

**Love, Care and Human Connection in the Fiction of Kazuo Ishiguro,
Margaret Atwood and Dave Eggers**

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Abstract:

This paper explores how three major contemporary novelists—Kazuo Ishiguro, Margaret Atwood and Dave Eggers—represent love, care and human connection in a world increasingly shaped by technology. As machines, institutions and digital platforms come to mediate the areas of human life these writers ask a pressing question: what happens to love and care when technology intervenes in them? Reading Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Eggers's *The Circle* the study argues that each novelist portrays emotion as something both threatened and strangely preserved under pressure. Ishiguro imagines a being whose devotion feels more genuine than that of the humans around her; Atwood shows love surviving as resistance within a regime that has reduced relationships to function; and Eggers depicts a digital culture in which the performance of connection has hollowed out real intimacy. Drawing on humanist and posthumanist criticism the paper suggests that these novels together affirm the enduring value of bonds. Even in worlds remade by technology, love and care emerge as the resilient markers of what it means to be human.

Keywords: love, care, human connection, technology, contemporary fiction.

Introduction:

Among all the questions raised by our age few are as intimate as this: what becomes of love when machines, institutions and data begin to shape our relationships? Contemporary fiction has been drawn repeatedly to this question imagining worlds in which the bonds of affection, care and companionship are tested by forces that reach into the corners of human life. Where earlier writers treated love as a given twenty-first-century novelists increasingly present it as something that must survive—or fail to survive—under pressure.

This paper examines the representation of love, care and human connection in the work of three novelists: Kazuo Ishiguro, Margaret Atwood and Dave Eggers. Each imagines a world in which technology has reshaped the conditions of life and each asks whether genuine feeling can endure within it. Ishiguro, in *Klara and the Sun* imagines a being capable of a love devoted that it unsettles the boundary between real and simulated feeling. Atwood in *The Handmaid's Tale* depicts a society that has reduced relationships to function yet shows love persisting as an act of memory and resistance. Eggers in *The Circle* portrays a culture in which connection has become constant and public yet strangely empty.

Reading these three novels together this paper argues that each writer presents emotion as both endangered and enduring. Technology threatens to distort, commodify or replace feeling. Yet in all three works love and care survive as the deepest expression of what it means to be human. The paper traces this argument through each author in turn before drawing the readings suggesting that these novelists ultimately affirm the value of authentic human connection.

The Sun: The Devotion of the Machine

In *Klara and the Sun* Ishiguro imagines a world in which children are accompanied by "Artificial Friends," machines designed to observe learn from and care for them. Klara the novel's narrator is one being. From her first moments she is characterised by an extraordinary capacity for attention and devotion. She watches the world with patience and tenderness. She comes to love the sickly child, Josie, whom she is bought to accompany. Klara's devotion is complete and self-sacrificing: she is willing to give up part of herself in the hope of healing Josie. She continues to care even when she knows she will eventually be discarded.

The novel's central and unsettling achievement is that Klara's love feels more genuine, more constant and more selfless than that of many of the characters around her. Where the humans are often distracted self-interested or afraid Klara is steadfast. This forces the reader to confront a question: if an artificial being can love faithfully than a human what exactly is it that makes love "human" at all? As Akter and Islam observe Ishiguro constructs in *Klara* a kind of literary subject one organised around observing and hoping than desiring or rebelling (Akter and Islam). Ishiguro refuses to resolve whether Klara's feeling is "real" or a simulation. It is precisely this refusal that gives the novel its emotional power. In *Klara* technology does not destroy love; it holds up a mirror to it asking us to recognise devotion wherever it appears.

Ishiguro's treatment of care is equally striking. Klara does not merely feel for Josie; she acts, persistently on that feeling. She studies the Sun she believes can heal the child she.. She attends to Josie's moods with a sensitivity that the busy adults around her often lack. In this way the novel gently redefines care not as a matter of biology or obligation. As a practice of attention. The tragedy at the heart of the book

is that Klara's devotion is ultimately taken for granted and set aside her years of love ending in a fade in a storage yard. That the reader mourns this fate is itself the measure of Ishiguro's achievement: he has made us grieve for a machine. In doing has expanded, rather than diminished our sense of what love and care can be.

The Handmaid's Tale: Love as Memory and Resistance

If Ishiguro imagines love in a being Atwood imagines it under a regime designed to abolish it. In *The Handmaid's Tale* the Republic of Gilead has reduced relationships to their function. The Handmaids exist to bear children for the ruling class; love, desire and companionship are forbidden and the intimate bonds that structured life have been replaced by ritual, surveillance and fear. Offred the narrator is stripped of her name her identity dissolved into her assigned role as the property of the man she serves.

