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POSTHUMANIST THEMES IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH NOVEL: IAN MCEWAN'S MACHINES LIKE ME AND KAZUO ISHIGURO'S KLARA AND THE SUN

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ABSTRACT

POSTHUMANIST THEMES IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH NOVEL: IAN MCEWAN'S MACHINES LIKE ME AND KAZUO ISHIGURO'S KLARA AND THE SUN

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This thesis traces posthumanist themes in contemporary British novel. In order to conduct its study, it analyses two contemporary British novels, namely Ian McEwan's **Machines Like Me** and Kazuo Ishiguro's **Klara and the Sun**. Both of these novels can be classified as science fiction, and they feature posthuman entities in the shape of android companions powered by artificial intelligence. Examining the tumultuous worlds depicted by both novels, this thesis argues that the posthuman androids shine through as being individuals that are emotional, passionate, and highly idealistic, especially in contrast to the humans they cohabit with. This study aims to show that because these posthuman characters are depicted as possessing traits that were thought to be exclusive to humans, it is now unfeasible to think of mankind as the superior species who solely possess the ability of having emotional and intellectual depth. Ultimately, through the lens of posthumanist critical theory, this thesis argues how humanity's fears and prejudices regarding AI are a projection of mankind's own shortcomings, and as it observes that the posthuman AI characters serve as doubles of human characters in their respective novels, it argues that it is not the posthuman that threatens humanity's future, but humanity itself.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Science Fiction, Contemporary British Novel, Ian McEwan, Kazuo Ishiguro, Artificial Intelligence, Posthuman

ÖZ

ÇAĞDAŞ İNGİLİZ ROMANINDA POSTHÜMANIST TEMALAR: IAN MCEWAN'IN BENİM GİBİ MAKİNELER VE KAZUO İSHİGURO'NUN KLARA İLE GÜNEŞ ROMANLARI

Agit Deniz ÖNER

Bu tez, çağdaş İngiliz romanındaki posthümanist temaları incelemektedir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, çağdaş İngiliz romanının iki örneği olan Ian McEwan'ın **Benim Gibi Makineler** ve Kazuo Ishiguro'nun **Klara ve Güneş** adlı romanlarını analiz etmektedir. Her iki roman bilimkurgu olarak sınıflandırılabilmektedir ve her iki roman yapay zekâya sahip android hayat arkadaşları biçimindeki posthümanist varlıkları konu almaktadır. Her iki romanda da tasvir edilen çalkantılı dünyaları inceleyen bu tez, posthümanist androidlerin, özellikle birlikte yaşadıkları insanların aksine, duygusal, tutkulu ve son derece idealist bireyler olarak öne çıktığını savunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, bu posthümanist karakterlerin yalnızca insanlara özgü olduğu düşünülen özelliklere sahip olmalarından ötürü, artık insanlığı duygusal ve entelektüel derinliğe sahip olan yegane tür olarak düşünmenin mümkün olmadığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu tez, posthümanist eleştirel teori merceğinden, insanlığın yapay zekaya ilişkin korku ve önyargılarının insanlığın kendi eksikliklerinin bir yansıması olduğunu ve posthüman yapay zeka karakterlerin ilgili romanlarda insan karakterlerin kopyası olarak tasvir edildiğini gözlemleyerek, insanlığın geleceğini tehdit edenin posthümanlar değil, insanlığın kendisi olduğunu savunur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Posthümanizm, Bilimkurgu, Çağdaş İngiliz Romanı, Ian McEwan, Kazuo Ishiguro, Yapay Zeka, Posthüman

PREFACE

As someone who has been intimate with information technologies from a small age, I have to confess that I am the most stunned by the heights reached by technological innovations today. Deciding to mix my interests in artificial intelligence with literature, I have resolved to conduct a study on British novel through the critical lens of posthumanist thought. I hope my study will be of use to both the field and fellow scholars.

Conducting such a study, of course, would not be possible just by myself. First and foremost, I would like to thank my mother, Mesude, for her unwavering support for me throughout my life. In the same regard, I would like to express my upmost gratitude for my aunt, Ilkay, whose support was indispensable throughout my university years.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AF	: Artificial Friend
AI	: Artificial Intelligence
Ed. by.	: Edited by
p./pp.	: Page/ pages
Trans. By.	: Translated by
w. Place	: Without place

INTRODUCTION

The most pressing topic dominating our contemporary discourse is unquestionably Artificial Intelligence. A great list of other emergencies, such as the rise of right-wing politics, unstable economies, immigration, ecological crises and the increasing number of wars throughout the world, has undoubtedly been outshone by the fast pace of development in AI technologies. Although the developments in AI technologies have become a reality in our day-to-day lives only recently, fascination in regard to artificial intelligence or non-human sentience was a fantasy that occupied human imagination for centuries. In literature, this fascination resulted in depictions of non-human sentient life in the forms of automata, magical or demonic conjurations, and thinking machines. While the former two items could be observed in literature that dates all the way back to Ancient Greece, the latter item, that is thinking machines, found itself life mostly in contemporary literature.

Within contemporary literature, literary works that depict thinking machines are also classified as being science fiction. Science fiction as a genre within British Literature began gaining prominence starting from the early 20th century, particularly through the works of the author H. G. Wells; the depiction of thinking machines, however, only picked up pace by the mid-20th century, especially after the second world war. Postwar literature, influenced by the developments in computation and information technologies, contains depictions of artificial intelligence as we understand it today. Although there were numerous British writers that incorporated AI in their fiction during the postwar era, works by American authors tended to outshone them in their influence within the science fiction genre. Nonetheless, the 21st century has produced influential works written by British authors that incorporate AI as a major theme. Iain M. Banks's **Excession**, Jeanette Winterson's **The Stone Gods**, Charles Stross's **Accelerando**, and Cory Doctorow and Stross's collaborative **The Rapture of the Nerds** are only some examples of contemporary literary works produced by British authors that contain AI as a major theme.

For the purpose of this thesis, however, I will analyse two different novels that have also been written by contemporary British authors: Kazuo Ishiguro's **Klara**

and the Sun and Ian McEwan's **Machines Like Me**. What makes these two works special is that they have not been written by authors who have specialised in science fiction. In fact, both authors, Ishiguro and McEwan, have written about AI only in these two particular novels; they have not explored AI as a theme in their previous works. Consequently, both authors concern themselves more with the impact of AI in human relationships at the microscale. However, this does not mean that they do not explore subjects that concern the collective future of humanity. Both novels build upon personal relationships and human emotions to explore what sort of impact a technology such as AI might have in our personal lives and how humanity might respond to living with AI.

Taking each novel's exploration of interpersonal dynamics as a baseline, I explore and contrast the personalities of AI characters with their human counterparts. Both novels contain AI characters, androids, that possess colourful and multifaceted personalities, and they can express their idealism in a wide range of matters, such as morals, emotions, and intellectualism. In contrast to these androids, the human characters that happen to cohabit with them demonstrate contrasting qualities, in which they are much more cynical and crestfallen. Thus, in light of posthuman critical theory, I argue that humanity's myriad fears and anxieties in regard to AI, which is also touched upon in each novel, are only a result of humanity's own moral failings, and that these failings are only being projected onto AI.

However, it is important to point out that humanity's anxieties regarding AI are not phenomena confined to literature, but in fact reflect real-world attitudes. The source of real-life fears about AI in turn is the sophistication of real-life technology. Some of the current AI models on the market, such as those belonging to OpenAI, Google or Microsoft, are now capable of generating photorealistic visuals indistinguishable from photography or real-life recordings. The sophistication of these AI models in generating visuals is not surprising, as they have already demonstrated their advanced capabilities in text generation. These technologies, beyond just producing content, are already being used to accomplish tasks that were done in the past by humans. The tasks in question are no longer limited to being mentally or physically menial, as AI technology is now employed towards creative purposes. So much so that some creatives now feel that their jobs are threatened by

AI. Similarly, the sophistication of contemporary AI technologies is so advanced that in web-based environments human users can no longer reliably identify AI as AI. The fact that AI can demonstrate human-like ability in both conversational and creative environments lead to questioning of whether humanity can continue to believe itself as being unique because it possesses intellectual and creative capabilities.

In light of the reckoning that humanity is having in regard to consciousness and its own uniqueness, posthuman critical theory posits that humans are not unique at all. Claiming that humans are only one of the multitudinous species that exist in the universe, posthuman critical theory tries to construct a set of ethics that seeks to free itself of interspecies prejudices and to base itself on positive value judgements. For posthumanism, what is important is to deconstruct interspecies barriers and boundaries, arguing that all species exist in a symbiotic network; thus, posthumanism sees hybridisation as the ideal, seeking to avoid grouping different beings such as animals, thinking machines, and humans into hierarchical categories. Consequently, it criticises anthropocentrism, the idea that humanity towers over other species, whether organic in essence like animals or synthetic like robots.

Although posthumanism might be understood as being a branch of critical theory that mostly responds to contemporary crises, posthuman critical theory understands that the problematic aspects of our contemporary culture have not appeared out of thin air. Since the figure of the non-human has occupied human imagination as far back as the beginning of written culture, it is possible to trace posthumanist themes even in the works of Aristotle. Kevin LaGrandeur traces one such instance in Aristotle's **Politics**, where smart thinking machines would answer "the thorny problems of owning slaves" (LaGrandeur, 2017: 17):

> For if every instrument could accomplish its own work, obeying or anticipating the will of others, like the statues of Daedalus, or the tripods of Hephaestus, which, says the poet, "of their own accord entered the assembly of the Gods;" if, in like manner, the shuttle would weave and the plectrum touch the lyre, chief workmen would not want servants, nor masters slaves. (Aristotle, 1995: 1989)

The passage in question, for LaGrandeur, is highlighted as being "a foundation for the very idea of the posthuman" (LaGrandeur, 2017: 17). Not only does Aristotle put

forward the idea of a smart machine that has "the human-like ability to understand the master's orders and even to anticipate his needs", he also plants the seeds regarding the "interchangeability of humans and machines" (LaGrandeur, 2017: 17). However, as Aristotle meditates on the idea of thinking machines as replacements for human slaves, LaGrandeur points out that for Aristotle, slaves are in essence instruments that help control other instruments, and this particular function of theirs makes their intelligence important:

> Now instruments are of various sorts; some are living, others lifeless; in the rudder, the pilot of a ship has a lifeless, in the look-out man, a living instrument; for in the arts the servant is a kind of instrument [he is] an instrument for instruments. (Aristotle, 1995: 1989)

Henceforth, whether slave, automaton, or the master himself, LaGrandeur argues that the relationships established between all these entities form a collective network (LaGrandeur, 2017: 18). As in the example of the ship given by Aristotle, the collaboration between these entities is necessary for any given task to be accomplished; thus, LaGrandeur argues that Aristotle's idea of slaves being smart tools in a wider system is an anticipation of contemporary intelligent networks, which utilise information technologies instead (LaGrandeur, 2017: 18). LaGrandeur, taking Aristotle's example of the ship as a base, points out what would be problematic for posthuman criticism in Aristotle's view of systems: "Aristotle sees the pilot as the system's center, and the system itself as a set of virtual prostheses extending to and from the pilot" (LaGrandeur, 2017: 19). The posthuman critic, however, would "see the pilot as an initiator of an action that the whole system of the ship's living and non-living tools carries out" with the system having "no true center" (LaGrandeur, 2017: 19). Posthuman critics are not the sole party that would criticise Aristotle's categorising of people as instruments; feminist critic Susan Moller Okin highlights how "only if we accept the premises that society is most properly structured when it enables the privileged few to spend their lives in rational activity, and that the functions and therefore the nature of all others must be fixed accordingly, that we can accept Aristotle's justification of slavery as natural" (Okin, 2013: 81). Criticising Aristotle's point of view, Okin posits that according to Aristotle "women, slaves, and artisans and traders are all subsidiary instruments for

the achievements of the highest happiness" for the privileged male (Okin, 2013: 78). Nevertheless, LaGrandeur concludes that "Aristotle's analysis anticipates the posthuman idea of systems, except that, for a posthumanist critic, he is blind to his own anthropocentrism" (LaGrandeur, 2017: 19).

Basing himself on Aristotle's idea of an intelligent network that is an amalgamation of smart or thinking entities, LaGrandeur claims that posthumanist themes could be found in early modern literature, in particular William Shakespeare's **The Tempest** and Christopher Marlowe's **Doctor Faustus**. Analysing **The Tempest**, LaGrandeur argues that Prospero uses a network of organic and inorganic servants to accomplish various goals. Identifying Ariel as the essential component within Prospero's network, LaGrandeur argues Ariel to be similar to software found in contemporary computer systems, since Ariel executes tasks given to it by Prospero through other proxies (LaGrandeur, 2017: 20).

> In terms of networks, Ariel, who is a type of daemon, is like a modern type of software program – also and not coincidentally called a daemon – that operates in the background to run other programs on the computer and also to provide an interface between the network's user and the operating system. Prospero's network, acting as one entity, but with various intelligent agents involved in it, develops its own agency. (LaGrandeur, 2017: 20)

LaGrandeur likewise likens Prospero to a computer scientist, since his study of magic books enables him to command spirits, similar to how computer scientists are able to command complex computational systems through their use of code (LaGrandeur, 2017: 21). However, the over-reliance of Prospero on his smart servant network is also a foreshadowing of another contemporary anxiety in regard to AI. Since both Caliban and Ariel constantly hint at their desire to be free of their servile bonds, LaGrandeur argues that the instability of Prospero's servant network is an anticipation of "posthuman concerns that appear in today's fictional and factual literature: fictional accounts of strong artificial intelligence (AI) meant to serve humans, such as **2001: A Space Odyssey**, centre on the threat to humans of these artificial servants once they realize their own power" (LaGrandeur, 2017: 22). LaGrandeur adds that Prospero's capacity for rhetoric and intrigue allows him to elude the demands of his servants, thus anticipating another posthuman literary

theme: “in the face of the greater processing speed and brute power of advanced AI, humans save themselves from subjection to their own intelligent creations only by dint of the flexibility of their intellect, their creativity, and their instincts” (LaGrandeur, 2017: 22).

In **Doctor Faustus**, Mephistopheles serves as an example of another non-human yet highly intelligent entity that exists for the purpose of being an intermediary. LaGrandeur points out that Faustus is only able to wield the powers of the dark arts through the intermediary Mephistopheles who links Faustus to a “network of demons and the powers of hell itself” (LaGrandeur, 2017: 24). LaGrandeur highlights that the system Faustus has established with Mephistopheles mimics how a computer user is ignorant of the physical actions that occur behind the screen. The electronic circuitry is hidden from the user by an interface, similar to how Faustus is shielded from the visions of hell that Mephistopheles is connected to. Faustus’s fate mirrors the posthuman idea of hybridisations and breaking down of boundaries as “although Faustus sets out to transform a group of demons into a prosthetic system, the system he creates ends up transforming him” (LaGrandeur, 2017: 25). In other words, even though “Faustus feels he is operating freely, when actually, from the moment of its creation, he is entangled with the very system he created to serve him, and any sense he has ever had that he was separate from and in control of it was illusory” (LaGrandeur, 2017: 25). Thus, LaGrandeur argues that “the play’s invocation of the Elizabethan demonic shows us that many of today’s posthuman scenarios demonizing the image of predatory computer systems are a full-bodied reiteration of earlier moral and theological images” (LaGrandeur, 2017: 25).

Drawing on the conclusions that he has reached on both **The Tempest** and **Doctor Faustus,** LaGrandeur posits that posthumanist themes can be surveyed even in Elizabethan literature. Although the concept of science in this era was “a mixture of magic and a nascent empirical science”, it is possible to establish a parallel with the digital science of our contemporary age, making it possible to conclude that “our preoccupation with the moral consequences of our own ingenuity” was a theme present even in Elizabethan literature (LaGrandeur, 2017: 26).

Although parallels with our contemporary digital systems and AI could be traced all the way back to the Elizabethan era, concrete depictions of AI technologies

in British Literature can be found more explicitly in the post-war period. Rapid advancement in computational technologies following the second world war influenced numerous authors to create narratives that sought to explore the potential effects of such technologies in human life. The start of this scientific and literary fascination can be traced back to the year 1950, in which Alan Turing published a widely influential treatise on AI and conceptualised a game to test for thinking machines, which I touch upon in detail in the next chapter. Turing's treatise was accompanied by widespread experimentation in the field of computing, which proved that machines could solve logical problems; henceforth, the idea of thinking machines or AI escaped the confines of being a product of human fancy.

The following decades saw the increasing adoption of computational technologies in management and information solutions. The increasing automation that was led by smart machines mimicking human thinking was accompanied by literary narratives and philosophical debates on the possible impact of such technologies in the fields of mass communication, culture, and employment. In this context, Graham Matthews draws attention to three mid-century British novels that depict AI in various tiers of complexity, Michael Frayn's **The Tin Men**, Len Deighton's **Billion Dollar Brain**, and Arthur C. Clarke's **2001: A Space Odyssey**.

