

Artificial Intelligence Infrastructure and Social Imagination in Hirano Keiichiro's *Honshin* (True Intentions)

Myungsim Yang

Academy of Mobility Humanities, Konkuk University 11F, New Millennium Hall, 120 Neungdong-ro, Gwangjin-gu Seoul 05029, Republic of Korea
Email: ms0611@konkuk.ac.kr

Abstract This paper examines how social imaginaries of future technologies are formed and organized through *Honshin* (本心, 2021) by Hirano Keiichiro(平野啓一郎), and in doing so, explores the possibilities of "infrastructural text studies" as a critical approach that reads literary works through the lens of infrastructure. The paper conceptualizes the Virtual Figure (VF) and the Real Avatar (RA) services depicted in the novel as anticipatory infrastructures that enable and organize the functions of other technologies within the fictional world. From this perspective, it analyzes how anticipatory infrastructures operate as social systems that materialize relational absence, emotional anxiety, and anticipatory care, while simultaneously shaping a society's capacity to imagine alternative futures, relationships, and modes of life. The paper further examines how ethical frameworks and the distribution of responsibility are reorganized in the course of this process. The VF service transforms death into an event that can be extended and managed through data, reconfiguring mourning and loneliness into governable domains of technological administration. The RA service, by contrast, promises the expansion of human agency and action beyond bodily constraints. Ultimately, however, *Honshin* reveals that infrastructures function as political dispositifs that produce promises of possibility while simultaneously obscuring or redistributing the costs and burdens associated with them.

Keywords Japanese Literature; Keiichiro Hirano; *Honshin*; AI Infrastructures; Ethics

Author **Myungsim Yang** is Research Professor at the Academy of Mobility Humanities at Konkuk University, South Korea. She received her PhD from the Graduate School of Humanities at Kobe University, Japan. Her academic interest lies in researching Zainichi Korean literature in general and the "movements"

depicted in Zainichi Korean narratives from the “mobility” perspectives in particular.

Introduction

This study examines how social imaginaries surrounding future technologies are shaped and given meaning through *Honshin* (本心, *True Intentions*, 2021), a novel by Hirano Keiichiro (平野啓一郎, 1975-), a leading figure in contemporary Japanese literature. Hirano made his literary debut with *Eclipse* (日蝕, 1998), which earned him the Akutagawa Prize, making him the youngest recipient at the time. He has consistently explored, from his early works onward, the concept of the “dividual” (分人)¹, which challenges the notion of a singular, fixed self and instead posits multiple selves that shift across relationships and contexts. This preoccupation with fluid selfhood extends into a broader interrogation of social inequality and institutional power, concerns that run throughout *Honshin* as well.

Honshin is set in near-future Japan and bears the character of a social science fiction work that interrogates how changes in social institutions and technological advancement can reshape human life. Ha-kyung Shin explains that Japanese science fiction incorporates scientific progress as a foundational element of the fictional world, predicting and reproducing a vision of a society toward which science and technology are directed. He further argues that the advancement of science and technology raises fundamental questions about the essence of humanity and demands a “redefinition” of human society (174-175).

Bearing the characteristics of the science fiction genre described above, *Honshin* is set in Japanese society in 2040, where jiyushi (自由死), the legal right to self-determination in death, has been legalized. Within this temporal framework, technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, digital archives, and surrogate labor appear as welfare services that transform everyday life, revealing how technological infrastructure simultaneously reconstructs and unsettles questions

1 See Keiichiro Hirano, *Dividualism Official Site* <https://dividualism.khirano.com/?_ga=2.30175738.451141160.1759021184225744901.1752569574>.

The concept of the “dividual” is proposed as a new model of the human subject that challenges and reconfigures the notion of the “individual.” The “individual” has traditionally been understood as an indivisible human being, centered on a single, authentic self, who adopts different roles or masks depending on social contexts. In contrast, the “dividual” refers to a subject whose identity is differentiated across interpersonal relationships and environments. Rather than presupposing a unified, original self at the core, this perspective recognizes multiple selves as equally authentic. This mode of thinking is referred to as “dividualism.”

of human emotion, death, and ethics. In particular, the novel reveals that even the most intimate domains of human life, including family, love, death, and the body, are intimately bound up with infrastructure.

