the object and the agencies of observation are co-constituted through the enactment of a cut that depends on the specific embodiment of particular human concepts" (Barad, *Meeting* 154). By negating the Cartesian presupposition concerning the fixed boundaries between observer and observed, Barad employs the agential cut—Bohr's example of a stick, when used for navigation in the dark with a firm grip, becomes an extension of the subject and when the same stick is touched loosely to sense its features, it becomes an object—that dynamically situates the boundary between subject and object (ibid.). The switching between subject and object, in the case of the stick, demonstrates the dynamism of the agential cut that reexamines the ontological and visual boundaries between them. This can be clearly understood in how the agential cut performs its functions at Hailsham. Ms. Lucy, for instance, tries to understand human clones, and therefore, she empathises with them and finds them as extended subjects of other humans. Although incapable of helping them, she advocates for the moral rights of the cloned children at Hailsham. On the other hand, other guardians, who only see them as infrastructural resources for other humans, visualise them as nonhuman entities or as mere objects to be experimented on and utilised for a practical cause. The same human clones become subjects and objects through the application of agential cut, rejecting the inherent and fixed boundaries between them and allowing the boundaries between subject and object to be ambiguous, fluid, and dependent on the agential cut that seeks its intra-active performance in the discursive practices, differently enacted at Hailsham.

The material practices and the machinery at Hailsham prepare them as donors and carers, and they are made aware of this strange responsibility of their infrastructural being. Kathy's remarks—"Carers aren't machines. You try and do your best for every donor, but in the end, it wears you down"

(Ishiguro 4)—only indicate how their bodies are materialised at Hailsham. She constantly strives to be the best donor and takes pride in her duties as a carer. Her behaviour highlights how porous bodies are co-constituted by the environment at Hailsham, adding to the point that bodies and the environment are intra-actively connected and have no fixed boundaries. Therefore, bodies no longer end at their visual and apparent boundaries at the skin. It is essential to note what Haraway suggests: "The insistence that there is an obvious bodily boundary that ends at the skin fails to recognize the body's specific situatedness in the world" (qtd. in Barad, *Meeting* 159). The situatedness of the environment cannot be separated from bodies; it exists as entanglements that remain fixated on bodies. According to Myra J. Seaman, this involves intricate connections between corporeal bodies and their situatedness in the natural environment (248). When situations are outside the bodies and invariably associated with bodies, bodies cannot cease to end at the skin. Bodies are not produced inherently or independently but as outcomes of their situatedness.

This draws attention to the posthuman conception that dethrones humans from their centrality and superiority. Barad argues that humans' positions and situatedness are co-constitutive alongside nonhumans. There is no specific privilege for humans as they are parts of the world and considered as "being-of-the-world" and not as "being-in-the-world" (*Meeting* 160). The body's materiality is constituted by the entanglements that emerge in the situatedness of bodies. According to the agential realist ontology, its situatedness and entanglements refer to "its requisite refigurings of causality, materiality, agency, dynamics, and topological reconfigurings" (ibid.). In other words, entanglements are material extensions of human bodies that are invariably situated in a specific material context.

Situatedness also permits the transcending of boundaries between objects and subjects, or in Barad's terms, bridging the gap between words and things by negating the traditional representational approach that guarantees the separation of "words and things" and "subjects and objects" ("Posthumanist Performativity" 812). Here, subjects and objects are intermingled through material reconfiguring, which assumes that subjects and objects are part of the process responsible for ontological understanding. Posthuman understandings require this recognition of the situatedness of human bodies, as they no longer occupy the central stage as subjects. Emilie Walezak, while analysing the nonhuman turn of A. S. Byatt's work, reaffirms the need to transcend the binary of objects and subjects (442). The critic endorses the notion of the interconnectedness between humans and nonhumans as part of the analysis of Byatt's texts, identifying how intra-action between humans and nonhumans produces

knowledge and reveals the web of situatedness, which rejects the defined boundaries between subjects and objects, as well as between nature and culture. Byatt's reference to Barad's intra-action for situated knowledge is noteworthy and valid, as Barad questions the binary of words and things, exposes humans' mistrust and neglect of the nonhuman in metaphysics, and coins the word "thingification" to counter the inherent binary of words and things, which automatically rejects the binary of subjects and objects ("Posthumanist Performativity" 812). For Barad, the reconfiguring of subjects and objects, going beyond the interconnectedness in situated understanding, is a crucial point for posthuman understanding of humans' place as one of the entities on the planet, neither above nor below.