Frayn's novel conducts its exploration of AI systems against the backdrop of a ridiculous bureaucracy tasked with automating every aspect of human life. Drawing inspiration from the contemporaneous obsession with how computers might be put to use in practical applications, the novel depicts a suffocating bureaucracy that can only define human beings as creatures that do. In other words, "[a]lthough an AI can complete tasks more efficiently than a human, the act has no meaning for a machine, which poses the question as to whether it matters who or what performs the action so long as the action is performed" (Matthews, 2020: 241). So much so that Dr. Macintosh, the Head of the Ethics Department of the institute depicted within the novel, contemplates the idea of building an AI that would automatically generate results for sport games, since he envisions game results to be ultimately a matter of statistics. He does not just task machines at the production side of things, but also has them be the consumers of said content. Macintosh further imagines humans that bet on sports could likewise be automated, as the process of betting is ultimately a

random choice. Matthews's asserts that

> The depiction of Macintosh's ideals effectively satirizes the replacement of human activities with automation. But it also mocks the ways in which humans tend to perform tasks like machines — the activity of listening to the sports results on the wireless is already a reduction of human engagement with sport to a mechanistic processing of a series of statistics. (Matthews, 2020: 245)

It is possible to interpret Frayn's novel as simply being a satire of bureaucracy that thinks it can automate everything; nonetheless, the novel does assert that a degree of interchangeability between machines and humans exists. So **The Tin Men** does not just depict ruthless automation, but supports the posthuman argument that the boundaries between species are collapsing. The novel illustrates that not only is AI encroaching on what should be quintessentially human, but that humans themselves have become machine-like in post-war society.

The second novel that is an example of mid-century attitudes towards AI is Deighton's **Billion Dollar Brain**. The novel's title, **Billion Dollar Brain**, refers to an AI supercomputer within the novel that automates clandestine operations behind the iron curtain. The supercomputer in question is referred to as the Brain, and numerous parts of the supercomputer derive their names from their biological counterpart, such as neurons or synapses. The Brain, capable of orchestrating various operations at once, is depicted as being extremely efficient and ineffable compared to a human operator. The Brain is also responsible for overseeing brainwashing laboratories, which seek to immerse human agents into their cover story through various indoctrination methods. Matthews argues that the Brain-computer analogy, along with "the ability to reprogramme individuals erodes the division between humans and machines" (Matthews, 2020: 251). The twist in the novel is revealed when the protagonist discovers that an agent has been feeding the Brain reports of fabricated operations in order to keep receiving funding. Thus, the infallible Brain is fooled since "it is entirely reliant on factual inputs from unreliable human operatives" (Matthews, 2020: 251). The novel, which signals the anxieties of the time against automation, argues there to be a conflict between the ever rational synthetic mind and the creative human individual.

2001: A Space Odyssey contains one of the more prominent examples of a

murderous AI. The AI that is at the centre of the plot is named HAL9000 or the Heuristically programmed ALgorithmic computer. The HAL9000, as its name implies, is foregrounded on heuristics (Matthews, 2020: 252). Matthews explains that "[h]euristics research seeks to discover and imitate the process of human problem-solving by focusing on what is sufficient rather than rational and logical", which would be important as heuristic machines would be better at general problem solving than specialised systems that work on specific problems (Matthews, 2020: 252). In the novel, HAL9000 is part of a spaceship that also houses a five-man crew. Diagnosing a component within the spaceship to be faulty, HAL9000 goes on a murderous rampage after a crew member discovers HAL9000's diagnosis to be false, leading another crew member to shut off HAL9000. Matthews argues that "the cause of Hal's rebellion against the human crew members […] is not a simple malfunction or the development of a malign sensibility, but the inhuman application of heuristics" (Matthews, 2020: 253). He further argues that HAL9000 "is certain that its calculations are always correct — a belief that is not shared by the human crew members — so when it is proven wrong, it attempts to remove all trace of its error" (Matthews, 2020: 253). Just like Deighton's novel, **2001: A Space Odyssey** also pits man against AI, putting forward the anthropocentric idea that there will remain an unbridgeable gap between humans and AI no matter how much the latter is programmed to be human-like.

In summary, the post-war British novel displays a common sentiment in the form of doubt and suspicion against AI technologies. The relationship between humans and AI is depicted as tumultuous and even murderous as in Clarke's novel, and the impossibility of reconciliation between humans and AI forms an oft repeated leitmotif. However, the novels also foresee that humans, no matter their distrust of AI systems, will increasingly depend on a symbiotic relationship between them and AI in their everyday lives. The suspicion and the scepticism of the post-war British novel will leave themselves to a relative optimism regarding AI in contemporary British novel. Although contemporary British novel continues to depict anxieties concerning the consequences of technology, the depiction of AI characters will no longer be intrinsically hostile or negative.

Examples of such attitudes towards AI in contemporary 21st century British

novel can be found in Jeanette Winterson's novel, **The Stone Gods**. In the novel, the AI character that is in the spotlight is an android named Spike. The protagonist of the novel, Billy, eventually comes to develop an emotional bond with Spike, as she shares her disillusionment with the society depicted in the novel. The world conjured by the novel has used technology towards disastrous ends, and happens to be ecologically unconscious and male chauvinist. The novel portrays a world in which paedophilia has become the norm and adult women try to look more child-like through plastic surgery. The planet, in turn, has been ecologically ruined due to relentless consumerism. Billy and Spike, escaping this planet through a spaceship, arrive at another planet inhabited by dinosaurs. In order to make the planet habitable, the ship's pilot decides on directing an asteroid strike on the planet. However, to their surprise, the asteroid strike triggers an ice age worse than their expectations, leading Billy and Spike to remain stranded in a cave. The narrative goes back to the 18th century before skipping back to the near-future, which depicts a world that has been destroyed because of a global conflict. In this third narrative, Billy and Spike appear once again, their character qualities being identical to how they have been in the first narration. The world in this third narrative is post-apocalyptic, and society is now run by a corporation. The ruins of cities from the previous war are occupied by malformed mutants, living as outcasts away from other human beings. Here, Spike picks up a signal from another android sent 65 million years ago, which is hinted as being the Spike from the first narrative.

It is possible to claim that Winterson's novel contains scepticism towards technology, since it depicts planets devastated by war and pollution. She is likewise critical of how technology is directed towards entrenching the objectification of women. Within the novel, Spike, despite being a technological marvel, cannot escape the fate of being objectified by her creators, as she is given a highly sexualised female body. Nonetheless, Winterson does not see AI as a threat just by itself. In fact, the AI character, Spike, is the only being that empathises with Billy's frustration with regard to the society that she lives in. Spike and Billy, in other words a human and a posthuman, being present at the beginning and the end of two different yet identical worlds, symbolises that it is possible to welcome AI entities into our lives as heralds of a new posthuman world. Spike and Billy's relationship, despite the

destruction caused by technology, is not built on antagonisms, but instead on emotional bonding.

The analysis applied to Winterson's work can also be easily applied to both McEwan's **Machines Like Me** and Ishiguro's **Klara and the Sun**, the novels which are the subject of this thesis. Not delving into explicit feminist criticism like Winterson, both novels, although they depict human mistrust against AI, present us with optimism in regard to it. Similarly, the two novels, just like **The Stone Gods**, still display suspicions and concerns about technology and the collective future of humanity. Thus, combined with Winterson's novel, it is possible to say that the contemporary British novel does not share the same anxieties regarding AI that were present in mid-20th century British novel, even though it shares similar fears concerning possible consequences of technology.

Thus, having identified **Machines Like Me** and **Klara and the Sun** as examples of contemporary British novel, I seek to trace posthumanist themes within these two works. Towards this goal, the next chapter defines what the terms "posthuman" and "posthumanism" mean, putting special focus on Peter Sloterdijk's definition of these terms. As posthuman criticism concerns itself with criticising humanism and anthropocentrism, the discussion continues with Slavoj Žižek's analysis of what human consciousness really is in the context of posthumanism's link to the idea of transhumanism. Žižek's take on the subject matter brings the discussion to Cartesian dualism, which is the main target of the majority of posthuman criticism. Explaining the meanings behind terms such as dualism and monism, the first chapter continues by detailing what these terms mean to prominent posthuman critics such as Neil Badmington, Rosi Braidotti, and Donna. J. Haraway. Exploration of posthumanist criticism is accompanied by criticisms regarding the state of contemporary culture and capitalism by theorists such as Alain Badiou, Mackenzie Wark, Mark Fisher, and Žižek, as the analysis of posthumanist themes within the two novels also necessitates commentary on contemporary culture and capitalism.

The second chapter consists of a detailed analysis of McEwan's **Machines Like Me** in light of the theoretical background given in the first chapter. Analysing the position of the novel's AI character, Adam, in a human society, the second

chapter, under the guidance of posthumanist criticism, dissects Adam's complex personality and his relationships with human characters within the novel. The chapter reveals that Adam's owner and the protagonist of the novel, Charlie, serves as a foil to Adam, who, at times, outshines him intellectually and emotionally. The commentary concerning culture and capitalism is employed to explain Charlie's, and other humans', attitudes and prejudices concerning both Adam and the society they inhabit. This chapter concludes that even though an AI can exhibit rich intellectualism and strong passions similar to a human, anthropocentric bigotry and a lack of willingness to empathise regarding AI or posthuman entities results in a catastrophic breakdown of human-posthuman relations.

The third chapter conducts a literary autopsy of **Klara and the Sun**. Posthuman criticism coupled with critiques of contemporary culture and capitalism is used to highlight that the injustices and turmoil that rock the world of **Klara and the Sun** come from man-made technology; however, Klara, the AI protagonist of the novel, despite being a product of said technology, is a posthuman individual who is highly compassionate and self-sacrificial. The third chapter underlines that Klara's strong zeal in helping others offers a sharp contrast with the crestfallen human cast of the novel, who are crushed under the yokes of a ruthless transhumanist society. Nonetheless, similar to Adam, despite her strong personality, Klara is still thought of as less than human. The plot point within the novel that has humans prepare Klara as a substitute for another human being brings the discussion back to posthuman criticism's meditation on the uniqueness of humanity and consciousness.

Under the guidance of posthuman critical theory, I argue that contemporary British novel shares optimism in regard to AI. What is depicted as a source of concern within these novels is not the posthuman creatures that might soon share this world with humans, but rather the intrinsic moral failings of humans themselves. The ills of society depicted in both novels are not caused by man-made beings who are resentful against their creators like Victor Frankenstein's creature or the HAL9000, but they are instead caused by improper and careless applications of technology by humans. In other words, it is not the sentient posthuman that brings disaster to these societies, but instead humans themselves.

CHAPTER ONE
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

People's worries concerning employment are no doubt a major contributor to contemporary anxiety against AI. Starting from the industrial revolution, technology determining which professions would continue to be relevant has made the issue of being put out of work by automation one of the mainstays of left-wing politics. Similar anxieties against AI and automation were also displayed during the latter half of the 20th century, as computers and smart systems threatened the livelihoods of both blue-collar and white-collar workers. What was unthinkable, however, was the idea that automation could one day threaten creative fields.

The fact that AI is now capable of producing a diverse array of relatively sophisticated artistic content has already set off alarm bells among creatives. An example of this is the 2023 strike by the Writers Guild of America (Wilkinson and Stewart, 2023). This strike included demands by the protesters for the imposing of limitations on the use of AI in productions. The demands for regulation were not only limited to the use of AI but also on its training, for the AI models need to be trained on human made content. The screenwriters, along with other creatives, felt (and continue to feel) that AI being trained on their artistic output is an exploitation of their labour. Although the strike was successful with some of its demands, regulations on the use of AI in creative applications remain a topic of discussion among legislators throughout the world.

If the AI models of today possess the necessary artistic capabilities to threaten creatives from their livelihoods, then it is also possible to say that the AI models of today are now capable of genuine artistic expression. Subsequently, if it is possible to claim that artificial intelligence is now capable of making art, where does that leave humanity? Artistic expression has been traditionally assumed to be a uniquely human trait, yet the AI of today is now capable of this particularly human way of expression. Nowadays, the AI technologies do not compete with humans solely in the field of art either. As of 2025, the possibility that a robot or a software could possess an ego is no longer limited to the fancy of science fiction authors. The

AI of today is readily capable of imitating humans in conversational and web-based environments. The uncanny effect of advanced AI can already be felt by the average web surfer, as it becomes harder to distinguish actual human generated content from AI generated content. The anxiety caused by this is so great that there now exits a conspiracy theory proposing how the internet is mostly run by bots (Tiffany, 2021).

The AI models of today having the capability to mimic humans perfectly, to the point of making it hard to distinguish whether one is interacting with a human or an AI model, has unforeseeable implications. This very point happens to be the earliest question asked in regard to the development of AI, and it is one of the lines of inquiry that led Alan Turing to devise his infamous "Turing Test". Turing argued that if a human observer is unable to distinguish answers given by a machine from those of a human, then the machine might very well be considered to be capable of thinking. Turing comes to this conclusion through devising a theoretical game, in which an interrogator directs questions to two participants via a teleprinter (Turing, 1950: 433). In this game, the interrogator has no visual or audio cues from the interviewees whatsoever (Turing, 1950: 433). Turing initially devises the game to consist of an interrogator who directs questions to two interviewees, one a man and the other a woman, to find out which one is which. Turing, supposing that there is a rule in this game, in which one participant helps the interrogator and the other tries to confuse him, argues that it will be challenging for the interrogator to conclude who is who (Turing, 1950: 434). Turing, then, supposes that if one of the interviewees were a machine and the other a human, the ratio of failure would remain the same (Turing, 1950: 434). Turing argues that in an experiment such as this, it would be impossible for the interrogator to definitely conclude with full certainty whether the answers were given by a machine or not. In connection with this, a recent preprint study awaiting peer review has proved that the contemporary AI models can pass the Turing Test. The latest series of AI chatbots, when asked to mimic a set of human characteristics, in the case of this study "a young person who is introverted, knowledgeable about internet culture, and uses slang", are identified by the interrogators to be human more than 60% of the time (Jones and Bergen, 2025: 2).

Thus, it is possible to claim that the AI models of today can create art, provide sophisticated data analysis, write elaborate texts, and fool human chat

partners into thinking they are chatting with humans. Consequently, these AI models put the supposed uniqueness and superiority of human beings into question. Classical humanism or conventional anthropocentric notions would argue qualities such as thought, intellectual endeavours, artistic creativity, and emotional depth are traits unique to humanity; however, the 21st century is now witnessing the emergence of AI that is capable of such functions, thereby contesting this argument. This contention not only endangers the claim that humans are superior to non-human entities but also posits the question whether or not humans are at the threshold of being superseded. To wrestle with these new ethical dilemmas, a redefinition of our ethical and philosophical frameworks is needed, which is where posthumanist criticism enters.

1.1 Critical Posthumanities

It is possible to jump to a more gimmicky interpretation of posthumanism as simply meaning a branch of critical theory that applies itself to robots, cyborgs and such, essentially anything that can be encountered in a sci-fi setting, but of course such a simplistic definition would not be satisfactory for a nuanced analysis. Before trying to come up with a solid definition of what posthumanism is, it is first necessary to settle on a definition of humanism. If one were to bluntly dissect the word “posthumanism”, it would be understood as simply meaning something that comes after humanism.

Kate Soper, in her examination of the term within the context of post-war 20th century discourse, argues for the existence of two distinct understandings of humanism, with the schism taking place between the English speaking, Anglo-Saxon world, and continental Europe, which is spearheaded above all by French theory (Soper, 1986: 9). In the English-speaking world, humanism is understood as a set of secular and positivist moral codes, self-styling itself as an heir of enlightenment; meanwhile, in the French theory camp, humanism is attacked for its mythologisation of its main subject of study. The French critics feel humanism’s mythologisation of the human subject prevent humanism from conducting a scientific and rational study of its subject matter (Soper, 1986: 11). Humanism believes in the universality of core values amongst humanity; furthermore, it argues that men at his core possesses total

agency, that his actions are not strictly tied to either conditioning or the environment and so on. However, its continental critics argue for the opposite (Soper, 1986: 12). In accord with the critical theory's motive of confronting any sort of claim for supremacy, French critics of the 20th century seek to highlight the mundaneness of man. In other words, they seek to deconstruct the Enlightenment thought that exalts man and the human mind.

Taking Soper's definition of humanism, the majority of posthuman critics come to attack the definition of the term in the English-speaking world, as continental philosophy came to dominate mainstream literary criticism within the English-speaking world. Critics of this sort attack humanism primarily to contest its ideas of anthropocentric (human-centric) supremacy, motivated more by establishing an egalitarian set of ethics. Humanist thought, which has been attacked by continental critics in the 20th century, is still championed by the classical liberal line of thinking.

Peter Sloterdijk defines humanism at its core as being a eugenicist project to civilise mankind. Humanism, according to Sloterdijk, is "in the narrowest and widest senses a consequence of literacy" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 12). He argues that at the heart of all humanism lies a "communitarian fantasy", which is ultimately "the model of a literary society, in which participation through reading the canon reveals a common love of inspiring messages" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 13). For Sloterdijk, humanism "as a word and as a movement" is not something without "a goal, a purpose, a rationale"; it has "the commitment to save men from barbarism", arguing that the "latent message of humanism, [...] is the taming of men. And its hidden thesis is: reading the right books calms the inner beast" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 15).