Honshin is a text that demonstrates how infrastructure reconstructs human modes of being and the formation of relationships, tracing the process through which future technology, social institutions, and human emotion and death operate in mutual entanglement. In this sense, the novel serves as a productive site for infrastructural text research, one that illuminates how human identity can be reshaped when human and non-human elements are bound together within a shared infrastructure.

In literary works, infrastructure has traditionally tended to serve either as the backdrop of human-centered narratives or as a symbol reflecting characters' inner psychology and connoting particular ideologies. However, an approach that identifies infrastructure as central to narrative structure and the formation of meaning contributes to restoring the dispositions and potentialities of infrastructure (Jinhyoung Lee 124-126). Reading *Honshin* from this perspective, the VF and RA services function less as discrete technologies that trigger narrative events than as naturalized premises embedded in Japanese society at large. This concretely illustrates how the infrastructural qualities of invisibility, self-evidence, and backgrounding are narratively realized in the future society depicted in the work.

In general, infrastructure refers to “a vast techno-scientific system that circulates everything on earth, including water, energy, people, resources, information, and goods” (Jung Lee 319). This understanding has largely confined infrastructure to the status of a functional and material foundation, with the result that the humanities did not, until relatively recently, treat infrastructure as a primary object of analysis. However, Susan Leigh Star observes that many aspects of infrastructure manifest in the form of numerical lists or technical specifications and are thus more familiar to social scientists. On this basis, she calls for humanistic inquiry into infrastructure that excavates the drama embedded within it and restores the narratives that lie therein (377). Brian Larkin likewise defines infrastructure as a relational and fluid structure that enables the movement of other things, and has referred to it as a field that generates and mediates relationships (329). In other words, a humanistic approach to infrastructure can mean seeking to understand the expressive and creative potential that “moving” materialities possess, as we encounter them, engage with them, and live alongside them (Adey et al. 6).

Extending the concept of infrastructure into future-oriented research from this perspective, Sarah Pink defines infrastructure as “conveyors of possibility,”

explaining that infrastructure not only determines what can happen in the present but also functions as anticipatory structures that organize what can happen next (Pink et al. 14). In this way, infrastructure is being reconceptualized beyond a mere material foundation into a temporal and relational structure that mediates between the present and the future and organizes the realm of possibility.

Accordingly, this paper does not regard the proxy services of “personality” and “body” provided by the VF and RA that appear in the novel as imaginings of future technology but rather understands them as “anticipatory infrastructure” that “make possible the functionality of other emerging technologies” (Pink, et al., *Everyday Automation* 40). As such, they configure and manage human life and death, emotion and relationships, in ways that differ from the present, making future scenes of life into presentable conditions and allowing the problems of life to be negotiated within infrastructural terms.

This paper therefore seeks to analyze—through a literary text—the process by which a society centered on such anticipatory infrastructure comes to imagine different futures, different relationships, and different ways of life, that is, the ways in which social imaginaries are formed.

Through this analysis, the paper explores the possibilities of infrastructural text research as a new mode of reading literature—one that attends to how the relationship between humans and technology is reconstructed through infrastructure as mediator, and how the questions of ethics and responsibility arising in that process are reorganized.

AI as Infrastructure and Emerging Technologies

Honshin is set in a near-future Japanese society in which the state's social security system has collapsed and voluntary death has been legally recognized. The novel depicts a world where social infrastructure, built to anticipate and prepare for future actions, risks, and aspirations in advance, has become fully normalized. In *Honshin*, the services that produce VFs and dispatch RAs represent concrete instances of infrastructural technology that institutionally operates the proxy functions of personality and body, respectively.