INFRASTRUCTURAL RECONFIGURINGS

The materiality of bodily constructions in *Never Let Me Go* recounts this posthuman conception of matter and meaning. Material exteriority (entanglements) is never separate from material interiority (bodies), leading to its intra-active functions and bodily reconfigurings. Ishiguro situates human clones at Hailsham, Cottages, and the Recovery Rooms, which comprise exterior materiality. Since exteriority and interiority are never clearly separate, they dynamically intra-act with one another in their situatedness. The situatedness of the educational organisation allows for naturalisation and voluntary submission to the state's program. The human clones' academic upbringing instils the values of being donors and carers, preparing them to be their best in creative tasks, academic performance, and general behaviour. Kathy recalls, "We were all very special, being Hailsham students, and so it was all the more disappointing when we behaved badly" (Ishiguro 43). Rich argues that the programs at Hailsham develop their creativity and instil meaning in their lives, allowing them to withdraw from the looming darkness of their original fate of infrastructural purpose (635). Rich recognises external factors that shape their identities, but this recognition does not involve material reconfiguration or, in Barad's terms, "intra-active agencies" that shape these clones through material discursiveness.

These intra-active reconfigurings not only forestall the hidden horrors of their lives but also help naturalise their infrastructural status, denying any possibility of rebellious attitudes in the future. These material reconfigurings, which emerge as a result of the intentional design by humans, forestall the horrors of their lives and prepare them to perform the tasks of donors and carers, allowing them to cope with the discomforting realities. This further supports Barad's assertion that agency is never a static phenomenon but rather a dynamic and ongoing intra-active process

in which "the universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming" (*Meeting* 141). Human clones express this dynamic reconfiguring through playful expressions that allow them to naturalise their material roles of clones. Suicide becomes the matter of a joke when Kathy recalls fences "where you could commit suicide any time you liked by touching a fence. This might have been intended as a serious point, but the rest of us thought it pretty funny" (Ishiguro 78). These electrified fences corroborate the fact of dehumanised bodies, as they are kept not for their protection but to stop them from exploring beyond the point. Naturalisation with their cruel reality is the only way forward, and this is again visible when the writer narrates: "The idea was that when the time came, you'd be able just to unzip a bit of yourself, a kidney or something would slide out, and you'd hand it over" (88). It is ironic how they refer to the act of "unzipping," which hints at the material construction of their bodies, as the characters joke about handing over parts of their bodies.

Further, the exquisite internal world of the infrastructure is also contrasted with the imagined horrors of the external realities that surround Hailsham. For instance, the stories of the children who tried to escape Hailsham and met with horrific deaths offer a fitting antithesis to the idea of rebellion. Ishiguro narrates the story of a boy who tried to escape Hailsham: "His body had been found two days later, up in those woods, tied to a tree with the hands and feet chopped off" (50). He further describes a girl who also tried to escape:

> She had been a Hailsham student until one day she'd climbed over a fence just to see what it was like outside. This was a long time before us, when the guardians were much stricter, cruel even, and when she tried to get back in, she wasn't allowed. She kept hanging around outside the fences, pleading to be back in, but no one let her. Eventually, she'd gone off somewhere out there, something had happened and she'd died. But her ghost was always wandering about the woods, gazing over Hailsham, pining to be let back in. (ibid.)

At the Cottages, as the splendid surroundings pave the way to tarnished and shoddy infrastructure, this active participation in the construction of the subjectivised identities takes a different turn towards fractured self-actualisation. The semblance of temporary refuge found at Hailsham suddenly disappears, partly because fully grown adults do not require the proper safeguarding of their bodies, which is only essential during the formative years. Kathy narrates, "The Cottages were the remains of a farm that had gone out of business years before. There was an old farmhouse, and around it, barns, outhouses, stables all converted for us to live in" (114).