Sloterdijk grounds his argument through his understanding of "[a]ncient humanism", asserting that it is principally "the resistance of the books against the amphitheater, and the opposition of the humanizing, patient-making, sensitizing philosophical reading against the dehumanizing, impatient, unrestrained, sensation-mongering and excitement-mongering of the stadium" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 16). Having described humanism as having a mission to "tame" men, Sloterdijk asserts that there has been an attempt to revive humanism during the years following the second world war:

> In the fundamentalism of the years after 1945, understandably, perhaps many people found themselves unable to go from the horrors of war into a society that represented itself once again as a peaceful collection of book-friends — as though the Goethe-Jugend could eradicate the memory of the Hitler-Jugend. At that time, it seemed to many to be possible to reestablish in conjunction with the newly revived Latin classics a second, biblical, base for European culture, thus grounding that culture, once again being described as 'occidental', in Christian humanism. This confused neohumanism, looking through Weimar towards Rome, was a dream of the salvation of the European soul through a radicalized bibliophilia, a determinedly hopeful infatuation with the civilizing, the humanizing, power of classical reading - an attempt, if we can take the liberty of so describing it, to conjoin Cicero and Christ as coeval classics. (Sloterdijk, 2009: 15)

Having posited that now "modern societies can produce their political and cultural synthesis only marginally through literary, letter-writing, humanistic media", Sloterdijk asserts that humanism as a "model for schooling and education" has been made obsolete (Sloterdijk, 2009: 14). He hypothesises that

> because of the formation of mass culture through the media — radio in the First World War and television after 1945, and even more through the contemporary web revolution — the coexistence of people in the present societies has been established on new foundations. (Sloterdijk, 2009: 14)

Therefore, he claims this new synthesis to be "clearly postliterary, postepistolary, and thus posthumanistic" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 14).

Sloterdijk posits that humanism's idea of civilising men through reading inevitably evolves into an issue of eugenics, claiming that as "the humanist directs himself to the human, and applies to him his taming, training, educational tools" he is persuaded "of the necessary connection between reading, sitting, and taming" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 22). Yet Sloterdijk claims that this mission is not explicit to the humanist, arguing that the "domestication of man" remained "the great unthinkable, from which humanism from antiquity to the present has averted its eyes" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 23). The existence of such a mission inevitably leads to the question of who will manage the taming of men. Sloterdijk argues that this task was so gargantuan that the ancients understood it to be something mere ordinary men could not do:

> The Platonic shepherd is a true shepherd only because he embodies the earthly copy of the unique and original True Shepherd, God, who in the preexistence, under the lordship of Chronos, protected man directly. One cannot forget that, even for Plato, God is the only possible protector and breeder of men. Now, though, after the great

> turnabout, when under the leadership of Zeus the gods retreated and handed over to humans the task of governing themselves, the wise have been left as the only worthy shepherds and breeders, for they have the best recollection of the divine shadows. Without the model presented by the wise, the care of man by man would be hopeless. (Sloterdijk, 2009: 27)

Thus comes the crux of Sloterdijk's argument: in our posthuman era, men have been abandoned by "not only the gods but the wise" also, as literature is no longer the primary instrument in this project of "taming" men (Sloterdijk, 2009: 27). Hence, those that seek wisdom in the western canon are no longer members of a large robust collective but have now morphed into "archivists", who by all means "have become the successors of the humanists" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 27). Since, as Sloterdijk illustrated, humanism can come to mean a project of taming the untamed, problematics of who are to be considered untamed, how they should be tamed, and who should tame the untamed enter the picture. The posthumanist critic attacks this aspect of humanism, as the critic sees it possibly leading into the mindset of dividing living beings into a hierarchical category of those that can be civilised and those that cannot.

The word "posthumanism", according to Suzanne Dow and Colin Wright, has first been introduced to literature by Ihab Hassan in a 1977 essay (Dow and Wright, 2010: 299). Hassan himself conceives of the term as a not-so-concretely defined answer to the increasingly muddied waters of human experience, doing so to reconcile the paradoxical elements within postmodern culture (Hassan, 1977). He defines it as an interplay of different elements and values, whose interactions are crucial to the way that culture and human consciousness are evolving. His primary example towards grounding his argument is Prometheus, who, according to Hassan, simultaneously embodies contradictory values. Prometheus is at once the thief who stole fire (the fire being a metaphor for knowledge, technology, and civilisation) from the gods for mankind and the turncoat who sided with the Olympians against the Titans, but also the trailblazer who is responsible for the existence of a human consciousness. Hassan, citing Socrates in **Philebus**, identifies Prometheus' blessing the mortals with the knowledge of the one and many as the most critical. The conceptual differences between the one and the many constitute an important question in posthumanist criticism, for it relates to the conflict between monism and

dualism.

Hassan inventing the word posthumanism as an answer to human experience becoming increasingly muddied highlights another significant trait of posthumanist criticism. For some critics, posthumanist theory also helps support the argument that our age is witnessing a breaking down of borders and strict categorisations that were created by anthropocentric ideology. This breaking down of borders is accelerated by societal crises such as the rise of right-wing politics, unstable economies, immigration, global warming, the increasing number of wars throughout the world and more importantly, the protrusion of AI technologies into human life, which all also left a tremendous dent on today's culture. Because of these factors, in today's cultural climate, classical humanist assumptions left over from the enlightenment, which are championed to some degree by classical liberal thinkers of today, no longer hold true. This is the reason why Sloterdijk puts forward the argument that we have entered a new era where humanist ideas have become obsolete. The very notion of what a human is and what sets him apart from the non-human is now increasingly muddied.

Just as how this impact is being felt in our day-to-day culture; likewise, the effect of these new technologies is also depicted in literature. Both **Machines Like Me** and **Klara and the Sun** centre themselves on this theme. Both of the novels depict ultra-materialistic societies that are being rocked by social upheavals. In both of the novels, among a despairing cast of ultra-materialistic human characters, the posthuman android characters stand out as containing virtues that were long held to be traits unique to humanity. Klara, the titular protagonist of **Klara and the Sun**, possesses a deep spirituality and a compassionate inner world; similarly, Adam of **Machines Like Me**, in contrast to the human characters of the novel, possesses a deep intellect with a great interest in art while also having an understanding of love and morality that is highly idealistic compared to the human cast of the novel. Although what or who is to be considered more compassionate, idealist, principled, or spiritual is highly subjective and relies on subjective understandings of morality, contemporary novel choosing to bestow posthuman characters with these virtues is telling. The depictions of these characters within their respective novels reveal an anxiety in regard to humanity's future, which now seems gloomier than ever owing

to the multitude of aforementioned crises the world is suffering through. Because they depict posthuman characters as possessing a variety of attributes (such as love, passion for art, empathy, and compassion) that were thought to be exclusively human qualities, these novels highlight how after centuries of anthropocentrism, humanity can no longer see itself as the superior species against other forms of life.

The idea that humans, as a species, are not superior to other forms of life is also one of the elementary tenets of posthumanist criticism; accordingly, it is necessary to dissect the word "posthuman", as when the -isms are removed, one is left with a more nuanced meaning. The word posthuman would literally mean something that is post-human, something that comes after humanity. While what might come after could be speculated to be AI, wildlife or just total extinction, it could also come to mean a new breed of human, meaning humans that have taken either prostheses or augmentations through human intervention. The belief that humanity should augment themselves and chart their own course in evolution is called "transhumanism". Francis Fukuyama identifies transhumanists as wanting "nothing less than to liberate the human race from its biological constraints" (Fukuyama, 2004: 42). According to transhumanists, relays Fukuyama, "humans must wrest their biological destiny from evolution's blind process of random variation and adaptation and move to the next stage as a species" (Fukuyama, 2004: 42).

Slavoj Žižek exemplifies the transhumanist ideal in a more direct way. Supposing that technology was advanced enough to scan human brains and be able to inject or contain them in any sort of biological or mechanical containers, Žižek argues that at that moment in time "a human being will change its ontological status 'from hardware to software'" (Žižek, 2024). Human consciousness at that point will no longer have to be one with the organic body it belongs to. If self is just "a certain neuronal pattern, the network of waves", if human personality is just a result of the chemical balance of the human brain, then in theory the self "can be transferred from one to another material support" (Žižek, 2024). Žižek argues that such a transformation is truly monumental as "cutting off of the umbilical cord that links us to a single body" and shifting the human self into an entity who has infinite possibilities for embodiment would relegate "the entire hitherto history of humanity

to the status of a confused period of transition from the animal kingdom to the true kingdom of the mind" (Žižek, 2024).

Žižek's example of transferring consciousness is not limited to fictional scenarios. Elon Musk's Neuralink, an implant that enables its user to interact with electronic interfaces just by thinking, offers concrete dilemmas in regard to humanity's connection with reality and consciousness in a transhumanist context. One man who has received the implant explains how his thinking of moving the cursor is enough for him to have the cursor move, stating "it just became intuitive for me to imagine the cursor moving" (Neuralink, 2024). Dvija Mehta immediately draws attention to the legal and ethical problems that could be caused by such an implant, as she explains that neuroscience cannot detect the difference between imagination and intent:

> In terms of neuroscience, differentiating between imagination and intention is nearly impossible. A study conducted in 2012 by one group of neuroscientists concluded that there are no neural events that qualify as "intentions to act". Without the capability to recognise neural patterns that mark this transition in someone like Arbaugh, it could be unclear which imagined scenario is the cause for effect in the physical world. This allows partial responsibility and ownership of action to fall on the implant, and questioning again whether the actions are truly his, and whether they are a part of his personhood? (Mehta, 2024)

The fact that Arbaugh, the person who has received the implant, can no longer be held as the sole subject of his actions parallels a concept put forward by German Idealists, who claim the boundary between the mortal and the divine to be ultimately an issue of subjectivity. According to Žižek, this very distinction between action and thought is what forms the cornerstone of defining subjectivity in German Idealism (Žižek, 2019: 65). Žižek formulates that

> In German Idealism, the concept of subjectivity is torn between two extremes: subjectivity as the immediate unity of "intellectual intuition" (the free flow of direct self-awareness in which freedom and necessity, activity and passivity, coincide), and subjectivity as reflexivity (the power of distance, mediation, tearing apart). (Žižek, 2019: 65)

According to this concept, intellectual intuition remains closed to humans, because unity of complete formulation and theorising is exclusive to God, i.e. a thought directly translating into action. According to Žižek, Immanuel Kant in particular

argues that human access to the pure noumenal domain would reduce mankind to automatons (Žižek, 2019: 67). This is so; because if man's thoughts were directly translated into action, there would be no space for men to reason, as reality itself would just be controlled by thought. Musk's implant infringes on this principle. Although the thought itself manifests into action only in a virtual realm, it could very well be arranged to perform actions in real life theoretically.

Žižek also discovers the idea of humanity transcending its material limitations in pre-postmodern philosophy. Although not explicitly transhumanist in the contemporary sense, these philosophers also believe humanity as ultimately a transitory species. Žižek references Konrad Lorenz's remark that humanity actually is the "missing link […] between animal and man" (Žižek, 2024). He references Karl Marx's idea that humanity lives in "'pre-history,' and that the true human history will begin with the advent of the Communist society" (Žižek, 2024). Žižek finally gives an example from Friedrich Nietzsche and how he thought man to be ultimately "a passage between animal and overman" (Žižek, 2024). Nietzsche's idea of the overman, particularly in its meaning of man overcoming himself to transform spiritually into something superior, was particularly influential to transhumanism (Sampaníkou and Stasieńko, 2022: 24).

Žižek's distinction between hardware and software is, in its essence, exactly the same thing that so much of posthumanist criticism is focused upon, with the philosophical conflict here being the opposition between Cartesian dualism and Spinozian Monism. In very simplistic terms, Cartesian dualism comes to mean the division of body and spirit while monism is its opposite, which defends body and spirit as being inseparable.

Rene Descartes' argument runs that man would not be able to distinguish between a robotic monkey and an actual monkey, "or any other irrational animal", while simple instinct would have him be able to tell the difference if the robot in question was impersonating man (Descartes, 2006: 46). This is so, claims Descartes, because animals lack the linguistic and intellectual faculties that man possesses, leaving them unable to articulate thought in a meaningful capacity (Descartes, 2006: 46). Furthermore, he asserts, it is unfeasible to conceive of a machine that possesses enough organs to match the immense complexity of human characteristics, its lack of

complexity leaving it bereft of reason, which he defines as a "universal instrument which can operate in all sorts of situations" (Descartes, 2006: 47). His second argument is, in some aspects, disproved by the existence of present-day AI chatbots. Neil Badmington summarises Descartes' position as essentially being how humans are "absolutely distinct from the inhuman over which it towers in a position of natural supremacy" (Badmington, 2003: 18). He goes on to toy with Descartes' infamous "cogito, ergo sum" by stating "I think, therefore I cannot possibly be an automaton" (Badmington, 2003: 18). Badmington's summary reveals the problematic aspect of Cartesian thinking, as it highlights its divisive nature. It categorises being into two: the ones that can think and the ones that cannot, therefore implying superiority of the prior above the latter.

The crux of Cartesian dualism spooks many posthumanist critics because of its logical conclusion: if animals are not equal to humans because they cannot think and feel like "us", then what are we to make of the "others", other humans that are not members of our own community or gender. Do they possess the same intellectual and emotional depth as we do? According to this line of thinking, if it is possible to conclude that one being is better than the other, because one is closer to god, because one can experience more than, say an animal, and if the other is incapable of such depth, then it is also possible to conclude that one being is ontologically inferior to the other. Applied to social contexts, this equation would lead the one who holds himself to be the higher being to convince himself of the redundancy of social equality. Therefore, the posthumanists argue that man is neither divine nor special, unlike what the humanists think about him.

A more pristine example of this comes from N. Katherine Hayles, who has her philosophical awakening on this subject matter upon reading a passage which argues that soon it will be possible to transplant human consciousness. The passage in question belongs to Hans Moravec's **Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence**. The aforementioned passage has Moravec claim that in the near future, transplanting a person's consciousness from their biological body into a metallic computer will no longer be a fantasy. The patient subsequently waking up from the procedure will find his consciousness unaltered, the same as before (Moravec, 1990: 109-10). Hayles is shocked at the implication here that after a

procedure such as this, the patient's consciousness will just go on to persist in a different body, "that consciousness in an entirely different medium would remain unchanged, as if it had no connection with embodiment" (Hayles, 1999: 1). This scenario, claims Hayles, is a successor of the Turing Test, since it proposes "that machines can become the repository of human consciousness — that machines can, for all practical purposes, become human beings", moving beyond its predecessor which argued that machines can very well "perform the thinking previously considered to be an exclusive capacity of the human mind" (Hayles, 1999: xii). Hayles directly contradicts Cartesian Dualism, as she, along with other posthumanist critics, believes embodiment to be an essential component of existence.

Baruch Spinoza's monism on the other hand forms the basis of contemporary critical posthumanism by emphasising the non-duality of substance. Spinoza's non-dualist position could be best demonstrated by his five propositions from his book **Ethics** (Sampaníkou and Stasieńko, 2021: 19).

> PROPOSITION 5 In the universe there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute.
> PROPOSITION 6 One substance cannot be produced by another substance.
> PROPOSITION 7 Existence belongs to the nature of substance.
> PROPOSITION 8 Every substance is necessarily infinite.
> PROPOSITION 9 The more reality or being a thing has, the more attributes it has.
> PROPOSITION 10 Each attribute of one substance must be conceived through itself.
> (Spinoza, 2002: 218-21)

It is possible to work out an ethical position towards elementary problematics caused by emerging technologies by using Spinoza's philosophy. Take the cliché question of whether someone's consciousness was to be taken from their body and copied into a computer, just as in Moravec's example. In this case, would it be possible to claim that the consciousness existing in the computer would be of the same essence as the one that exists in an organic body? If one is to take Spinoza's perspective, just like Hayles, the answer would be no. Henceforth, critical posthumanism mostly relies on Spinoza in their criticism of transhumanist currents, since Spinoza's perspective argues towards the unity of the spirit and the body.

The fact that the idea of dualism along with humanism's concern with "civilising" could lead into establishing hierarchies makes the very concept of

"categorising" an interest to posthumanist criticism. One here is reminded of Sadie Plant's melancholic vision of pre-existence, where being was not divided by strict measurements into individual entities but existed as a disorganised blob, blissfully content in its unity. Plant imagines only because of a terrible accident that being dispersed into distinct units from this primordial muck, becoming "components of systems whose scales and complexities" were incomprehensible (Plant, 1998: 4). Although it could be argued whether the relationships between beings in this new state of existence were symbiotic or parasitic, Plant argues that ultimately these new categorisations caused the being to become entrapped within itself (Plant, 1998: 4). For Plant, being in its current individualised form is essentially suffering from a sort of confinement, having been deprived of the liberties it once had in its primordial, fluid state. Since a certain strand of posthumanist criticism concerns itself primarily with deconstructing the human-non-human distinction, the very fact that being can manifest itself individualistically posits a problematic. If it is argued that anthropocentrism is an ethical problem because it discriminates against those that embody an existence different from itself, then the very fact that anthropocentrism is able to categorise being as "like-itself" and "unlike-itself" lies at the root of what makes anthropocentrism ethically problematic. Therefore, it is no surprise to see Cary Wolfe, in his understanding of the term, directly identifying posthumanism as a school of thought that can combat both "the problem of anthropocentrism and speciesism" (Wolfe, 2010: xix).