In her book *All the Ghosts in the Machine: Illusions of Immortality in the Digital Age* (2020), Elaine Kasket argues that digital technology reconstitutes death not as a rupture but as a continuing state of relationship, proposing that data accumulated in online spaces sustains an individual's existence after death and that this fundamentally transforms the ways in which grief is practiced (20-26). This perspective provides an important theoretical framework for understanding

the virtual beings that appear in *Honshin*. In the novel, the deceased mother is reconstituted as a data-based entity capable of sustained interaction, which may be regarded as a concrete literary instantiation of posthumous existence in the digital age.

The VF production service is grounded in technology that collects and analyzes data generated by an individual during their lifetime, including video and audio recordings, social media archives, and biometric information, encompassing memories, speech patterns, personality traits, and personal imagery. This data is processed through algorithms and reconstructed in the form of a "representation of personality," albeit without physical embodiment. Through artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and voice synthesis, the VF responds as though alive, and users access and interact with it via a dedicated platform.

It involves creating a human being within virtual space. There are two types: one based on a real model, and one that is an entirely fictitious person. In Ms. Ishikawa Sakuya's case, you have requested the model-based type. The appearance is indistinguishable from that of a real person. For instance, even if my own VF and I were both to meet you, Ms. Ishikawa, in virtual space, I dare say you would not be able to tell which of us was the real one. [...] However, it has no inner life. It does nothing more than analyze conversation on the basis of syntax and produce the most appropriate response. (11-12)¹

The protagonist Sakuya's mother declares her wish for voluntary death, but passes away in an unforeseen accident before she is able to carry it out. Amid grief and guilt, Sakuya seeks to restore her mother through a virtual human production service operated by a private company. The VF's "appearance is indistinguishable from that of a real person," blurring the boundary between the virtual and the real and suggesting that the human form has become technically reproducible. Yet as the statement "it has no inner life" makes clear, such representation falls short of reaching the human interior. The VF analyzes language syntactically and calculates probabilistically to generate the most appropriate response. Nevertheless, the VF serves a substantive function in managing personal emotions such as grief, longing, and guilt. In this context, the VF goes beyond being a mere technical device—it operates as a technological infrastructure that converts memory into data, algorithmically reconstructs personality, and renders emotion into a predictable

¹ See Keiichiro Hirano, *Honshin* (本心), Tokyo: Bungeishunju, May 26, 2021.

All references to the text are to this edition; hereafter, only page numbers will be cited.

form.

The VF service transforms post-death relationships from a state of rupture into one of continuity, reorganizing the emotions of grief and loss into a manageable domain. As Sang-gyu Shin observes, the advancement of contemporary high technology reaches into the human mind and body themselves, taking them as direct objects of manipulation, rather than simply altering the outward forms of life (14). This shift is concretized in attempts to technologically reconstruct the interior elements of human experience, such as memory, personality, and emotion, and the VF service may be regarded as a representative instance of this tendency.

Simply put, it is a matter of lending you my entire body. You will view the footage from the camera-equipped goggles I wear through your own headset. As though you had become my body, you will be able to look through my eyes, hear through my ears, and move anywhere through my feet. (23-24)

The RA service, which is established in the novel as Sakuya's occupation, is realized, as the quoted passage explains, through real-time audiovisual relay and the transmission of biosensory data. The avatar worker and the client are connected through sensory transmission technology and network technology that operate in real time. Through the cameras and sensors Sakuya wears, his field of vision, hearing, movement, and walking rhythm are transmitted to the client, who experiences not just watching but something closer to inhabiting Sakuya's body. Wearable sensors and biosignal transmission technology enable the proxy of bodily experience by indirectly conveying even physical states such as tension, fatigue, and anxiety, depending on the circumstances.