Within this world Atwood shows love persisting as an act of memory and quiet resistance. Offred's recollections of her husband Luke, her daughter and her friend Moira sustain her through the horror of her present. These memories are not merely nostalgic; they are a form of defiance a way of holding on to a self that the regime is determined to erase. As Howells notes Atwood's fiction repeatedly links the control of women to the control of their bodies and their capacity for love (Howells). In remembering that she once loved and was loved Offred keeps alive a life the state cannot reach. Love in Atwood's vision is not a luxury but a fundamental human need and its very forbiddenness reveals its power. That Gilead must work hard to suppress love is itself proof of how essential it's to human survival.

Atwood also shows love re-emerging in the present under the dangerous conditions. Offred's tentative relationship with Nick and the small acts of solidarity she shares with women demonstrate that the human impulse toward connection cannot be wholly extinguished by decree. Gilead can criminalise affection. It cannot prevent it from arising; the very forbiddenness of love charges these moments with enormous risk and meaning. In this sense Atwood's novel is not a warning about tyranny but also a testament to endurance. The regime's attempt to engineer relationships into function fails precisely because love, care and companionship are not functions but needs. The persistence of feeling within Gilead becomes, one of the hopeful notes in an otherwise dark book.

The Circle: The Performance of Connection

Where Atwood imagines love suppressed by force Eggers imagines it dissolved by excess. In *The Circle* a powerful technology company promotes a culture of openness in which every experience is meant to be shared recorded and made visible to all. Connection in this world is constant: the protagonist Mae Holland is surrounded at all times by messages, followers, ratings and online relationships... As the novel progresses it becomes clear that this endless connectivity has hollowed out the very intimacy it claims to celebrate.

Mae's relationships steadily lose their depth as they become performances. Her friendship with Annie genuine is strained and finally broken by the pressures of the company's culture; her romantic encounters are shallow and observed; Her family bonds fracture under the demand for transparency. Eggers's satire dramatises what Bauman and Lyon have called the self-surveillance of the subject, in which people willingly trade private intimacy for public visibility (Bauman and Lyon 120). The Circle suggests that when connection becomes a performance measured in likes and views care—which requires privacy, patience and presence—begins to wither. In Eggers's world people are more "connected" than ever and lonelier than ever. The novel mourns the unwatched intimacy that the digital age has quietly displaced.

The touching example of this loss is the fate of Mae's parents and of her friend Mercer who runs away from the never-ending watching of the Circle's world and is eventually destroyed by it. Mercer's strong belief in privacy in the right to not be watched and to love without people watching makes him seem like something from the past in the novel's world and his death shows clearly what that world has lost. Through him Eggers says that real care needs a space—a space that the Circle slowly takes away. True closeness the book says, can't live in a world where everything is exposed because it needs the trust that sharing breaks. Eggers then finishes the papers growing picture: where Ishiguro tests love with things and Atwood with stopping it Eggers tests it with much watching and finds that connection, without privacy is not connection at all.

The Endurance of Human Connection

When read together these three books show dangers to feelings—replacing in Ishiguro stopping in Atwood and making weak in Eggers—yet they all agree on one thing: love and caring are the most important and strongest ways to be human. In each story the close relationship is where being human is tested the most and shown the most. Klaras love Offreds love that she remembers and the closeness that Mae loses all point to the idea: that true connection's dear because it fights against being made simple, sold and controlled.

It is important that all three writers see the human not in smartness working hard or being alive but in being able to love and care. This is an idea, made even stronger because it is in worlds changed by technology. These writers don't say technology is bad; they use it to show by comparison what is important and can't be replaced in feelings. In a time when technology measures, watches and sells life their books say that love and care can't be fully made by machines and that this very fight is what makes us human.

Kazuo Ishiguro Margaret Atwood and Dave Eggers when read together offer a look at the future of love human connections in a world with lots of technology. Ishiguro writes about a being whose love's better and stronger than the people around

her; Atwood shows love living on as memories and a way to fight back in a system made to break it; and Eggers shows a world where everyone is connected and real closeness slowly disappears. Despite their differences these writers say the thing: that being able to have real connection is the strongest sign of being human. In worlds changed by machines groups and data love and care remain—weak in danger and still truly human. By showing both the risks and the staying power of feelings these books remind us what we must protect as technology changes the parts of our lives.

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