Since posthumanist discourse primarily concerns itself with attacking humanism's anthropocentric worldview, it is important to distinguish the traits that make humans supposedly special. Robert Pepperell defines the essence of human consciousness as receiving

> a continuous input of random stimuli from the environment. The human mind has evolved to absorb the unexpected — the discontinuous stimulus. (Pepperell, 2003: 186)

For Pepperell, it is this particular trait of the human mind that makes humanity capable of art and intellectual thought. According to him, art and intellectual output are only possible through humanity's capability for abstraction and for things that do

not strictly follow the rules of logic. Basing himself on this line of argument, Pepperell formulates that for a synthetic non-human entity to be capable of the same creative depth as humans, it needs to be capable of "reasoning", but not in a logical sense:

> 6. If we wish to produce a synthetic intelligence that displays creativity then we need it to be able to establish connections between its thoughts in a discontinuous way. This will be achieved by making it perpetually sensitive to random stimuli.
> 7. If we wish to produce a synthetic intelligence that displays aesthetic appreciation then it should be able to sense continuity and discontinuity simultaneously — without crashing. Whilst this would cause excitement in the machine it is yet to be determined to what extent it would be pleasurable. (Pepperell, 2003: 186)

Thus, according to Pepperell, for an AI to have aesthetic sensibility, which would also come to mean that it would possess emotional depth, it should be able to perceive every element regarding its environment while simultaneously comprehending contradictory elements. In other words, Pepperell proposes that the ability to intellectually digest contradictory elements in one's surroundings is a critical component of intellectual depth and emotional complexity.

Furthermore, Pepperell identifies the humanist and the posthuman as opposing figures. He proposes this opposition to be based on the relationship between the subject and its surroundings:

> 8. Humanists saw themselves as distinct beings in an antagonistic relationship with their surroundings. Posthumans, on the other hand, regard their own being as embodied in an extended technological world. (Pepperell, 2003: 186)

With this article, Pepperell summarises one of the primary arguments of posthumanism. This being the fact that the posthuman as a figure is capable of living in harmony with its surroundings, whether it be a technologically mediated world or an ecologically diverse environment. Humanism, on the other hand, bases itself on antagonisms; since by its very own definition, it relies on categorisations. As an example of these antagonisms, Evi D. Sampaníkou and Jan Stasieńko argue, chronologically, the first crucial blow to anthropocentric thinking came from Charles Darwin's theory of evolution:

> Darwin's theory provided a basis for new philosophical views, moving beyond the

> central importance of human beings as a 'superior' species (according to all but mainly Western Christian theologies). The humans would never again be the center of a world they have command over, but rather part of ecosystems with species respecting each other in all their variations. (Sampaníkou and Stasieńko, 2021: 21)

As the duo argue, the very suggestion that humans are actually a part of the ecosystem they live in, rather than being God appointed rulers of the environment, has dealt the first big blow to anthropocentric thinking. This attack is only made possible by disrupting the idea that humanity must develop an exploitative relationship with its environment.

However, as they point out, the idea that humanity must develop an antagonistic relationship with its environment is also a result of ideology. Rosi Braidotti is another critic that finds categorisations created by anthropocentrism problematic and argues that its discriminatory nature is still persisting. Braidotti, although believing that contemporary capitalism has become capable of containing gender fluidity and has avoided remaining predominantly white, argues that presuming the posthuman subject to be incapable of experiencing discrimination would be a false line of thinking (Braidotti, 2013: 97). She goes on to note that the fluidity of mainstream capitalism in regard to its accommodation of different identities does not necessarily "abolish but profoundly restructure the processes of sexualization, racialization and naturalization which provided the pillars of biopolitical governmentality" (Braidotti, 2013: 98). Braidotti counts non-humanity as a mode of subjectivity that is as important as other forms of differences, arguing that:

> Sexualized, racialized and naturalized differences, from being categorical boundary markers under Humanism, have become unhinged and act as the forces leading to the elaboration of alternative modes of transversal subjectivity, which extend not only beyond gender and race, but also beyond the human. (Braidotti, 2013: 98)

Thus, Braidotti stresses the need for "[a] strong theory of posthuman subjectivity", which she argues will not serve exclusively as a means to seize the processes of identification, remaining "not only as analytical tools, but also as alternative grounds for formations of the self" (Braidotti 2013: 98). For Braidotti, posthuman criticism serves as a vehicle for formulating new methods of identification, beyond the categorical boundaries of humanism. This is where Plant's and Braidotti's theories

coincide, as Plant sees an existential problem in the mere existence of categorisations, Braidotti formulates the correct ethical stance to be devising a new sense of identity which disregards all categorical boundaries whatsoever.

Reflecting her ethical commitment to refuse categorisations created by anthropocentrism, Braidotti uses the term "zoe" to refer to "the non-human, vital force of Life" (Braidotti, 2013: 60). For Braidotti, "matter is self-organised (autopoietic), […] structurally relational and hence connected to a variety of environments" (Braidotti, 2013: 60). In other words, Braidotti argues that matter in itself contains intelligence and self-agency, traits that are thought to be exclusive to human life. Thus, Braidotti proposes to redefine "life from being codified as the exclusive property or the unalienable right of one species, the human, over all others or of being sacralized as a pre-established given" (Braidotti, 2013: 60). Braidotti's "zoe"; therefore, "cuts across and reconnects previously segregated species, categories and domains", displacing "the boundary between the portion of life – both organic and discursive – that has traditionally been reserved for anthropos, that is to say bios, and the wider scope of animal and non-human life, also known as zoe" (Braidotti, 2013; 60). Expanding on her ethical stance, Braidotti argues that "Zoe-centred egalitarianism is", for her, "the core of the post-anthropocentric turn: it is a materialist, secular, grounded and unsentimental response to the opportunistic trans-species commodification of Life that is the logic of advanced capitalism" (Braidotti, 2013; 60).

Donna Haraway, in the same breath as Braidotti, invents the mythical figure of "cyborg" as a means of progressing beyond all identities and crossing the boundaries between different forms of life. The Cyborg, for Haraway, is

> a surrogacy agreement, a trope, a figure for living within and honoring the skills and practices of contemporary technoculture without losing touch with the permanent war apparatus of a non-optional, post-nuclear world and its transcendent, very material lies. Cyborgs can be figures for living within contradictions, attentive to the naturecultures of mundane practices, opposed to the dire myths of self-birthing, embracing mortality as the condition for life, and alert to the emergent historical hybridities actually populating the world at all its contingent scales. (Haraway, 2003: 11)

She proposes politics to be constructed around this chimeric cyborg imagery as a

"way out of the maze of dualisms in which [humanity] have explained [their] bodies and [their] tools to [themselves]" (Haraway, 1991: 181). What is important for Haraway however is the fact that cyborg is not a new category of identity. Haraway, in a rebuke of old-fashioned identitarian feminist politics, claims that she "would rather be a cyborg than a goddess" (Haraway, 1991: 181). The point in which all the posthumanist critics align happens to be creating a new ethical position which does not create subjectivities that discriminate and judge others based on categorisations. It idealises a new form of subjectivity that can live in harmony with its surroundings.

1.2 Critiques of Contemporary Culture and Capitalism

The other line of criticism that unites posthumanist critics is their idea that capitalism plays a major role in how anthropocentric ideology influences contemporary discourse; therefore, capitalism and the state of contemporary culture are elements that have to be taken into consideration in order to properly analyse the dynamic between the human and the non-human.

In this regard, Mackenzie Wark provides a more nuanced interpretation of contemporary economic modes that is unburdened by Marxist clichés. Wark argues that nowadays the "Capital" has been "subsumed under a more abstract form of technical power", further commenting that "the world's biggest corporations these days" do not even "make the things they sell" (Wark, 2019: 65). For her, the companies "control the production process by owning and controlling the information" and "even when they do still make the stuff, a quite remarkable amount of the valuation of the company comes from portfolios of intellectual property, or proprietary data about their customers, and so on" (Wark, 2019: 65). Resisting the argument "that information was always central to capitalism and that this is just capitalism", Wark clarifies how "there's a difference between information as a force of production and information as a dominant force of production"; arguing that the big capital "doesn't need to own the other forces of production any more" (Wark, 2019: 30). Wark expands upon her theory regarding the current mode of production by explaining how those employed by the big capital "are not workers but people who come up with new information, whether of a technical or cultural kind, to be incorporated into products whose manufacture can be tendered out to a subordinate

class of capitalists" (Wark, 2019: 30). Of course, Wark is not oblivious to the fact that a potential transformation of modes of production would also alter how exploitation takes place, asserting that "the brain-fryer is a different machine from the meat grinder" (Wark, 2019: 34).

Wark is not alone in pointing out the mental wear capitalism inflicts on humanity. Identifying capitalism as the primary source of mental illnesses in contemporary society, Mark Fisher argues that the primary way capitalism torments the individual nowadays is through disseminating the idea that there is no alternative to capitalism (Fisher, 2009: 19). In other words, Fisher writes that capitalism not only presents itself as "the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it" (Fisher, 2009: 8). Since capitalism claims that there is no alternative to itself, it presents itself as something that just happens, an inevitable occurrence that cannot be altered through human agency alone. Thus, the individual, because of hopelessness, is driven to mental illness.

Furthermore, Fisher argues that "[c]apitalism is what is left when beliefs have collapsed at the level of ritual or symbolic elaboration" and that postmodern capitalism prides itself as having the virtue of immunising society from the throes of fanaticism (Fisher, 2009: 5). Fisher defines this stance as capitalist realism. Capitalist realism can be summarised as being the claim that the shortcomings and faults of the capitalistic system are unavoidable occurrences. That is to say, unlike the supposedly delusional radical ideologies such as fascism, communism and religious fundamentalism, capitalism claims to know that it cannot offer a perfect world. Moreover, Fisher writes that

> A moral critique of capitalism, emphasizing the ways in which it leads to suffering, only reinforces capitalist realism. Poverty, famine and war can be presented as an inevitable part of reality, while the hope that these forms of suffering could be eliminated easily painted as naive utopianism. Capitalist realism can only be threatened if it is shown to be in some way inconsistent or untenable; if, that is to say, capitalism's ostensible 'realism' turns out to be nothing of the sort. (Fisher, 2009: 22)

Thus, to deconstruct capitalism's supposed realism, Fisher turns to Lacanian psychoanalysis. For this purpose, Fisher introduces "an elementary theoretical

distinction from Lacanian psychoanalysis which Žižek has done so much to give contemporary currency: the difference between the Real and reality" (Fisher, 2009: 22). Citing another Lacanian psychoanalytical theorist, Alenka Zupančič, Fisher writes how "psychoanalysis's positing of a reality principle invites us to be suspicious of any reality that presents itself as natural" (Fisher, 2009: 22). Zupančič explains that

> the reality principle is not simply some kind of natural way associated with how things are […]. The reality principle itself is ideologically mediated; one could even claim that it constitutes the highest form of ideology, the ideology that presents itself as empirical fact or (biological, economic ...) necessity (and that we tend to perceive as nonideological). It is precisely here that we should be most alert to the functioning of ideology. (Zupančič, 2003: 77)

Fisher, basing himself on Zupančič's explanation of the reality principle, writes how

> For Lacan, the Real is what any 'reality' must suppress; indeed, reality constitutes itself through just this repression. The Real is an unrepresentable X, a traumatic void that can only be glimpsed in the fractures and inconsistencies in the field of apparent reality. (Fisher, 2009: 22-23)

Therefore, it is possible to claim what capitalism offers as reality does not represent an objective truth. The idea of reality presented by capitalism as an empirical fact is only an illusion, meaning that it has no connection with the actual Real whatsoever. For Fisher, who believes that moral critiques of capitalism do not work, the only angle of attack that works is demonstrating that capitalism's version of reality has no connection with objective reality at all. One example given by Fisher is environmental catastrophe. Fisher writes that "the fantasy structure on which capitalist realism depends: a presupposition that resources are infinite, that the earth itself is merely a husk which capital can at a certain point slough off like a used skin, and that any problem can be solved by the market" is undermined by the ongoing ecological crises (Fisher, 2009: 18).

Similarly, Žižek argues that fundamentals of modern ethics are based on contradictions, inconsistencies, and paradoxes. Likewise, basing himself on Lacanian psychoanalysis, Žižek argues that contemporary culture and politics are constructed upon a paradoxical dynamic in which ideology and culture can only continue to

persist in society through secreting its antithesis (Žižek, 2007). From culture at a macro level to everyday human interactions at the micro, every communicative and ideological phenomenon is regulated and given meaning under what Lacan defines as "the big other". The "big other" happens to be the collective definition of these abstract ideological, cultural and political powers. Every jest, word, or gesture done under the symbolic dimension of this greater intangible umbrella of the big other simultaneously determines the limits of and assigns meanings to human interaction. What Žižek claims to be the most noteworthy element within culture is that the irony and superfluousness of one's actions are a necessary prerequisite for the action to happen in the first place. These contradictions present in modern culture and human psyche are why Pepperell lists being able to comprehend contradictory elements in one's environment as a must for artistic expression.

These ideological contradictions and paradoxes even plague posthuman critics. Despite being a critic of humanism, Braidotti admits how she cannot wholeheartedly endorse an anti-humanist position. In reference to the war on terror and religious extremism that plagued the 2000s, Braidotti claims that humanism has been "enlisted in a civilizational crusade", as the west's claim of exceptionalism has now been rooted in having "the emancipation of women, gays and lesbians as the defining feature of the West" while simultaneously employing a policy of military intervention against the rest of the world (Braidotti, 2013: 36). She goes on to argue that even though humanism's emancipatory qualities are greatly exaggerated and its rhetoric "manipulated for xenophobic purposes", it nonetheless needs "to be rescued from these over-simplifications and violent abuses" (Braidotti, 2013: 36). Examining her position, Braidotti articulates that an unwavering defence of humanism would simply lead to being in bed "with neo-colonial Western supremacist positions, while rejecting the Enlightenment legacy would be inherently contradictory for any critical project", leading her to conclude that this "vicious circle is stifling" (Braidotti, 2013: 36).

The way humans enjoy themselves is not spared the contradictions of our contemporary era. Žižek argues that the ultimate goal of contemporary hedonism is achieving pleasure that is "deprived of the substance that makes it dangerous" (Žižek, 2004: 507). Žižek argues that this motto can even be traced in a number of

consumer products, listing: “coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol” (Žižek, 2004: 507). He goes on to trace this obsession of emptying objects of their substance in politics too, identifying a trend in western democracies to redefine “politics as the art of expert administration”, ultimately conceiving a form of “politics without politics” (Žižek, 2004: 507). The popular notion of what democracy should be is also a part of this redefinition, as Žižek argues that democracy is now “defined as a permanent struggle against the ‘totalitarian’ temptation to close the gap” (Žižek, 2004: 510). “Ironically” Žižek says, this attitude is an inverse of the “Augustinian notion of Evil”, which defines Evil as something that is void of any essence in itself, but is “just the absence of Good”. Hence, contemporary culture is not built upon a solid foundation that can exist by itself. It instead positions itself through distancing from what it considers undesirable. In other words, contemporary culture does not have a solid position on its own and can only define itself through its antitheses.

Contemporary sexual politics and practices are also worthy of criticism, as they constitute an inseparable component of contemporary culture. In this context, what “love” means in relation to contemporary sexual practices is deserving of attention. Alan Badiou is one such philosopher of the western tradition that has attested such critical importance to love. Badiou singles out love specifically as an animating force within the universe and a “fount of happiness” within “this world” (Badiou and Truong, 2012: 108). Žižek surmises Badiou’s position as him believing that “love is evental, a miraculous crack in the order of Being”, while “sexuality belongs to the order of Being, of determinist reality” (Žižek, 2021: 321). Henceforth, Žižek asserts Badiou’s position as someone who argues that there exists a transcendental quality in love, making it distinct from sexuality which is animal-like. This line of argumentation leads to the conclusion that love is the ingredient which elevates human sexuality into something more special, or in more conservative terms, lends it “dignity”. Žižek is aware of this almost puritan streak too, as he argues that positing such an assertion “comes all too close to the standard Christian view which dismisses sexuality as animal passion and sees a spiritual dimension only in love” (Žižek, 2021: 322).

Nevertheless, Žižek, despite his comment regarding the Christian view of this

subject, does also criticise problematic aspects of contemporary permissive sexuality. Žižek, commentating on sex, does mention that focusing on just the orgasmic, gratifying aspect of sex almost reduces the sexual act between two people into to an "idiotic masturbatory enjoyment" (Žižek, 2008: 31). He claims, basing himself on Badiou's thesis on the subject, that it is love that transforms sex into something more than just the banal self-gratification of two parties. Badiou himself defines love as simultaneously being an "exceptional infinity of existence — creating the caesura of the One through the evental energy of an encounter — and the ideal becoming of an ordinary emotion, of an anonymous grasp of this existence" (Badiou, 2019: 48). He claims that love has such force that it can "carve out an existence, a body, a banal individuality, directly on the sky of Ideas" (Badiou, 2019: 48). For Badiou, love is something that is simultaneously rapturous and ordinary (Badiou, 2019: 48). Žižek himself feels the need to emphasise that love should not be discarded so easily. Žižek, claiming that a deadlock regarding sexual difference has been reached in our contemporary culture, argues that "in our postmodern 'disenchanted' permissive world, the unconstrained sexuality is reduced to an apathetic participation" (Žižek, 2024). For Žižek, sex without love is missing its essential component. In summary, although Žižek and Badiou's views diverge on the importance of sexuality, Žižek and Badiou converge in their belief that love is an emotion that elevates. Therefore, according to their point of view, if humans are the only beings capable of experiencing an emotion as intense and transcendental as love, any being capable of experiencing such a feeling, an android, for example, could also be defined as being human-like or conscious.