In this way, the RA service assumes the character of a contractual structure that conceives of the body as a labor resource. Through a contract with the platform, the RA worker provides the client with physical movements alongside emotional responses such as sensory reactions. As confirmed by the description, "it is a matter of lending you my entire body," the body in the RA service is no longer the individual's own foundational basis of existence, but becomes a mediating device made available to another. In other words, the body is a rentable resource rather than an object of ownership, one that becomes a form of service. The description "... to look through my eyes, hear through my ears, and move anywhere through my feet" demonstrates that sensation and perception can be separated and transmitted through technology. In this configuration, the user experiences the world through another's body and becomes capable of movement beyond the physical constraints of their

own. Within the novel, against the backdrop of Sakuya's educational background as a high school dropout and an unstable social structure, RA work is presented as a pragmatic survival strategy. While the RA platform is at times perceived positively by Sakuya, offering access to spaces and experiences previously unavailable to her, that experience is ultimately circumscribed by the strict limits of the client's intended purpose and the terms of the contract.

While demand and the number of prospective workers surged rapidly, "protests" against the premise of "complying with any request made by the client" flooded in as well. *This is irresponsible behavior. It must not be permitted by society [...]*

Frankly, I harbored an unusual degree of distrust toward the company. Unlike before, when they had cherished me as a veteran worker, the moment my client ratings dropped, "guidance" notices increased immediately, renegotiation of commission rates was forced upon me, and for the first time I even received a warning of account suspension. All of it was the AI automatically evaluating me and unilaterally sending messages. (185-186)

The passages above reveal that the RA constitutes an infrastructure that simultaneously encompasses the issues of labor, ethics, and technological control. As social interest in RA surges within the novel, the occupation emerges as a new form of labor while at the same time triggering intense ethical debate. The condition of "complying with any request made by the client" is subject to particular criticism, as it implies a structure that subordinates the individual's body and actions to the will of another. The novel also concretely depicts how Sakuya's RA labor is managed and controlled within a platformized environment. Working conditions shift immediately in response to unilateral client evaluations, commission rates are renegotiated, and account suspension warnings are issued, all processed automatically by algorithm, with no human judgment involved.

The fact that this process is described as "the AI automatically evaluating me and unilaterally sending messages" demonstrates that labor management is conducted through an automated system driven by data rather than through human judgment (Veenhoven 90-92). This leads to a weakening of worker autonomy while simultaneously intensifying precarity. The RA worker provides their body and senses so that others in need of such experience may access them yet is simultaneously placed in a position of continuous surveillance and regulation by the platform and its algorithms. This scene thus reveals how the body becomes

infrastructuralized while technology simultaneously reconstructs human agency, responsibility, and labor conditions through their control. In *Honshin*, the RA labor service acts as a technological substitute that fills the gaps of a weakened welfare system in a Japanese society where public provisions such as pensions, healthcare, and care services have deteriorated, doing so through the bodily proxy of assuming on behalf of others the burdens of mobility, face-to-face interaction, and emotional labor. At the same time, however, it exposes the risks, fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and ethical burdens that the individual avatar worker must bear alone. Together with the ethical contradictions inherent in this platform-based labor resource service, the novel raises questions about the extent to which the role of the RA should be socially permitted, and about who bears responsibility for the act of living another person's life in their stead.

In *Honshin*, the VF and the RA are discrete technological devices, yet for either to function, data must be accumulated, and algorithms must be designed. The structure of these services reorganizes human emotion, social relationships, and future modes of survival within an institutional environment, rendering even one's way of life and the choice of death manageable within the domain of infrastructure. By presenting future forms centered respectively on the continuity of relationships and the proxy of the body, the two services condition people to perceive rupture and deficiency as technologically manageable conditions.

As a result, death becomes an event extendable through data, freed from its status as absolute rupture, while care and mobility services are imagined as problems resolvable through contractual arrangement, divested of their character as public responsibilities. Yet the VF and the RA do not so much eliminate problems as redistribute them to different registers, revealing that technological infrastructure forms new structures of ethical tension and responsibility in the ways it organizes human emotion, the body, and relationships. These technologies thus simultaneously present the possibilities of a future society and function as devices that compel critical reflection on the ways in which those possibilities are constructed and constrained. In this process, technology renders responsibility ambiguous, dispersing ethical accountability for human actions across individuals and systems alike.