Furthermore, the materiality of the bodies becomes more prevalent with the introduction of the notion of "possibles"—the humans on whom the clones are modelled. "Possibles" reveal their infrastructural existence as the clones have been modelled on normal humans. For instance, Ruth's quest to find her "possible" only leads her to face a gory picture of her infrastructural identity. Ruth's attempt to seek refuge in the belief of finding her "possible" as a person of repute working at an office meets with a disastrous end. For her, knowing the person from whom she was copied, as part of the cloning process, was essential as it would lead her to believe in the positive sights of the impending future (137–38). Like any other infrastructure, models are a technical necessity for human clones. Ruth's high optimism and expectations for a professional career can be attributed to her upbringing at Hailsham, as she is naturally drawn to such a managerial position at a reputable office. Upon her investigation of her model, she is forced to acknowledge that clones "are modelled from trash, junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos" (166). She further claims that "if you want to look for possibles, if you want to do it properly, then you look in the gutter. You look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that's where you'll find where we all come from" (ibid.). Her hope of claiming her true self meets with the eventual infrastructural self. Her identity crumbles and assumes the quality of matter indistinguishable from trash: societal refuse. This scene also implies, as Tiffany Tsao suggests, that they were never meant to be integrated into a human society they viewed with admiration (217). Ruth is not allowed to be part of the world she admires, nor can she assume the role of her "possible," which also represents the degenerate group of society.

Kathy, on the other hand, finds solace in the company of an infrastructural panorama through her multiple journeys by car. Her driving is not without purpose, as she carries the material remnants of Hailsham wherever she goes. Her infrastructural longing for Hailsham is constant, and the road, motor, fields, and buildings only contributes to it. She admits: "Driving around the country now, I still see things that will remind me of Hailsham. I might pass the corner of a misty field or see part of a large house in the distance as I come down the side of a valley, even a particular arrangement of poplar trees up on a hillside, and I'll think: 'Maybe that's it! I've found it! This actually is Hailsham!'" (Ishiguro 6). Kathy's experience with nonhuman actants illustrates how anthropomorphism surrounds our routine experiences and serves as a constant reminder of the nonhuman actants we often overlook. Bennett presents this anthropomorphism as an alternative to anthropocentrism, revealing that nonhuman actants constantly surround us, influencing and shaping human behaviour, emotional sensibilities, and actions (120). Kathy's attachments and relationships with nonhuman

actants are a testament to anthropomorphism, as she recognises intelligence and emotional sensibilities among the objects with which she interacts. Her character negates the Anthropocentric narcissism of human exceptionalism, as she experiences Hailsham's ceaseless emotional calls for reunion, meeting between human infrastructures and nonhuman infrastructures. In other words, Kathy's infrastructural self is contrasted with the anthropomorphic infrastructures that incessantly invoke feelings and desires in her. The objects "manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the outside of our own experience" and reveal "a liveliness intrinsic to the materiality of the thing formerly known as an object" (Bennett xvi). The purpose of the anthropomorphism in new materialism is to offer an alternative to the widely popular truth that privileges humans as active and denounces nonhumans as passive (Skiveren 191).

Kathy's connection to Hailsham and various objects relates to Bennett's concept of material vibrancy, as these objects evoke familiar sensations in Kathy. Her constant desire to possess Hailsham while driving may also induce her to crash and meet her death, inciting her to fulfil her ultimate infrastructural role. For Kathy, driving becomes a metaphor for her materialised body, as both the car and her body share similar material goals with other normal humans. Through her driving, she can recreate Hailsham from her views of the nondescript infrastructure and perform her material duties. Kathy's experience demonstrates how her body, as matter, and matter outside of her body are inseparable. This inseparability between bodies and matter is traced when Rich notes how the car represents the "instrumentalized beings" (639) of the clones. This substantiates Rich's claim that a clear separation between exteriority and interiority ceases to exist. However, the lines between humans and nonhumans can be drawn dynamically through intra-active agencies involving material discursivity, which considers matter as an active or vibrant agent that shapes human experiences. Kathy ponders her material reality with the car: "I do like the feeling of getting into my little car, knowing for the next couple of hours I'll have only the roads, the big grey sky and my daydreams for company" (Ishiguro 204).

Towards the end of the novel, the trio of Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy visit the deserted boat, reminiscent of Hailsham. They observe "how its paint was cracking, and how the timber frames of the little cabin were crumbling away," and yet Tommy says, "Maybe this is what Hailsham looks like now" (220). This ruined status of Hailsham is also suggested by Ruth when she narrates her dream: "I was, in Room 14, and I was looking out of the window, and everything outside was flooded. Just like a giant lake" (ibid.). This resurrection of Hailsham at the deserted boat allows them to assume Hailsham's final closure and ruin. Therefore, "finding Hailsham here entails accepting its status as a ruined experiment, an abandoned structure, or in

Ruth's dream, a giant lake of trash" (Rich 642). However, this decayed infrastructure is not a passive entity waiting to be eradicated from the face of the earth. It is a matter of sustenance for Kathy while she drives on the road, a frustrated dream for Ruth, and a reason for Tommy's uncontrollable rage. Its indispensable presence speaks for its material existence in the clones' lives.