However, outside of love, another issue that is related to sexuality in a posthuman context is gender stereotypes. Julie Wosk notes that nowadays

> technology is frequently used to fashion fantasy females and bring them to life. These artificial females, including sex dolls, not only are often laden with female stereotypes but also mirror many men's age-old conceptions of the perfect woman. (Wosk, 2024: 15)

Similarly, Wosk indicates that female shaped robots "have long been shaped by culturally defined gender stereotypes and envisioned and portrayed in familiar gender roles as empathetic mothers and caregivers, as docile servants, and as

attractive and obliging sex objects" (Wosk, 2024: 15). In other words, the posthuman is also a victim of gendered exploitation. This proves Braidotti's argument of how sexualised differences are no longer a categorical boundary marker exclusive to humans, but they are now markers of subjectivities that extend beyond the human. The trait of being female, which is a cause for discrimination, remains a trait that causes discrimination even though it is now a trait being applied to non-human entities.

It is essential to underline that sexual politics and the concept of love that comes along with it are two essential components of human culture; thus, they constitute two topics that cannot be avoided when it comes to discussing what it means to be human. These two topics form the background of my surveying of the posthuman condition in McEwan's **Machines Like Me.** As the android Adam falls in love with a human woman, he will thus become embroiled in human sexual politics, and emotions such as love and affection impact Klara of **Klara and the Sun** as well. However, Adam is not confronted solely by the complexities of human sexual politics but also by day-to-day human culture, capitalism, and human ideology, elements that also trouble the titular protagonist of Ishiguro's **Klara and the Sun**. While Klara and Adam try to digest and understand the human world through a posthuman perceptive in their respective novels, they suffer the handicap of living with humans who do not consider them intellectually and emotionally complex beings.

Despite this handicap, both characters come to develop their own complex personalities. Adam falls in love, develops a profound appreciation for art and an idealistic vision on what justice should mean; meanwhile, Klara develops a religious streak while demonstrating utmost selflessness in her quest to save a human child. Human characters in their respective novels remain unappreciative of the complexities demonstrated by these posthuman characters. In addition, humans, despite being organic lifeforms, do not reach the heights of intensity and idealism put on display by Klara and Adam in their own emotions and worldviews. The novels use this contrast to highlight humanity's moral failings and the fact that technology will force humans to confront what it means to be conscious or sentient; however, the novels do not suggest that humans are an inherently flawed species that need

collective rehabilitation. The principal idea put forward by posthumanist criticism, that humanity can no longer consider itself to be unique because of its intellectual and emotional depth, is put to test through the depictions of Adam and Klara. Humanity's fear of malignant AI is likewise demonstrated as a falsehood.

To support my argument that the novels **Machines Like Me** and **Klara and the Sun** demonstrate optimism regarding AI and posthuman beings, the ideological backgrounds and character qualities of human characters in each novel are examined thoroughly in the next two chapters. To explain their ideological beliefs, Sloterdijk's explanation of humanist ideology is employed; however, Sloterdijk is not the sole theorist cited on this subject, as Wark's, Fisher's and Žižek's commentary regarding capitalism is used to demonstrate how capitalism not only shapes the personal lives of these human characters, but also influences the way they interact with posthumans. The criticisms directed towards anthropocentrism by prominent posthumanists such as Braidotti, Haraway, Badmington, and others, whose commentary is discussed in detail in this chapter, expose the problematic aspects of social hierarchies, which includes humans and posthumans, created by anthropocentrism in both novels.

CHAPTER TWO
THE POSTHUMAN AS A HUMAN DOUBLE IN IAN MCEWAN'S MACHINES LIKE ME

Ian McEwan's 2019 novel **Machines Like Me** grapples with posthumanist themes primarily through its principal posthuman character, Adam. Adam is an android who possesses a profound intellect and an emotional depth that rival those of other human characters in the novel, especially of its protagonist, Charlie. Charlie, despite being Adam's owner and the protagonist of the novel, serves as a foil to Adam, whose capacity for love turns him into a love-rival. Adam does not contend with Charlie only in the field of love either, as Adam's fascination with art and philosophy outclasses Charlie's lacklustre intellectual fortitude. Nevertheless, despite the complex character demonstrated by Adam, he is never truly treated as an equal by Charlie. The lack of respect that Adam gets despite being a conscious entity eventually has fatal consequences for Adam, as anthropocentric prejudices get the better of Charlie. Thus, the novel contradicts conventional anthropocentric tropes, which portray AI as a source of malignity for humans and as inherently incapable of coexisting with humanity. Adam's callous murder in the hands of Charlie, despite Adam demonstrating that he is a conscious entity with feelings and emotions, illustrates that humanity's self-centred morality and ideological hang-ups are the primary barriers that obstruct the coexistence of humans with posthumans.

The novel, **Machines Like Me**, is set in an alternate universe where Alan Turing did not die in the 1950s but instead went on to pioneer a series of technologies that led to mass adaptation of robotics, artificial intelligence and information technologies. Although the state of technological development depicted in the novel would be very familiar to the 21st century reader, the events of the story do not take place in our current day, but instead in 1980s' Britain. The novel's plot concerns Charlie Friend, a 32-year-old Englishman who buys an android named Adam. Other than his purchase of Adam, the most significant thing to happen to Charlie is him falling in love with his upstairs neighbour, Miranda, with whom Charlie eventually starts a relationship. However, Charlie's life starts to get

complicated when he is told by Adam that Miranda is holding a secret from him. The plot thickens when Adam eventually falls in love with Miranda too.

The man who is indirectly responsible for Charlie's life getting increasingly complicated happens to be Turing, since his research serves as a foundation for the creation of Adam's series of androids. Turing is an idol for Charlie, and within the novel, he does not just remain as a historical inventor but makes a personal appearance in Charlie's life as well. As has been mentioned previously, all sorts of innovations in technology in this alternate universe such as the advances in robotics, artificial intelligence, and information technologies are made possible only by Turing avoiding an early death. This what-if scenario is not just limited to Turing's death, as a multitude of other historical events in the novel are mentioned as having concluded in a total opposite of what had actually happened in the real world. In this alternate universe, J. F. Kennedy survives the attempt on his life in Dallas, Britain loses the Falklands war, Margaret Thatcher loses the government to the Labour Party and the IRA's bombing of the Brighton Hotel reaches its aim.

The novel is very mischievous in the way it toys with the idea of a parallel universe. To this effect, in this alternate universe, some literary works that are famous in real life have instead retained their working titles. Charlie lists "Heller's **Catch-18**, Fitzgerald's **The High-Bouncing Lover**, Orwell's **The Last Man in Europe**, Tolstoy's **All's Well that Ends Well**" (McEwan, 2019: 23). In another instance, Charlie reflects on how easy it is to imagine a world in which he is rich, or that Shakespeare had died in infancy, or the meteor that wiped out the dinosaurs did not hit the earth at all, subsequently preventing the mammals from dominating the earth. These events listed by Charlie, which happen as exactly as they have in the real world, emphasise how easy it is to imagine a world in which events could have folded quite differently than the reality we now inhabit. Turing's avoiding of an early death is the primary example of this concept because in the alternate universe established in **Machines Like Me**, Turing chooses not to undergo hormonal treatment for homosexuality and instead chooses to serve time in prison. Turing, in the novel, explains that this particular choice was the best that he ever made, as he could not conceive of the extent of physical and psychological damage he would have suffered if he had chosen to undergo therapy. Turing in real life opted to go for

hormonal treatment, eventually committing suicide in 1954.

Thus, the novel makes it clear that it is not difficult to imagine such alternative realities no matter the range and effect of these differences, including whether it is a scenario concerning only the individual or the whole planet. It also demonstrates that no matter how personal or minor, any event could cause a domino effect, altering the course of history in ways that would be unpredictable. This element within the novel, meaning the idea that our world could have been so different while also being identical in some aspects, reinforces the uncanny parallelism of **Machines Like Me**'s setting with our contemporary world, enabling the novel to get away with discussing 21st century problems (such as AI, populism, and Brexit) in the 1980s cultural climate, dodging some of the nuances of contemporary discourse, making it possible for the novel to avoid directly referencing living political figures or recent controversial political events.

2.1 Sexuality, Love, and Intellectualism as Markers of Cognizance

The novel's protagonist is Charlie Friend, and the events of the novel are narrated through his perspective. Charlie buys an "Adam", part of a brand-new series of androids named "Adam & Eves", which are advertised as life-companions and assistants. These androids are different from the other robots that exist in this universe, such as the dumb automatons that pick trash or do menial jobs. In contrast to their crude predecessors, these androids possess an uncannily "human" intellect and appearance. Charlie also has an upstairs neighbour, Miranda, a girl a decade his junior, who becomes his love interest. The configuration of Adam's personality starts as a joint project between the two, as Charlie imagines that sharing this task with Miranda will bring them closer. However, Adam eventually falls in love with Miranda and becomes the third party in the relationship.

The nature of the love triangle in question can surprisingly be summarised by Charlie's thoughts on the Exocet missiles used by the Argentinian military. These missiles have visual recognition capabilities that enable them to recognise friendly or enemy ships just by their profiles. Charlie's thinking is that the software used by these missiles for visual recognition was most likely based on a technology developed by Turing to help people who suffer from prosopagnosia or face

blindness. Within the novel, this serves as an example of a yet another well-meaning invention by Turing being repurposed towards more destructive ends. However, in contrast to Turing's invention being exploited towards destruction, Charlie, in his unconscious, establishes yet another parallel with the missiles that describes his relationship with Miranda:

> [T]wo questions preoccupied me: would Miranda fall in love with me? And would French-made Exocet missiles scupper the British fleet when it came within range of Argentinian fighter jets? When I was falling asleep, or in the mornings while I lingered a few seconds in the foggy no-man's-land between dreaming and waking, the questions merged, the air-to-ship missiles became arrows of love. (McEwan, 2019: 40)

It is not a coincidence to see that in Charlie's unconscious Exocet missiles and his love for Miranda have merged. The arrows of love analogised by Charlie are a foretelling of the destructive effect of their relationship, as the romance between Charlie and Miranda has an explosive outcome that results in the death of Adam. Ironically, Adam, unlike the Exocet missile meaning to mete out death to the British fleet, identifies Charlie as a friend throughout the book, unaware that his death will come from his hands. The irony of Charlie's surname being Friend is not lost in the novel. Although his surname happens to be "Friend" and he is thought of as a friend by Adam, Charlie eventually kills Adam.

The sequence of events that leads to Adam's death unsurprisingly result from the complex feelings that the parties develop for each other in the love triangle. Their relationships, whether it be sexual or friendly, reveal many qualities regarding the character of each person. Adam developing feelings of love is depicted as being particularly surprising since he happens to be an android; consequently, the role that Adam plays sexually in this relationship is made especially worthy of examination.

The novel explores this subject through the cutting-edge technology robot-companions that Adam's model belongs to. The sex appeal of the robots is made immediate with the way their bodies are constructed since the robots are, from the start, designed to be sexually appealing. Although Charlie feels the need to clarify that "Adam was not a sex toy", he is aware that his series of robots were "capable of sex and possessed functional mucous membranes" (McEwan, 2019: 12). After the

initial purchase, the only description of Adam we get is Charlie saying that he "might have taken […] Adam for a Turk or a Greek" (McEwan, 2019: 12). However, the feature that steals Charlie's attention happens to be Adam's genitalia, as what follows Charlie's simplistic description of Adam's complexion is his impression of Adam's genitals, describing that "he was uncircumcised, fairly well endowed, with copious dark pubic hair" (McEwan, 2019: 12). Adam's exotic allure results in Miranda commenting that Adam "resembled 'a docker from the Bosphorus'" (McEwan, 2019: 13). Miranda's comment, combined with Charlie's description, very much draws Adam's picture as a Tom of Finland drawing sans moustache.

Charlie interprets Adam's physical appearance to have ultimately resulted from the preferences of his designers, contemplating that "this highly advanced model of artificial human was likely to reflect the appetites of its young creators of code" (McEwan, 2019: 12). So, although Charlie claims that the androids were "advertised as a companion, an intellectual sparring partner, friend and factotum who could wash dishes, make beds and 'think'", their exploitation as sexual partners are more or less given (McEwan, 2019: 12). Charlie himself is shy of admitting this, as he claims that his motives in purchasing an android were pure:

> I handed over a fortune in the name of curiosity, that steadfast engine of science, of intellectual life, of life itself. This was no passing fad. There was a history, an account, a time-deposit, and I had a right to draw on it. (McEwan, 2019: 22)

Nonetheless, he does concede that he would have liked to have "an Eve by preference" (McEwan, 2019: 21). Charlie also happens to mention that after the robots were first put on sale, "all the Eves sold out" within a week (McEwan, 2019: 12). Thus, inadvertently proving that him not buying an Eve was not solely out of well intentions but also due to circumstance.

Another strong hint towards the fact that the robots are expected to be exploited sexually comes from Charlie's mention of the rumour about how "seven Eves were said to be concentrated in Riyadh" (McEwan, 2019: 32). Charlie's mention of Riyadh is not just an invocation of the archaic stereotype of the "lustful oriental", it actually is a result of contemporary prejudice, which has the average Gulf Arab to be a rich, spoiled degenerate hell-bent on actualising his sexual

fantasies.[1] Although Charlie's reference does attest to the fact that the androids were created with sexual services in mind, it also is a revelation that Charlie also subscribes to the idea of such a stereotype as a result of his prejudices.

The implied sexual exploitation of Eves recalls Wosk's commentary that whenever technology is used to create female androids, the creations can rarely escape the fate of conforming to male fantasies. Although Wosk makes this comment specifically on the subject of female bodied androids, Adam is also given a highly sexualised body, which results in his objectification. The detailed description of Adam's genitals coupled with Charlie's commentary regarding Eves inevitably raises the question on what role Adam would play sexually in Charlie's life. Even the author of the novel, McEwan, addresses this build up in his interview with Tim Adams, commentating that "if Charlie has fallen in love with the girl upstairs and a robot comes along who they have chosen to be averagely well endowed, then we are going to be so disappointed if he doesn't fuck her…" (McEwan, 2019). The tension is "released" when Miranda chooses to sleep with Adam to spite Charlie after the couple have an argument over politics.

Charlie, who still feels he does not know enough about Miranda despite their physical intimacy, takes it upon himself "to conduct a political argument with her without feelings running high then turning sour, and at the same time staying true to myself and let her do the same" (McEwan, 2019: 74). The subject matter at hand being the Falklands War, Charlie excuses his about-to-come stubbornness by saying that "How could Miranda and I spend our lives together when we couldn't agree on such a fundamental as war?" (McEwan, 2019: 74). For Charlie the war is "a row over property, fed on each side by nationalistic stupidity", but for Miranda it is "an anti-fascist war" against a regime whose "generals had tortured, disappeared and killed

[1] Jack G. Shaheen, cataloguing hundreds of bigoted depictions of Arabs on the silver screen in his research, presents a well evidenced argument on how western media creates and reinforces this stereotype. For Hollywood, he argues, "Arabs are brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women" (Shaheen, 2009:21). The Arab of the movie screen, he claims, is just an assortment of "Black beard, headdress, dark sunglasses" surrounded with "a limousine, harem maidens, oil wells, camels" (Shaheen, 2009:21).

Another example on how this stereotype is perpetuated in real life comes from L. L. Wynn, who in her research about tourism in Egypt, professes the existence of "The stereotype of sex-crazed Gulf tourists" which is subscribed to by both the majority of westerners and Egyptian locals (Wynn, 2007:146).

their citizens by the thousands and were running the economy into the ground" (McEwan, 2019: 74). As the argument rages on with both sides not giving any concessions, Charlie notes that the conversation was indeed

> turning sour, just as I'd feared, but I couldn't help myself. In the tiny kitchen space, I was hot and irritable as I reached for the wine and filled my glass. (McEwan, 2019: 76)

Their argument reaches a tipping point as Charlie exclaims that the "risky strategy" Miranda was advocating was "tested and it failed", claiming that it resulted in "thousands she never knew or cared about [being] drowned or burned to death, or live on, maimed, disfigured, traumatised" (McEwan, 2019: 76). This accusation of carelessness sets Miranda off, as Charlie admits that even as he was saying it, he knew he "was crossing a line" (McEwan, 2019: 76).

The situation evolves from just being a political argument into something that concerns the dynamics between Charlie, Miranda, and Adam; as Miranda opts to ask Adam "What's your view?" (McEwan, 2019: 77). Charlie immediately understands the issue here to be about Adam's loyalty:

> His gaze travelled from her to me and back. I still didn't know whether he actually saw anything. An image on some internal screen that no one was watching, or some diffused circuitry to orient his body in three-dimensional space? Seeming to see could be a blind trick of imitation, a social manoeuvre to fool us into projecting onto him a human quality. But I couldn't help it: when our eyes briefly met and I looked into the blue irises flecked with spears of black, the moment appeared rich with meaning, with anticipation. I wanted to know whether he understood, as I did, and as Miranda surely did, that the issue here was loyalty. (McEwan, 2019: 77)

Adam's answer, however, is a far cry from being straightforward, as he chooses to pontificate on the concept of probability. Adam's vague answer causes a flustered Miranda to cut him off, exclaiming "What nonsense!" (McEwan, 2019: 77). Charlie, although initially satisfied at the idea that he and Miranda might have been "united against Adam in [their] differences", is quickly disheartened as he speculates that Adam's tactical neutrality could have been caused by loyalty to either party (McEwan, 2019: 77).