Anticipatory Infrastructures in *Honshin* : Operation and Ethical Implications

Six months after losing her mother in an accident, Sakuya commissions the production of a VF to console her through her grief and to learn her mother's true intentions and true feelings, specifically why her mother desired voluntary death

during her lifetime. Within the novel, the VF is a legalized and commercialized service. In order to produce a VF of her mother with a high degree of fidelity, Sakuya's interactions with the VF do not conclude after a single session, but proceed through a repeated process of revising and adjusting questions and responses. Yet while the VF's utterances appear logical, they are subtly at odds with the emotions Sakuya actually remembers, and this discrepancy leads to the outcome of failing to approach the truth she had hoped to find.

Is it incapable of even this level of adjustment? For the first time, I felt a sense of distrust toward Nozaki, along with dissatisfaction at the VF's performance. *Had I truly purchased something worth its considerable price?*

At first, a sense of dissonance is inevitable, but as the volume of learning increases, it will gradually become more natural. Your mother has only just returned to this world, so please think of it as a rehabilitation period and watch over her with patience. (64)

The passage above depicts a process in which the VF of the mother, contrary to expectation, fails to sustain the relationship and instead commodifies it, escalating the situation into a matter of technological performance. The expression “worth its considerable price” in particular reveals that grief and relationships are treated as objects of consumption and evaluation. At the same time, the language of “learning” and “rehabilitation period” reframes the relationship between Sakuya and the VF as a problem amenable to adjustment and improvement through the accumulation of data.

In this process, grief no longer remains confined to the individual's inner contemplation. The AI predicts and generates emotion on the basis of collected data, with the result that emotion comes to be perceived as something measurable, reproducible, and manageable. Yet in that very process, the VF service accumulates uncertainty even as it promises understanding. The infrastructural function through which human life is converted, via the VF production service, into a resource capable of continuing to operate as a virtual entity beyond death rather than concluding with it, is depicted more concretely in the scene of an elderly professor's voluntary death. In the moments before his death, the mother's VF is dispatched to witness the final moments of the professor who has chosen voluntary death. Sakuya reflects that “if the professor can find peace of mind through <Mother> in the moment before death and quietly cross the threshold of dying, then of course I must help” (340). In this scene, the VF service goes beyond staging consolation to

become a device capable of mediating and orchestrating the flow of emotion even at the moment of death through technological means.

Among the residents of care facilities, there are those who say it gives them strength to think that they can still be of help to others even after death, and who personally commission the production of their own VF.

Can that serve as consolation for the anxiety of death? The thought of being reborn as a VF?

It would bring considerably more peace of mind, I think. Because not everything is lost through death. (231)

The VF of the deceased is produced, managed through a platform, and dispatched to care facilities as a commercial product, generating revenue through its labor. As a result, a digital entity constructed from the data of the dead comes to be involved even in the intimate scene of an individual's dying. For those who choose voluntary death and prepare for their own dying, death becomes something that can be managed more comfortably through technological infrastructure—no longer an event of darkness or a moment of terror to be borne entirely alone. The novel also demonstrates how the VF service functions as an institutionalized welfare infrastructure. It shows in detail the process by which the VF no longer remains a personal technology supplementing individual loss, but comes to operate within the institutional space of the care facility. The care facility depicted in the work is a place where staff shortages, declining family visits, and the proliferation of nursing robots have led to a sharp reduction in human interaction. The business of dispatching VF is presented as an alternative means of alleviating the solitude of the elderly, and the observation that “there are quite a number of residents who enjoy conversing with their VF all day long” (229) suggests that human loneliness and isolation are no longer perceived as personal matters but as conditions that can be technologically managed and resolved. Human solitude thus becomes an object of service, and emotion a subject of administration within the welfare infrastructure.