While all the characters, except Kathy, complete their organ donations, Kathy, precariously, is alive and waits for her time to complete her task. We gather that human interaction with matter is dynamic and often controlled by matter rather than vice versa. Such material understanding enables us to recognise the "efficacious powers of particular material configurations" (Bennett ix) and is necessary for sustainable development and ecological balance. The material force, though invisible, is inescapable. We notice this when the characters evaluate their infrastructural performance; for instance, Tommy opines, "It can't be good. Completing at the second donation. Can't be good" (Ishiguro 222). He further states, "I'm a pretty good donor, but I was a lousy carer" (ibid.). While the characters are treated as infrastructural resources, they are also shaped and modified by the things around them.

Kathy's final meeting with Norfolk is significant in her infrastructural fulfilment. Norfolk, as Emily narrates, "was England's 'lost corner' where all the lost property found in the country ended up," and it is equated with Hailsham's '"Lost Corner,' where the lost property was kept" (65). Norfolk in England and Lost Corner at Hailsham indicate unattainable possibilities, which offer a mirage of hope. Norfolk is where human clones go to seek their "possibles" working in an office, and this is the place that Kathy visits after Tommy completes his donations. She mentions, "I drove up to Norfolk, even though I had no real need to" (282). She further highlights, "I stood there, looking at that strange rubbish, feeling the wind coming across those empty fields, that I started to imagine just a little fantasy thing, because this was Norfolk after all, and it was only a couple of weeks since I'd lost him" (ibid.). The novel ends with Kathy's insatiable quest for Hailsham and Tommy, even if it is a mirage.

MATTER AND EMOTIONS

The narrative of the intensified materiality of the clones is counterbalanced by the portrayal of evocative feelings. The novel's narrative ensures the coexistence of the materiality of dehumanised bodies with humane emotions. Kathy's fondness for the song "Never Let Me Go" is striking, as the song involves a woman singing it while holding a baby close to her bosom. Kathy's infrastructural body is contrasted with her desire to hold a baby. Tommy, with his pointless outbursts, and Ruth, with her futile agonies, align with Kathy's

paradoxical situation. This emotional paradox, filled with futility, is a recurrent phenomenon in the novel. While referring to the narration of such feelings, Shaddox argues that the novel's primary focus is to juxtapose the evocative feelings of the clones with the inhumane society that ignores their plight (450). While we can accept the instrumentality in the treatment of the human clones, it is improbable to consider the case of sentimentality as the chief motive of the novel. The writer's function is not to lead the way for rehumanisation, as Shaddox notes, but rather to further intensify dehumanisation, allowing the emotional paradox to affirm their infrastructural status in the novel. These emotions naturally evoke compassion among the readers, but not without the heavy baggage of ironic conditions of dehumanisation.

Kathy and Tommy's request for a deferral indicates a validation of this paradox, as it meets the expected ironic end. We can quickly notice, as Groes identifies, that the evocative feelings are purposeless, and the clones meet their destined fate irrespective of their claim of pure love (8). The acknowledgement of love and the demand for deferral are narrated against the backdrop of the historical contexts of the cloning system. Ishiguro narrates both the rise and fall of Hailsham around the same time that Kathy and Tommy decide to seek deferral, which could permit them to discontinue organ donations. Hailsham was established to seek a remedy for incurable diseases during the post-war world of the 1950s and 1960s, offering the right platforms for such institutions to flourish. Through this historical view, Ishiguro juxtaposes the hope of humanity with the hope of the infrastructures—Cathy and Tommy—in their demand for deferral. This emotional paradox is further complicated by the Morningdale scandal, which attempted to create, in Emily's words, "the possibility of having children with enhanced characteristics. Superior intelligence, superior athleticism, that sort of thing" (Ishiguro 258). The idea of superior clones frightened people, as they did not want clones to be superior to them but rather to function as infrastructural resources. Emily responds to Kathy's question on the closure of Hailsham: "They didn't want to think about you students, or about the conditions you were brought up in. In other words, my dears, they wanted you back in the shadows" (259). The closure of Hailsham does not signify the end of the infrastructural project, but it reaffirms the clones' material status, leading to the rejection of Kathy and Tommy's request for deferral.