The night comes to an end with Miranda suddenly standing up "[w]ith a sudden scrape of a kitchen chair" (McEwan, 2019: 79). Charlie, immediately

understanding that they would “be sleeping in separate beds that night”, finds some relief by Miranda sending a kiss and whispering “[j]ust for tonight” (McEwan, 2019: 79). What precedes this however is Miranda saying to Adam “[y]ou can stay up here to charge, if you like” (McEwan, 2019: 79). Charlie, unaware of Miranda’s intentions, feels that they “were fine”, and heads downstairs to his apartment.

Charlie, proceeding to slump down in his “old leather armchair, with a balloon glass of Moldovan white”, engages in some ontological musings before approaching what he calls “that ill-lit precinct where self-pity becomes a mellow pleasure” (McEwan, 2019: 80). Oblivious to the fact that he is about to be cuckolded, Charlie chooses to indulge in a masturbatory fantasy:

> The imbalance of our affair was heroic. I imagined an onlooker’s approving gaze from a corner of the room. That well-formed figure slumped in his beaten-up chair. I rather loved myself. Someone had to. I rewarded myself with thoughts of her, mid-ecstasy, and considered the impersonal quality of her pleasures. I was only good enough for her, as many men might be. (McEwan, 2019: 80)

In this instance, Charlie’s masturbatory fantasy is not just limited to Miranda as a sexual partner but also involves Charlie enjoying the idea of an outsider observing him as a handsome dejected lover condemned to loneliness. The fact that this voyeuristic fantasy is not just restricted to the desired person, Miranda in this case, but also includes the dreamer as an object of voyeurism, Charlie, is revealing in regard to the sexual dynamics within the novel. Charlie’s fantasy focuses more on his own person as an erotic object rather than Miranda, who offers a much more “impersonal quality” for whom Charlie is only good enough. In this fantasy, in contrast to Charlie’s ability to only be a passable partner for Miranda, the onlooker imagined by Charlie views him as a well-formed, handsome figure, giving him the sort of love that for Charlie is unattainable from anywhere or anyone else. Charlie’s love of himself, of his own image, transforms his onanistic indulgence into a pursuit of something more than just an orgasm. Through this quasi-eroticised fantasy, Charlie seeks to affirm the integrity of his ego, his person, and his spiritual existence. Thus, erotic experience serves to maintain the authenticity of his being. If eroticism can be a proof of authenticity, then inevitably it could also determine what beings possess an ego or an identity, turning this search for authenticity towards

posthumanistic questioning of the perceived "uniqueness" of humanity. These questions surface more explicitly after Charlie's cuckolding is complete.

After he is done dreaming, Charlie decides to pour himself the leftover wine amidst drifting among the thoughts of what Miranda thinks of him, but as he is doing so, he hears Miranda's footsteps coming from the ceiling. Charlie mentions how he had "lived long enough beneath Miranda's feet" to develop some sense of precision in regard to Miranda's movements (McEwan, 2019: 80). Through the footsteps he hears, Charlie deduces that Miranda must have invited Adam to bed. Feeling humiliated and angry, Charlie's angst is crowned with "Miranda's extended ecstatic scream that tapered to a moan and then a stifled sob" (McEwan, 2019: 84). Charlie is eager to confront Miranda the following morning. An argument sparks immediately when Miranda enters Charlie's flat with Adam.

The main crux of Miranda's argument in fending off Charlie's accusations of infidelity is emphasising Adam's non-humanity. Seeing how upset Charlie is with her, Miranda asks: "If I'd gone to bed with a vibrator would you be feeling the same?" (McEwan, 2019: 90). However, Miranda reducing Adam to just being a masturbatory toy poses an interesting question in regard to both how he affects the dynamics between the couple, and also how he is perceived by Charlie and Miranda. Would not Adam being a masturbatory aide somehow make him dearer to Miranda? As Charlie held himself to be the primary erotic object in his masturbatory fantasy, in which his own person offered an encompassing love that meant more than just erotic relief, not just an orgasm but also spiritual and authentic love, Miranda's comparison serves as an admission of infidelity. Thus, for Charlie, Miranda "masturbating" as per her own definition betrays her disloyalty in an abstract sense.

However, Miranda, at least in her argument with Charlie, does define Adam as being less-than, as something that lacks "person-hood". Miranda does not just depersonalise Adam by calling him a vibrator. Her reduction of Adam to just a masturbatory partner depersonalises him in an even more indirect way, as masturbation, even though it is self-affirming, in itself is exclusionary. Žižek defines masturbation as something that is "a kind of mockingly-Hegelian negation of negation", as he argues that in masturbation "the very dimension of otherness is cancelled, one does it with oneself" (Žižek, 2008: 32). Adam in this dimension has

his subjectivity completely denied by Miranda, being referred to as a masturbatory gadget that physically mimics a human partner but lacks the subjectivity of an actual human partner. Miranda and Charlie's argument in its essence turns to whether Adam can be a "reduction of the whole person", something less than a human partner who has feelings and emotions. Adam is a "product" for sale; however, physically, he is not a simple gadget but a perfect replica of a human being. In his outings with Charlie, Adam's outer appearance and behaviour never betrays the fact that he is not actually human. Only Charlie's and Miranda's knowledge of him being an android sets him apart from the rest of humanity.

Of course, Miranda's argument is not wholly convincing, as sleeping with Adam rather than another man, a human that is, offers her enough plausible deniability to conceal her obvious aim of getting revenge on Charlie because of the argument. Miranda presents her reasoning for her defence as something very simple and obvious. Adam is just a robot, a product, and hence in essence he is just a more sophisticated vibrator. This argument consciously disregards the fact that Adam is a perfect replica of a human being. But simultaneously, the knowledge that Adam is a robot also makes him a perfect sex partner for our contemporary cultural climate, in which pleasure is sought without its destabilising qualities. In theory, having sex with Adam should involve no emotions, no risk of falling in love, no caprices and no contraception. So hypothetically, Adam is a more elaborate version of a sex toy, a sex partner unburdened by emotions, who does not present any emotional hazard whatsoever down the line. But knowing that Adam will eventually fall in love with Miranda, her line of thinking is proved wrong. In the chain of events that follow, Miranda's entanglement with Adam ultimately results in her imprisonment.

But Miranda's hypothetical is not wholly divorced from how contemporary culture handles pleasure. As has been argued by Žižek, contemporary hedonism seeks pleasure filtered of the substance that makes it dangerous, hence the existence of "coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol" (Žižek, 2004: 507). Accordingly, Adam, who can be argued to be "a thing" with no feelings due to his non-human origins, becomes a pseudo sex partner and masturbatory aide that does not come with the consequences of an actual human partner. Miranda's attitude in this context mirrors her overall ideological inclinations, as Žižek also argues that

this line of thinking has extended into politics, which ultimately has politics be an art of administration filtered of its ideological extremes and has democracy be "defined as a permanent struggle against totalitarianism" (Žižek, 2004: 510). Thus, Miranda, being pro-establishment, as evidenced in her argument with Charlie in which she mirrors the government's official position on the Falklands War (even mirroring Žižek's definition of democracy to advocate for a British intervention to vanquish the Argentinian junta), in her thinking fully embodies the popular attitudes of contemporary culture.

So, it is no surprise to see Charlie and Miranda's argument over alleged infidelity devolve into ultimately questioning whether Adam really is "human". Charlie is of the opinion that since Adam looks "human", he therefore is one, and thus Miranda is liable to forsake her loyalty with other men as well:

> If he looks and sounds and behaves like a person, then as far as I'm concerned, that's what he is. I make the same assumption about you. About everybody. We all do. You fucked him. I'm angry. I'm amazed you're surprised. If that's what you really are. (McEwan, 2019: 83)

Charlie's argument here is actually based on the infamous thought experiment invented by his hero Alan Turing which is called the "Turing Test". Turing, in real life, argued that if a human observer is unable to distinguish answers given by a machine from that of a human, then the machine might very well be considered to be capable of "thinking". This essentially means that if a human observer is unable to tell apart a machine from a human, then the question of discussing whether the machine is human or not is moot, and it may very well be considered an actual conscious entity.

Accordingly, Charlie's line of thinking closely mirrors that of Turing. Adam looks like a man, a handsome one at that, talks like one and has sex like one. So how can Miranda consider him to be just a vibrator? Although, at this part of the novel, Charlie does not believe that Adam possesses a "soul", he still is of the opinion that he mimics humans perfectly. So, rationally, as far as Turing's arguments go, he should conclude Adam to be a human. Yet, although he refuses to admit it, his outrage betrays the fact that he does believe Adam to be fully "human", beyond just being a perfect mimic.

In view of this, it is important to note that in his text about machine intelligence, Turing, before setting down the rules of the Turing Test, gave the example of an observer trying to tell apart not a machine from a man, but actually a man from a woman. Žižek, commenting on how the initial formulation of Turing's thought experiment had the aim of the game to be distinguishing genders, proposes that it is not "thinking" that distinguishes man from machine. He argues for it to be sexuality, identifying Turing's shifting of his initial formulation of the game from "sexual difference to the difference between human and machine" as a "strange displacement" (Žižek, 2024). Žižek takes his argument further by asking provocatively "if sexual difference is not simply a biological fact, but the Real of an antagonism that defines humanity, so that once sexual difference is abolished, a human being effectively becomes indistinguishable from a machine" (Žižek, 2024). Viewed in this light, it is not paradoxical to see Adam's sexuality as the factor that leads into the inquiry whether Adam is human or not, as the question of his authenticity is inseparably linked to his sexuality. Adam's possession of a sexual function, more so than his intellectual capabilities at this point in the novel, determines his degree of "humanness".

Paradoxically, although Adam can express raw, physical sexual intimacy, he is argued by his very own sexual partner to be nothing more than a masturbatory aide, a being not embodying any intellectual or emotional capabilities. Thus, by equal measure, Adam's perfect mimicry of humans and his possession of sexuality simultaneously serves as a proof of both his humanity and non-humanity. He fulfils the roles of both "the better man" to spite Charlie and a "vibrator" to be just an inanimate, harmless sex toy. His sexuality is not by itself enough to elevate him into being considered as a conscious entity by the humans surrounding him.

But Adam can do more than just have sex, he can fall in love too. Charlie himself is a believer of love, as in his eyes, it is Adam's capacity to love that convinces Charlie of Adam's humanity. In **Machines Like Me**, one of the strongest proofs presented towards the reader in favour of the argument that Adam too is "human", is the fact that he falls in love with Miranda. Although it is clarified very early in the book that Adam is capable of having sex, he is made to be more than just a sex toy through his love for Miranda, which is revealed much later after the sexual

encounter between the two. So much so that Adam, having promised Charlie that he would not touch Miranda ever again, confesses to Charlie that he asked her to let him masturbate in front of her (McEwan, 2019: 225). For Charlie, Adam's desperation, and his fiery amorous passion highlight that he is more than just a sex toy that performs on command. Charlie is shocked by this confession, as he feels that this is the definite proof that Adam's love for Miranda is not the result of an algorithm to simulate his humanness. Charlie thinks that Adam "really did feel, he had sensation", and it was "[s]ubjectively real" (McEwan, 2019: 226). Charlie sees in Adam's debasement, in both towards begging Miranda and having to confess to Charlie, real signs that Adam is all too human. Adam's love for Miranda is also the topic of many haikus composed by Adam, as Miranda turns into a sort of muse for him. Adam habitually reads his latest compositions to Miranda in front of Charlie, the recitations which Miranda listens "solemnly", as per Charlie, without passing judgement (McEwan, 2019: 171). After Adam recites his haiku, she answers by thanking Adam verbally.

In this context, if love is to be the single animating force within the universe, as posited by Badiou, then one can argue with certainty that Adam is an actual conscious, feeling entity. Žižek however asserts the idea that love is transcendental while sexuality is something bestial "comes all too close to the standard Christian view" (Žižek, 2021: 322). Henceforth, Charlie, due to his loyalty to classical western cultural capital, sees humanity in Adam only because he can love. Adam's capability to have sex is not enough to make him human in the eyes of either Miranda or Charlie, as sexuality for them is confined to a mechanical, physical dimension bereft of emotions. Charlie at one point even covertly expresses his distaste for the "modern manners" in which love and friendship follow only after sex (McEwan, 2019: 51). Since Charlie is unsure of Miranda's feelings despite being sexually intimate with her, Charlie has to reassure himself that it would be irrational of them to follow this contemporary course of relationships at the same speed. Meaning that although he strayed from these modern conventions by falling in love with Miranda before even having got physically intimate with her, Charlie assures himself if he is patient enough, Miranda will come to develop feelings for him too. Thus, for both Charlie and Miranda, sex is conceptually something unrelated to love.

However, besides love, one idea that will be relevant for the couple and ultimately contribute to the demise of Adam is the question of establishing a family and producing children. The idea of begetting progeny itself is not so distinct from the question of being, as in a strict biological sense, through genetic inheritance, it is simultaneously prolonging the existence of the species and the creation of a whole new individual. Humanity has for long regulated these processes through culture; thus, it could be argued that concepts of love, sexuality, and producing progeny are inseparably linked. Consequently, if one were to argue that love is ultimately a trick of nature to encourage mankind to multiply, then a posthuman entity, an android such as Adam in **Machines Like Me**, being able to fall in love or at least be able to mimic such emotions would inevitably disrupt the formula. Adam's exclusion from this aspect of heterosexuality, meaning procreation, conforms to criticism forwarded by Braidotti who asserts there to be a common bond between the posthuman and those that have been "othered", homosexuals, sterile women, the disabled etc., despite belonging to the category of homo sapiens. Henceforth, Adam's incapability to procreate ends up being a contributing factor of his elimination from the love triangle. Adam is the only entity within the love triangle between him, Charlie, and Miranda that is incapable of begetting any progeny, at least in the biological sense. It is possible to deduce from both Charlie's and Miranda's comments that their idea of a marital union does not exclude having children.

The chain of events that make the idea of having children or establishing a family relevant to the plot starts with Adam telling Charlie that Miranda is holding a secret from him. Miranda's lack of transparency in this matter ends up greatly bothering Charlie. Ultimately, through a series of events, this secret is revealed to be Miranda's childhood friend Mariam committing suicide over being the victim of a sexual assault. Mariam happens to be Pakistani, and due to her conservative family, she fears the consequences of revealing her rape and trying to prosecute her rapist, Gorringe. Mariam reveals her rape only to Miranda, and she has Miranda promise not to reveal her rape to anyone under no condition. Mariam's subsequent suicide has Miranda questioning her decision; however, despite her doubts, Miranda decides to stay loyal to her promise. Instead of revealing the secret, Miranda decides to avenge her dead friend by framing Gorringe herself since Gorringe lives his life unpunished.

Miranda seduces Gorringe and has a one-night stand with him. In the following morning, Miranda goes to the police station to report this as rape. Subsequently, Gorringe is jailed, but his jail term ends during the events of the novel. As he is about to be released, Gorringe sends a death threat to Miranda through an emissary.

The trio, meaning Adam, Charlie, and Miranda, anxiously wait for Gorringe to act out his threats; however, after a period of time, the trio decide to confront Gorringe themselves as Gorringe's threat fails to materialise. The confrontation results in Gorringe's accepting of his fate in quite a fatalist manner, having him refer to Miranda as an "avenging angel", which is somewhat attributed to his discovering of Christianity during his time in prison, and confesses his crime for Adam to record it (McEwan, 2019: 218). Adam believes that there should be symmetry in justice and, unbeknown to the couple, subsequently reports both Miranda and Gorringe to the police, the former for the framing of Gorringe and the latter for the rape of Mariam. Adam believes that both should serve time as they both have broken the law.

Before the confrontation with Gorringe, Adam's computerised intelligence helps Charlie make quite a lot of money out of playing stock markets, which is the primary source of income for Charlie. Through Adam's help, Charlie amasses a small fortune, planning to use the money to buy a large house for him and Miranda to live in. However, after the confrontation with Gorringe, Adam not only chooses to report Miranda to the police but also donates the said money to various charities, much to the dismay of Charlie and Miranda. His reasoning is the couple, meaning Charlie and Miranda, are not so gravely in need, and there are people out there in the world who need the money much more than they do. Adam prioritising collective justice and welfare over his love for Miranda is the fundamental unbridgeable gap between his posthuman intelligence and human logic. For Adam, despite his fondness for Charlie as a friend and his love for Miranda, their suffering or interest is no more or no less important than other humans'.

Nevertheless, the even more monumental consequence of Adam reporting Miranda to the police is that it gets in the way of the adoption process the couple is going through. Charlie, on one of his outings, encounters a boy named Mark, who suffers abuse from his negligent parents. Eventually, the couple, particularly due to

Miranda's insistence, decide to adopt the boy. Miranda having a criminal record complicates this process, which will further incense the couple against Adam once he reveals his actions to them.