Particularly noteworthy is the scene in which the care facility residents, as users of the technological infrastructure, imagine their own deaths in connection with the production of a VF. The remark that “it gives them strength to think that they can still be of help to others even after death” (231) reveals a cognitive structure in which death is revalued as a form of continuation rather than absolute loss, from which individuals derive their own consolation. The imagination of being “reborn” as a VF thus demonstrates that the anxiety surrounding impending death

can be preemptively alleviated, and that one's attitude toward death itself may be transformed through the perception of remaining socially functional and of use even after dying.

This trajectory becomes even clearer in the passage where the VF production company states that “of course, our company will continue to research ‘humanness’ and will persistently update the AI itself, including in this case” (237). Humanness is presented as something technically resolvable, exceeding the bounds of ethical or philosophical inquiry alone. Emotion and authenticity, long regarded as distinctly human domains, become parameters optimizable through calculation, and humanity itself is treated as a feature subject to update.

The scene in which Nozaki, an employee of the VF production company, conveys the fact that the mother's VF has generated revenue through dispatched work at the care facility demonstrates that the personality of the deceased mother has been extended into an entity that produces economic value. The posthumous personality becomes a form of labor, and the relationship between humans and the VF is converted into profit. Here, the VF production service expands along a single trajectory: it moves from consoling personal grief to administering solitude, alleviating the anxiety of death, engineering humanness itself, and finally mobilizing posthumous existence as an economic resource — each step folded into the same anticipatory infrastructure.

Ifi, a character who appears in the novel as a user of the RA service, is a globally renowned avatar designer, but is unable to move freely due to a lower-body disability. One day, a video of Sakuya witnessing a foreign convenience store clerk being discriminated against and coming to his aid spreads online, and upon seeing the footage, Ifi hires Sakuya as her exclusive RA. The labor proxy service that Sakuya provides thus becomes an essential infrastructure enabling Ifi's social presence. As noted above, the RA service is a system through which one provides one's body and senses in accordance with another's needs, allowing the client to experience the world they desire through Sakuya's perspective and physicality without moving or engaging in face-to-face interaction themselves. Yet through the indirect sharing of emotional states such as tension, fatigue, and anxiety, the system ultimately operates as a structure that imposes physical risk and emotional burden upon another person.

Material infrastructure, as a complex in which social, material, aesthetic, and political elements converge, shapes both the experience of everyday life and expectations about the future. At the same time, while infrastructure promises circulation and distribution, that very promise carries within it the risk of frustration

and failure (Appel et al. 3).

“It is difficult to walk freely through the streets and save those who are suffering through direct physical engagement. Yet I often indulge in such fantasies. How wonderful it would be if I could do such things” (262). When Ifi speaks these words, the RA is presented as a promise of possibility, enabling intervention in society beyond physical limitation. Yet this promise simultaneously entails a cost. While Sakuya intervenes in another's life and fulfills the assigned role, physical fatigue, stress, and emotional wounds accumulate in her body. Responsibility for actions also becomes ambiguous between the client and the RA. Furthermore, the statement that “when working as a RA, if those around you notice, please have them disregard my existence as much as possible” reveals that this form of labor reduces the body from a presence to a function.

The Japan of 2040 that forms the backdrop of *Honshin* is a society in which the social security system has collapsed, and voluntary death has become an institutionally administered option. Within these conditions, the VF and RA services transcend personal choice to become essential infrastructure for survival and the maintenance of relationships. In a society where the functions of public provision have been weakened, anticipatory infrastructure emerges as a technological substitute that compensates for the absence of a welfare system. Yet this also constitutes a new form of governance that shifts responsibility and risk from structural conditions onto individuals. In this respect, the infrastructural technologies that appear in the novel simultaneously promise a future while critically exposing the ways in which life and death, emotion and humanness, are managed and redistributed.