In addition to portraying such emotional paradoxes, which reinforce the material status of human clones, the novel complicates this sentimentality, which blurs the boundary between humans and nonhuman agents, as it becomes natural for us to recognise nonhuman entanglements that shape emotional sensibilities among the clones. The novel explores ways in which cloned humans associate themselves with material entanglements that form a significant part of their self-awareness. Through such nonhuman

entanglements, Ishiguro establishes what Barad terms the disavowal of "self-contained existence" (*Meeting* ix). Naturally, manufactured in laboratories, they found solace in horizontal instrumentalities and developed attachments with material entanglements. Kathy's entanglements include a cassette tape, her car, Hailsham, and Norfolk, which collectively form a considerable part of her infrastructural interiority. For human clones, such entanglements become material forces that formulate emotional responses and affect their self-awareness. Such emotional marks are developed through mattering of intersubjective agencies, which, rejecting the independent and determinate status of human clones, establish matter as a vibrant and actant entity. The emotional responses suggest that the binary of interiority and exteriority is no longer defined conventionally but dynamically situated within intersubjective agencies. The emotional responses of the clones counterbalance the otherwise scientific approach of the normals, who do not acknowledge the clones as humans but rather consider them as medicinal resources. The reader, having observed the lives of the clones through their affective narratives, recognises that the clones are more humane than Madame and other guardians, as the clones dream about better lives and strive to attain them despite encountering contrary circumstances (Seaman 268–69).

However, it becomes difficult for the reader to reconcile with the novel's outcome, which is undoubtedly saddening. The narration of emotions in human infrastructure compels readers to empathise with Kathy, as she waits for her donations, and to hope for the unlikely end. In the paper on relatability, Dancer argues in favour of a corrective reading, suggesting that it allows readers to reconcile and alleviate their dissatisfaction at the inhumane treatment of the clones (158). For him, corrective reading allows for a moment of detachment, as he tries to adhere to the greater goals for the sake of humanity at the cost of the human clones, Kathy and Tommy. This consequentialist logic, which places its core ideas on detachment, is improbable and unrealistic, as the infrastructural emotions narrated by Ishiguro compel readers to experience the eventual trauma.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the novel, through the theoretical framework of the new materialism, especially the theories of Bennett and Barad, connects with the contemporary posthuman condition, recognising human embeddedness with (non-living) nonhumans. The paper shows how humans intra-act with vibrant nonhumans, while recognising the thing-power of nonhumans and acknowledging bodily existence beyond the skin. The skin, as advocated by critics, does not define boundaries (Borbély n.pag.), as humans are

co-constitutive things and are the consequentialist outcomes of this co-constitution.

Therefore, the novel showcases how humans and matter perform their roles, in Barad's terms, intra-actively. The narrative weaves the intricacy of infrastructural interiority (the bodies and minds of the cloned humans) and infrastructural exteriority (matter that exists outside human bodies). When they interact, humans and matter intra-act, allowing them to enact a posthuman performance of mutual modifications. While the material influence, developing from human-matter interaction, evolves through the dehumanised practices of other humans, it does more than that and creates multiple meanings for the human clones. Therefore, the dichotomy between humans, emanating material qualities, and matter, emerging as a vibrant and active force on humans, remains dynamically interchangeable throughout the novel, enabling the reader to understand the nuances of material forces, and creating awareness that sustainable and ecological balance can be maintained through careful utilisation and preservation of all material entities, i.e. earth, water, plants, animals, and other commodities.

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Dr Rajesh Bharvad is Associate Professor of English in the Department of English at Shri Govind Guru University, Godhra. His research areas include postmodern literature, contemporary fiction, posthumanism, and emerging trends in diaspora literature. In addition to active presentations at conferences and publications in reputed journals,

he received a prestigious fellowship, the Shastri Mobility Program, from The Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, New Delhi, in 2020. During this fellowship, he pursued his research on intersectional diasporic identities under the supervision of Prof. Nandi Bhatia of the University of Western Ontario, Canada. In 2022, he was invited as a visiting fellow at the University of Hyogo, Kobe, Japan, where he conducted research in environmental humanities. Recently, he has been editing a volume, *Post/Apocalyptic Narratives in Contemporary Indo-Japanese Environmental Literature*, to be published by Routledge, within the series *Routledge Studies in World Literatures and the Environment*.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8333-5273
rkbharvad@sggu.ac.in