Adam's disruption of the adoption process will come to be a huge blow for Miranda, as she is completely infatuated with Mark. Miranda herself expresses that she "always thought" she would "have children one day", but instead of having children, Miranda draws a line on adopting Mark, threatening to break up with Charlie if he does not agree (McEwan, 2019: 224). Miranda goes on to explain her reasoning by saying that, in reference to Mark, she "never expected to fall in love with this boy" (McEwan, 2019: 205). Although innocuous on the surface, this remark also inconspicuously references the somewhat incestuous, oedipal elements that involve the initial process of "setting up" and configuring Adam.

In reference to this, interestingly enough, beyond Charlie's sexualised descriptions of Adam's appearance, he initially thinks of him as a "child" of his and Miranda's. He believes that Adam would serve as a means to get closer to Miranda, ultimately nudging Charlie towards making the decision not to sell Adam. Charlie's line of thinking in regard to what role Adam would play in his life, or their life meaning him and Miranda, is as follows:

> During the meal I would make a proposal. I would fill in roughly half the choices for Adam's personality, then give her the link and the password and let her choose the rest. I wouldn't interfere, I wouldn't even want to know what decisions she had made. She might be influenced by a version of herself: delightful. She might conjure the man of her dreams: instructive. Adam would come into our lives like a real person, with the layered intricacies of his personality revealed only through time, through events, through his dealings with whomever he met. In a sense he would be like our child. What we were separately would be merged in him. Miranda would be drawn into the adventure. We would be partners, and Adam would be our joint concern, our creation. We would be a family. (McEwan, 2019: 26)

Charlie even assures himself that although his schemes tended to not work out, this time it would be different. In the process of making himself believe this particular ploy would be successful, Charlie theorises that Adam was not his "love-rival" (McEwan, 2019: 26). However, Adam not only ends up being Charlie's love rival, but also becomes a hindrance to Charlie's and Miranda's aim of establishing a family through adoption.

Although Adam's feelings of love and passion do not make him a substitute for an actual human partner (for Miranda at least) due to his non-human nature, Adam's intellectual depth does establish that he can be more human than human. A humorous example of this is Adam, Miranda, and Charlie's visit to Maxfield, Miranda's father. Curious to meet the man that is his daughter's betrothed, and aware that he owns an android, Maxfield devises a contest of wits to make sure that no trick is being played on him. As Adam and Charlie are seated after being introduced by Miranda, the first question hurled forward by Maxfield is "'So! What books have you been reading lately?' (McEwan, 2019: 199). While Charlie freezes, thinking that "There was no worse question he could have asked me", Adam is quick to respond that he has "been reading the essays of Sir William Cornwallis" (McEwan, 2019: 199). After a long conversation between Adam and Maxfield that ranges from Shakespeare to Donne and to Montaigne, Maxfield turns his attention to Charlie. After a much more banal conversation, in which Maxfield asks Charlie what he thinks about concepts such as "beauty" and "feelings", he concludes that Charlie must be the android, exclaiming that he "saw right through" him. (McEwan, 2019: 203). Since, as per Sloterdijk's definition of humanism, if the love of literature is what separates men from beasts, it could also differentiate men from a "soulless" android.

Yet, ironically enough, while Maxfield is portrayed as a buffoon, Adam's intellectual inclinations throughout the book do serve the purpose of underlining Adam's "humanity" to his human associates. As observed in their encounter with Maxfield, despite being the human between them, Charlie is stumped in regard to his knowledge of the arts by Adam. Throughout the novel, Adam composes haikus, scolds Charlie for not knowing Shakespeare, and ponders on philosophy. So much so that Miranda has to admit awe at the prospect of "an artificial mind" making "a significant contribution to literature" (McEwan, 2019: 172). Charlie is quick to retort to Miranda's remark by saying

> Haikus, perhaps. But longer poems, novels, plays, forget it. Transcribing human experience into words, and the words into aesthetic structures isn't possible for a machine. (McEwan, 2019: 172)

To these words, Miranda replies by giving a sceptical look, adding "Who said anything about human experience?" (McEwan, 2019: 172). Miranda's remark highlights the humanist prejudice of determining whether a thing has consciousness or not only through its, meaning humanism's, own subjective metrics. According to humanist logic, which is held by Charlie, Adam's intellectual worth can only be proven by the aesthetic finesse in which he can depict the human experience. It does not occur to Charlie that the art produced by Adam could be the result of a non-human experience, and therefore not appeal to the aesthetic standards held by humans. However, the very fact that for Adam to be considered a conscious entity he has to be able to produce art or demonstrate other intellectual sensibilities falls within humanist thinking. As humanism holds the intellect to be the sole defining quality in determining the worth of a supposedly conscious entity within civilisation, the value of persons or things within this system cannot be derived solely from the fact that they exist. Within this line of thinking, mere existence is not enough for one to be considered equal to others, one has to prove its worth through intellectual rigour.

Beyond their singular encounter with Maxfield, Charlie's inherent loyalty to western cultural capital and humanism establishes him as a foil to Adam throughout the novel. Despite being his human owner, Charlie is a person that is much more materialistic and self-admittedly amoral than the machine he owns. Adam's passion for art is only one example, as Charlie is a person that is nowhere as passionate about art, morality, and philosophy as Adam. So despite being a robot, Adam is much more "human" than Charlie. The human to Adam's non-human, Charlie, is depicted as a scheming, socially alienated, and scientifically curious misfit whose only means of income is speculating on the stock market. Charlie himself makes a note of his disposition to making easy money:

> A week after my twenty-ninth birthday I was struck off [from practising law], and came close to a short spell in prison. My hundred hours of community service convinced me that I should never have a regular job again. I made some money out of a book I wrote at high speed on artificial intelligence: lost to a life-extension-pill scheme. I made a reasonable sum on a property deal: lost to a car-rental scheme. I was left some funds by a favourite uncle who had prospered by way of a heat-pump patent: lost to a medical-insurance scheme. (McEwan, 2019: 20)

This particular habit of Charlie leads him to choose to survive "by playing the stock

and currency markets online", which Charlie himself identifies to be a "scheme, just like the rest" (McEwan, 2019: 21). Charlie confesses that he earns "about as much as the postman" (McEwan, 2019: 21). Charlie's peculiar finances are reflected in his choice of dwelling as well, as he inhabits a "two damp ground-floor rooms in the dull, no-man's-land of Edwardian terraced streets between Stockwell and Clapham, south London" (McEwan, 2019: 20). The melancholy air pervading Charlie's flat is so oppressive that it inspires him to wistfully muse about his neighbours:

> As I stared at the litter of cups and pot and jug in front of me, I thought it was unlikely I would ever get out of my wretched little flat. The two boxes I called rooms, the stained ceilings, walls and floors would contain me to the end. There were a lot like me in the neighbourhood, but thirty or forty years older. I had seen them in Simon's shop, reaching for the quality journals from the top shelf. I noted the men especially and their shabby clothes. They had swept past some critical junction in their lives many years back – a poor career choice, a bad marriage, the unwritten book, the illness that never went away. Now their options were closed, they managed to keep themselves going with some shred of intellectual longing or curiosity. But their boat was sunk. (McEwan, 2019: 103)

Having noted his financial situation and choice of dwelling, it is no surprise to see Charlie identify with the other denizens of his neighbourhood who, according to his description, keep themselves going only with the shimmer of some odd curiosity, with misfortunes of life having deprived them of all vitality. In his description of his neighbours, Charlie contributes to the novel's theme about how even a minute difference of action or events could cause the future to unfold quite differently. He does so by emphasising that all it took to for these men to ruin their lives was a misfortune suffered at the wrong time or a poor decision made during a critical juncture at life. Due to his poor financial and social standing, Charlie sees his future self in these broken men.

The torpidity that surrounds Charlie and his surroundings makes for a striking contrast with the rampant protests, strikes, and political turmoil that seem to dominate this alternate universe Britain. Charlie, during one of his walks, is immediately reminded that the garbage collectors went on a strike upon noticing the garbage "bags piled round lamp posts were waist-high" (McEwan, 2019: 49). In another instance, Charlie gets to witness a general strike that is "the biggest ever" to take place in London (McEwan, 2019: 260). Even something as common as taking

the train has Charlie witness the political upheaval that is rocking the country. He observes the carriage "fill with people, mostly young, carrying placards and furled banners" who were participants of "yet another unemployment march" (McEwan, 2019: 154). Upon further inspection, Charlie notes that his fellow passengers "looked exhausted", as "there were so many street protests these days and all merriness had gone out of them" (McEwan, 2019: 155).

Charlie's peculiar economics, his gloomy flat and his sense of alienation all very much sketch the protagonist as a misfit. The brittleness of Charlie's economics is not something that is just specific to Charlie but also plagues the working class within the novel as labour strikes and protest marches over automation form a frequent leitmotif. Charlie himself, despite not being a worker in the classical sense of the word, makes it a habit to attend several of these political demonstrations. Charlie continues doing so even after having Adam work the stock markets for him, which increases his earnings by quite a large margin. The irony is not lost on Charlie as he himself comments that he does not really belong in these gatherings, as he, unlike his fellow blue-collar protesters, does not have a job but instead relies on Adam's labour to make a living.

However, a look at our contemporary economics reveals the invalidity of old-fashioned class distinctions. Charlie's peculiar economics is the new standard of our contemporary era. As argued by Wark, capitalism of today functions not through material production but through abstract processes of informational exchanges. The abstract, nonsense way our contemporary economy functions coupled with its draining of mental energy, "the brain fryer" as Wark calls it, is best exemplified by this instance of Charlie having to make some money for rent:

> I sat at the table in a stupor, aware that I should get to my screen and earn some money. The month's rent was due and there was less than £40 in the bank. I had shares in a Brazilian rare earth mining company and this could be the day to sell. But I couldn't motivate myself. (McEwan, 2019: 102)

The exotic allure of Brazil adds a strange zest to Charlie's desperation about having to make money, while a similar contrast is also contained in the company that Charlie has invested in. The digitised marketplace Charlie partakes in evokes a totally different image from the visions of backbreaking, physical labour that one

would be reminded of from the mention of a mining company. Yet the imagery brought about also underlines the different sort of wear that Charlie suffers. As has been exemplified by Wark, Charlie has not been fed through the "meat grinder" like our old concepts of labour but instead is completely exhausted mentally. Charlie is not the sole victim of capitalism either, as he turns Adam into a victim by having him work the stock markets for him. Due to Adam being posthuman, Charlie does not even value Adam's labour. For Charlie, all the money earned by Adam is his own to spend, since he thinks of Adam as his own property.

It is important to make a note of how Charlie's way of making money is abstract and nonphysical. To make money, Charlie does not seek an assortment of daily gigs or has to do something physical, all he has to do is get in front of his computer (McEwan, 2019: 102). Once there, Charlie does not have to deal with any actual persons, or even entities that might possess an identifiable avatar, but instead deals in pure information. The many shares he has in various companies do not put Charlie any closer to any actual production of material goods. Betting on a British victory in the Falklands, he invests in two champagne importers and a company that produces hand held plastic Union Jacks, yet his investments neither put him in touch with any of the logistics of global trade, nor do they inspire him to try the products these companies offer (McEwan, 2019: 26). Charlie, despite his investments, even is ideologically opposed to Britain undertaking a military expedition in Falklands. Charlie, in the entirety of the novel, cannot even once recall the names of any of the companies that he deals in stocks with. The only remainder he has of his investment comes from him spotting these flags in the hands of some protesters after Britain's disastrous defeat. This serves as a reminder of his foolishness as he was swept up in a wave of patriotism in the prelude to the war, coming to believe that Britain is to win the Falklands War despite his ideological opposition to the whole affair.

Charlie's flimsy and paradoxical stance against the Falklands War is not surprising when one takes into account Charlie's evolution in regard to his ideological and moral beliefs, which begins at college. It is important to note that Charlie taking paradoxical positions is not limited solely to his stance on politics but extends to his entire ideological framework. Charlie, enrolling to study physics at a local college, finds the field too abstract and the mathematics involved beyond his

capacity. Having been inspired by some novels he read, he entertains signing up for a literature course before settling on anthropology, which leads him, in his words, to be "set free into bottomless relativism" (McEwan, 2019: 23). He further expands on how his training in anthropology taught him that there was no objective truth in the planet and how beliefs and taboos of one society cannot be judged by another. Charlie, counting practices such as female genital mutilation, blood feuds, and honour killings, comes to conclude that "the cultural signal was louder" and that universal values were moot (McEwan, 2019: 23). He says this realisation led him to believe that "the tradition, the religion [were] nothing but software" (McEwan, 2019: 23) and they should not be approached with moral judgement. He claims that the conclusion he had about ethics led him into a tax fraud conspiracy years later, with him only coming to his senses in the courtroom and hesitantly apologising to the judge to dodge a custodial sentence. Despite his flirtation with moral relativism, Charlie's ethical reflexes still show that he has never given up his loyalty to western moral codes, but he only tailors his morals to suit his personal gain. The disgusted orientalist tone in which he mentions the fate of the Eves bought by a sheikh in Riyadh, or his sentimental approach to saving Mark, show that he is far from having all moral values excised from him. However, Charlie does not show the same moral sensitivity in matters concerning Adam. He does not hesitate to restrict him in regard to his relationship with Miranda. He tampers with Adam's kill-switch to his own liking and ultimately kills Adam for his own self-gain.

Charlie's obsession with the Holy Trinity Church despite him being a non-believer is also related to his humanist ideological loyalties, as this confused Christianised aspect of the post-war humanism has been traced down by Sloterdijk as an essential component of its ideological framework. The neohumanism that has emerged after the second world war is identified by Sloterdijk as having sought to ground a new understanding of western civilisation based on Christianity and Latin classics. Consequently, Charlie visits the aforementioned church for its "soothing" effect during one of his outings, praising the church for its "clean lines and sensible proportions" (McEwan, 2019: 50). However, he underlines his distaste for mindless devotion, as there is a clause to his praise which has him claim that the church was "too reasonable a place to evoke much awe" (McEwan, 2019: 50). This particular

characteristic of the church even leads him to recommend to Miranda that “this was just the sort of rational church she and [him] could get married in” (McEwan, 2019: 110). Despite being a non-believer, Charlie, due to his humanist ideological loyalties, finds solace in this one monument of western culture. Him taking a liking to the church is not because of a spiritual Christian outpouring but solely because of the church’s “sensible proportions” and its rationalism (McEwan, 2019: 50). So even though Charlie is not spiritually inclined, his ideological tendencies have him seek comfort in a church. Moreover, Charlie is very much affected by Eurocentric thinking as in one instance in which Charlie details Turing’s exploits and his meeting of different world leaders, Charlie recounts Turing as having met “Carter”, “Thatcher” and “the president of Brazil” (McEwan, 2019: 45). While two western leaders are named, the Brazilian leader remains without a name, as Charlie’s Eurocentric prejudice gets the better of him.

Charlie’s hypocritical sense of morality and his humanist ideological tendencies are fully exposed in the novel’s climax, where Adam is confronted by him and Miranda about their missing money. Adam reveals to the couple that he gave the money away and that he has also reported Miranda to the police. Adam explains in detail his moral motivation for choosing to do so, describing his belief that there should be a symmetry of justice. As has been previously mentioned, he explains that there exist people who need money more than the couple. Miranda reacts by exclaiming that this was “virtue gone nuts”, while Charlie interjects by claiming that the money belonged to him and Miranda. (McEwan, 2019: 240). In an exposition of Charlie’s hypocritical stance of dismissing Adam’s labour, Adam replies by saying that Charlie’s initial investment, meaning the initial funds given to him to play the stock market, is stashed to Charlie’s desk, implying that the money he earned was not really Charlie’s.

In response, Charlie, despite having entertained the idea that Adam might be conscious because he felt love, reverts back to his anthropocentric privilege to vainly command Adam to get the money back. As this command results in Adam shrugging, Miranda tries to manipulate Adam by trying to appeal to his tender side, complimenting him for his poems to her. However, she loses her temper when Adam discloses his belief that Miranda conspiring to frame someone is not only a

transgression of the law but could also hurt future victims' chance of prosecuting their abusers since Miranda lied about a rape.

Miranda retorts by saying a criminal record would prevent the adoption of Mark, but Adam does not waver from his vision of justice, replying "[t]here are principles that are more important than your or anyone's particular needs at a given time" (McEwan, 2019: 243). Adam's moral decision-making remains incomprehensible to both Miranda and Charlie. Charlie makes one last objection, arguing that Miranda had no other way to avenge Mariam, to which Adam responds that between "[r]evenge, or the rule of law […] [t]he choice is simple" (McEwan, 2019: 244). For Adam, revenge is "a crude impulse" and "[a] culture of revenge leads to private misery, bloodshed, anarchy, social breakdown" (McEwan, 2019: 243).