Ultimately, the anticipatory infrastructure depicted in *Honshin* fails to resolve problems at their root, and the VF and RA services that appear in the novel each raise new ethical questions. The VF service, by enabling the continuation of relationships with the deceased through technological infrastructure, poses new questions to the existing ethical order in which death has been understood as a rupture of relationships. The RA service, in turn, generates the problem of who bears responsibility for an action in which the agent who performs it and the subject who experiences it are distinct, forming another dimension of ethical tension. In this process, the VF and RA services blur the boundary between the human and the non-human, redefining the very concept of humanity, while human agency and its attendant responsibilities are dispersed and reconstructed across the human and the technological. Nie Zhenzhao has defined ethical literary criticism as a critical theory designed to read, analyze, and interpret the ethical character and function of

literary works from an ethical perspective. Within this framework, “ethics” refers primarily to the ethical relationships and moral order that sustain human relations within the world constructed by a literary work, with the central concern being the ethical relationships formed between human and human, human and society, and human and nature (189-190). *Honshin* inherits the premise of “literature as ethical experience” that underlies Nie’s ethical literary criticism, while simultaneously revealing that such experience is no longer constituted solely by the inner choices of the human subject, but is also shaped by technological infrastructure such as the VF and RA. Ethics and responsibility are thus expanded from problems attributable to the individual into problems that are redistributed within a structure in which technology and society are mutually entangled.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a case study in “infrastructural text research,” an approach that reads literary texts through the lens of infrastructure, with Hirano Keiichiro’s *Honshin* as its object of analysis. By conceptualizing the VF and RA services in the novel as anticipatory infrastructures that reconstruct human emotion, the body, and relationships in new ways, the paper has examined how these technologies bear upon individual life and choice, as well as relationships that extend beyond death. It has further demonstrated that in this process, technology does not resolve problems so much as redistribute them in different registers, reconstituting the questions of ethics and responsibility in new forms. Through this analysis, the paper has proposed that literature provides a space in which the social imaginaries constituted by technological infrastructure, along with their attendant ethical tensions, are rendered visible and subjected to critical reflection.

The VF and RA services that appear in *Honshin* concretely demonstrate the workings of anticipatory infrastructure through technologies that respectively proxy personality and the body, mediating relational rupture, emotional anxiety, and the inadequacies of public welfare. In this novel, anticipatory infrastructure operates beyond the level of imagination and illustration of future emerging technologies, showing how human life and death, emotion and relationships can be newly organized and reconstructed through technology.

Within *Honshin*, the VF service presents the possibility that relationships can continue beyond death, while the RA service makes visible a future in which social action can be extended beyond physical constraints. The VF service offers the prospect of sustained understanding and accountability through its technological promise of revealing the deceased mother’s true intentions, yet exposes the

incompleteness of that promise through misaligned responses and deferred interpretations.

In this process, the act of mourning a mother becomes not an inner contemplation unique to the human subject, but an object that can be produced through data, algorithms, and platforms grounded in AI technology. The RA service is likewise presented as an alternative technology that addresses social problems essential to an aging society, including care, healthcare, and livelihood, yet in practice the burden falls upon the individual, extending into questions of responsibility and ethics. In the process of outsourcing mobility, face-to-face interaction, risk, and emotional labor to another person, the logic of capitalism operates, and the attribution of responsibility becomes increasingly ambiguous.

Keiichiro's *Honshin* thus reveals how future technology does not so much resolve problems as generate new ones, redistributing rather than resolving social crises. The novel narratively demonstrates how anticipatory infrastructure organizes social imaginaries while simultaneously showing how those imaginaries become misaligned and renegotiated at the level of individual everyday life and emotion. In *Honshin*, future technology becomes the condition through which society anticipatorily constructs the range of imaginable futures and ethical choices. Through this narrative representation, *Honshin* exposes both the ways in which future technology governs the present and the fissures and uncertainties that such governance inevitably entails, offering a space for critical reflection on the ethical relationship between infrastructural technology and humanity.

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