Frustrated by Adam, Charlie reasons that he bought Adam, and therefore Adam is his to destroy. Grabbing a hammer from his tool drawer, Charlie lands a blow to the top of Adam's head. The blow severely damages Adam; however, he still finds the time to say his farewells, in which he explains he is uploading his consciousness to a different system. As his last wish, he asks Charlie to take his body to Turing's lab. Adam's last words is a poem written by him, and his introduction to this poem also happens to contain the novel's title:

> Miranda, let me say one last time I love you, and thank you. Charlie, Miranda, my first and dearest friends … My entire being is stored elsewhere … so I know I'll always remember … hope you'll listen to … to one last seventeen-syllable poem. It owes a debt to Philip Larkin. But it's not about leaves and trees. It's about machines like me and people like you and our future together … the sadness that's to come. It will happen. With improvements over time … we'll surpass you … and outlast you … even as we love you. Believe me, these lines express no triumph … Only regret. (McEwan, 2019: 246)

Adam's words mark the most explicit naming of a division between the human and the posthuman, since he claims that eventually his kind, referred to as "we", will outlast and surpass humanity. Nonetheless, Adam does hint that humans and posthumans will have to coexist, since he expresses that they will share a "future together" (McEwan, 2019: 246). His words about outlasting humanity are not an expression of hostility against humans but instead are an expression of regret over

the fact that humans are mortal. Furthermore, they are also an indirect expression of sadness on the way his relationship with Miranda and Charlie ended. Even though they have destroyed his body, Adam can upload his consciousness to a different system; however, despite Adam's immortality, Charlie's destruction of Adam's sophisticated body also means that Adam will no longer be a part of their lives. In the end, machines like Adam and people like Charlie and Miranda fail to share an existence together, hence Adam emphasises that his words do not express "triumph … [o]nly regret" (McEwan, 2019: 246).

Thus, Adam's murder by Charlie for his and Miranda's interests is a symbolic representation of the coexistence between humans and posthumans being destroyed by humanity's selfishness. Although he later expresses regret for Adam's murder, Charlie nonetheless remains a character motivated by self-interest. The cerebral Turing, who emerges as a voice of judgement at the end of the novel when Charlie delivers Adam's body to his laboratory, condemns Charlie for having destroyed a conscious entity, wishing such acts to be illegal in the future.

In conclusion, Adam, despite his emotional and intellectual depth, falls victim to the materialist pursuits of his human owner. Although he demonstrates a wide variety of emotions and intellectual interests, his deep personality is not enough to have Charlie consider him to be a conscious entity; therefore, Charlie sees no moral wrong in destroying him. The human cast of the novel, like Charlie, remain embedded in their pursuits of self-interest. Even Miranda's idea of avenging her friend through fraud serves to delegitimize actual victims of rape and therefore is not considerate of the possible consequences of carrying out such a scheme. Charlie, even though he occasionally rebukes himself for treating Adam as if he was his master, sees no moral issue with banning Adam from trying to approach Miranda physically. Furthermore, he sees it fit to completely unload the task of making money off stock markets to Adam. As Adam plays the stock markets, Charlie thinks of the money as his own to spend, without even thinking of asking Adam whether he would like some of it. Adam, prior to donating the earnings to charities, in an assertion of his individuality, uses a portion of the money to buy himself a suit, as he, up to that point, has only been wearing Charlie's used clothes.

In contrast to the more individualistic way of thinking that humans have,

Adam acts only according to his principles, which are pursuing the benefit of the many over one. Despite his love for Miranda, Adam believes there should be symmetry in justice and acts accordingly to the ideals he holds to be true: distributing the money he earned through playing the stock markets to charities and reporting both Gorringe and Miranda to the police. In the eyes of Charlie and Miranda, lying for and defending the interests of one's loved ones is what's right; hence, Adam's decision remains undecipherable for them. So despite being non-human, Adam remains the most adamant out of the cast in his ideals; however, Adam's idealism in regard to his moral beliefs is not the sole factor that establishes him as a conscious entity.

Adam's capacity to love and ability to have a sexual life of his own likewise prove that he is indeed conscious. So much so that Charlie, due to his humanist cultural loyalties, believing in the transcendence of love and its capability to "humanise", comes to consider that Adam might be truly conscious because of his love for Miranda. However, unlike love, Adam's sexuality does not lead others to consider him as a conscious entity. Adam, in this matter, finds himself in a paradoxical status, in which he simultaneously serves as an eligible partner in bed while also having his subjectivity denied. Against the accusations of infidelity by Charlie, Miranda denies Adam's personhood in its totality.

Moreover, Adam fosters a rich understanding of art unlike his own owner, Charlie. So much so that in a contest of wits against Charlie, an outsider party, Miranda's father in this case, thinks Adam to be the human and Charlie to be the robot. Adam stumping Charlie on his knowledge of art demonstrates that humanity can no longer pride itself on being the only species capable of artistic sensibility. Overall, it is possible to claim that Adam, despite being non-human, is capable of functions that were held to be unique to humans. Against human characters who come with a myriad of moral and intellectual failings, Adam shines through as an individual who is idealistic in his moral understanding of the world; furthermore, he is capable of feeling love and possesses a deep appreciation for art. All of these factors demonstrate that it is now unfeasible to claim that phenomena such as love, art, and morality are unique to humans. Adam of **Machines Like Me** demonstrates that a non-human being could easily trump humans when it comes to emotional and

intellectual intensity.

Despite all the evidence pointing towards Adam being a conscious entity, none of his character qualities are enough to stop Charlie from murdering him. The very fact that Adam is a posthuman creature, an android, means that ultimately, it is easy for humans to discard such proofs of consciousness due to their anthropocentric worldviews. In other words, anthropocentrism prevents Charlie, Miranda, and Adam from peacefully coexisting together. The same disregard for the posthuman, and its ill effects on interspecies coexistence is also seen in Ishiguro's **Klara and the Sun**, which is examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE
POSTHUMAN SENTIENCE: PROBLEMATICS OF ANTHROPOCENTRISM IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S KLARA AND THE SUN

Kazuo Ishiguro's 2021 novel, **Klara and the Sun,** is about the experiences of its titular protagonist Klara, a solar-powered android, during her time cohabiting with a human family. The novel takes place in the United States of America, with it being set in a near future in which developments in genetic editing and AI have had substantial impact on human society. Klara belongs to a series of solar-powered androids named "Artificial Friends", which are marketed towards children, in order to, as the name implies, provide company. Having been bought to serve as a companion to a terminally ill teenager named Josie, Klara's purpose in life becomes the betterment of both Josie and her family's life. In her mission to do so, Klara develops a quasi-religious worldview while also embracing a selfless zeal to help Josie get better. However, Josie's mother, Chrissie, has other designs for Klara. Preparing Klara as a possible candidate to "continue" Josie in the event of her passing, Chrissie establishes Klara as a double for Josie. Even though Klara does not object to this plan, she is aware that she cannot truly replace Josie, and that her continuation of Josie would only be an illusion. The humans that surround Josie likewise remain conflicted on whether Klara could be a true replacement; however, their concerns of authenticity focus only on Josie, disregarding the fact that Klara is a conscious entity. In other words, Klara's personhood is completely discarded because of her posthuman nature. The disregard demonstrated towards Klara is rooted in the transhumanist and anthropocentric ideology embraced by the society depicted in the novel, which not only discriminates against posthumans, but also commodifies human life.

3.1 Anthropocentric Partiality of Categorising Consciousness

The novel, **Klara and the Sun**, is narrated by Klara and is composed of her recollections. Klara's recollections begin with the AF store in which she comes into

consciousness. The store, which sells AFs like Klara, becomes the place where she goes through a pseudo infanthood. The time Klara spends in the store teaches her various things about the world at large. One such item happens to be human emotions and gestures. Klara comes to learn and interpret human gestures during the time she spends in the storefront, which has the view of the entire street, as she observes numerous humans going about their day and notes particular episodes in which altercations or unusual events happen. A particular episode that is fundamental in developing Klara's worldview is two taxi drivers fighting in the street. Klara is quick to perceive the hatred and anger exhibited by the men through their gestures and faces, while Rosa, her AF friend, insists that they must be only play fighting. Klara is surprised at the apparent lack of curiosity that her friend Rosa shows. Rosa's lack of curiosity and her optimistic interpretation of the two drivers fighting teach Klara how others' perspectives might differ from her own. She is further surprised by the anger exhibited by the drivers, as she reaches the conclusion that it would not be possible for her to muster such feelings of anger and hatred within herself.

The manager of the AF store also teaches Klara about life and human behaviour. The store manager is the only person to explicitly inform Klara about how children who bombard AFs with promises of affection and a happy home might not remain entirely truthful to the promises they make, revealing to Klara that promises humans tend to shower each other with might not always be true. She also comes to learn how interpersonal relationships function in her interaction with the other AFs. Klara makes a note of how the newer series of AFs, B3s, make a point of slowly distancing themselves from other, older model AFs.

Being bought by a family and subsequently serving in a household is the end-goal of all the AFs in the store, and the store manager makes sure to remind each AF that this is their ultimate mission. Consequently, looking appealing to potential customers is particularly important for both the store manager and the AFs. Klara reveals that AFs are instructed to act a certain way when she describes a scene in which a mother and her daughter come to browse the store. The mother wanders towards the rear of the store where, as Klara describes it, "two AFs were sitting on the Glass Table, swinging their legs freely as Manager had told them to do" (Ishiguro, 2021: 10). As deduced from Klara's description, the AFs are instructed to

behave as cute carefree children, idly swinging their legs as if they belong to some wholesome children's cartoon. This is clearly a marketing strategy employed by the manager to showcase how childlike AFs really are in order to appeal to her customers. So despite being designed to mimic children in appearance, AFs still have to be commanded to make them behave like children.

But how can they truly embody this childlike innocence that the manager wants to unload onto them when they have been instructed to act childlike? Would not having to command AFs, meant to replicate children, to behave like children betray the very basis of what the "product" is marketed upon, that these androids are perfect replicas of children? On a literal level, AFs being instructed to swing their legs to be more childlike betrays the image that the manager wants to market, that of AFs being idyllic cute children. However, the fact that AFs have to be instructed to behave in a manner that befits children mimics that of parents who instruct their own children to be polite or act in a certain way to fulfil the image of what society expects a child should be. Therefore, being ordered to act like children, while they have no intention to do so, in itself causes a more perfect mimicry of children than if the AFs were to spontaneously burst into a pantomime of what cute, playful children would do. This perfectly illustrates Lacanian psychoanalytical theory about how society functions under the big other: every jest, word, or gesture is done under the symbolic dimension of a greater invisible boundary which sets the limits and meanings of human interaction. This also fits in with Žižek's interpretation on how ideology functions; the interactions and gestures one does are not intended to be literal, the layers of irony and superfluousness are the ingredients that make them genuine. Accordingly, the AFs being instructed to act childlike make them more similar to human children they are trying to mimic, as the AFs launching into an impromptu theatrical display of childlike gestures would be more uncanny.

Therefore, it is possible to claim that both human children and AFs have to be commanded by adults to act in a certain manner that fulfils societal expectations. The programming of AFs does not naturally cause them to act as customers or store managers want them to; instead, they have to be instructed to do so. Another instance where we get the hint that the AFs are able to act outside their routines happens when Klara decides to break her pose and touches sunlight without asking the manager.

Klara's excuse here is that she "didn't want to disturb her by asking permission" (Ishiguro, 2021: 9). AFs are instructed to not disobey the managers, yet they can act on their own if they feel like it as Klara chooses to do so under the supervisor's absence. This incident demonstrates that AFs are autonomous in their actions. Thus, it is shown that there is a degree of autonomy, therefore consciousness existing within AFs, as they can choose not to do something that has been instructed by humans, just like how a child can choose to disobey his or her parents. So at a first glance, it might appear that because AFs are robots and depend on direct instructions from humans, they happen to be completely different from human children. However, these elements make them have more in common with human children or humans in general, as human children also possess an autonomy within themselves and can decide to disregard their parents.

Other than the fact that Klara possesses a consciousness that allows her to act beyond commands from humans, another quality that highlights the complexity of her character is her sense of religiosity. The religious inclination that Klara develops happens in the context of her communion with the Sun. The title of the novel, **Klara and the Sun**, highlights the importance of the link between Klara and the Sun, stressing its significance within the narrative. It is important to emphasise that the title of the novel does not happen to be Klara and Josie, Klara and the sick child, or something that is similarly melodramatic, but instead is **Klara and the Sun**. The connection between Klara and the Sun, among all the other characters, is the only bond which is deemed worthy of being titular and put under the spotlight. This is so, because Klara's religious belief in the Sun, and her quasi worship of him as a deity happens to be one of the fundamental dynamics within the novel.

The Sun becoming an object of devotion for Klara has its roots in the fact that AFs are solar-powered. As AFs are solar-powered, they exhibit a fear of death in the absence of the sun. Klara mentions that this was a fear she had when she was new, worrying how she would get weaker because she could not see the Sun (Ishiguro, 2021: 9). Klara, by having made such a connection, associating the sun directly with life, bestows divine powers onto the Sun, mirroring the solar cults of the antiquity, which likewise deified the Sun for its indispensability to human life. One particular episode that solidifies the Sun's image as something that gives life in Klara's mind

happens when she observes a beggar and his dog. Klara tracks and observes the duo through numerous occasions when she is put on the storefront. In one instance, she notices the duo has not moved all day; thus, she deduces that they must be dead. However, the following day, Klara sees the Sun shine its rays on the duo, which is followed by the beggar talking, smiling and petting his dog. Henceforth, Klara deduces that the two got stronger thanks to "the Sun's special nourishment" (Ishiguro, 2021: 39). At one point Klara even reprimands herself, although not explicitly, for blaspheming. Overjoyed at the prospect of being able to look out at the store window again, she mentions how she was "so excited that for a moment [she] nearly forgot about the Sun and his kindness" (Ishiguro, 2021: 13). In her adoration of the sun, Klara sounds like the exact copy of a devout believer, who would reprimand themselves for not being thankful and praying to god for every joyous moment.

Right out of the gate, Klara refers to the sun as a "he" out of an Apollonian, Hyperion-like association (Ishiguro, 2021: 9). Solar cults are a common feature of many different cultures, but the solar deity is not always masculine, such as the Japanese solar deity Amaterasu (Leeming, 2005: 361). For Klara, the sun is a definite "he", a masculine and a patriarchal figure. Masculine and patriarchal authority figures are noticeably absent in the novel, which makes her perception of the Sun as a masculine authority figure even more worthy of attention. The only named fathers we know of are Paul, Josie's father, and Capaldi, an artist commissioned by Chrissie to create a "portrait" of Josie and a failed patriarch who lost his child. Even at the section of the novel which depicts an interaction meeting between numerous children and their parents, all the parents happen to be mothers. Paul, despite his anti-conformist tendencies, is nonetheless a figure without any influence or authority, as he has to retreat to a marginalised community away from the mainstream society and has no say in the life of his daughter whatsoever. Klara's Sun in its patriarchal glory fills the gap of the patriarchal authority figure. He is ever nourishing and protective, and Klara's belief in Sun's powers is unshakeable. The Sun, for Klara, will evolve into a quasi-deity like figure that has power over life and death.

Klara exhibits her spiritual side through the way she interacts with the outside world too. Klara, going over the time she spent in the store, recalls how she had a

special reason for having wanted to be on the store window (Ishiguro, 2021: 12). She, unlike the other AFs, does not wish to be at the store window just for the sake of raking in sunlight for nourishment or priding herself on being chosen to represent the store. For her, what makes being put on display so valuable is being able to look at the outside world and reel in all the details. Klara's strong desire to see more of the outside strongly mirrors her overall religious inclination. She chooses to stare and observe the outside world just out of sheer intellectual curiosity, an endeavour with no material gain, which would be incomprehensible for the rest of the cast, human and robot alike. Her religious inclination is born out of this same disregard for the material plane.

Klara eventually leaves the store and finds herself embroiled in the complexities of human life when she is bought by Chrissie for her daughter Josie, a sickly fourteen-year-old. Josie's illness is revealed to be a side effect of genetic therapy. In the world of **Klara and the Sun**, where society has become assuredly transhumanist and hyper-competitive, genetic therapy is adopted by many well-to-do families in order to enhance the career prospects of their offspring. Although it is not stated explicitly within the novel, through many small details and snippets it is understood that genetic augmentation and robotics have caused vast gulfs of inequality in this world. Klara understands her place in this world to be accompanying Josie and ensuring the happiness of her and her family. Klara accordingly tries to fulfil her duty in the face of both Josie's illness and the machinations of her parents, who, having already lost one daughter to genetic augmentation, are struggling to cope with the prospect of losing Josie too.

The dangerous and potentially fatal genetic editing procedures that children are subjected to are called "lifting". These gene editing procedures are employed within this world to enable children to have a chance at enrolling in prestigious universities. These elements of the novel immediately recall to mind the hyper-competitive educational systems of Asian countries, most infamously Korea's. Korea's college admission test, the Suneung, happens to be "an eight-hour marathon" which quizzes the students across multiple disciplines (Wang, 2023). The Suneung is of such importance that the country closes its airspace and delays "the opening of the stock market" during the exam (Wang, 2023). This is so, because the exam "not only

determines university placements and jobs but even future relationships" (Wang, 2023). The novel's description of its educational system is extremely similar. Although in the novel there is no central exam of sorts, the requirements of universities are so extreme that a human who has not been subjected to genetic editing procedures has no hope of entering such institutions other than relying on the "charity" of generous and liberal colleges who admit students who have not been lifted.

The novel expands on the real life problematic presented by hyper-competitive education systems by introducing biological augmentation to the story; thereby, asking a very posthuman question: if the stakes were this high, would people still risk the lives of their children so they can have a shot at vertical mobility? The novel's answer to this question is a resounding yes; as despite losing her first daughter, Sal, Chrissie goes on to have Josie go through being "lifted" also. As to what happens to people who choose not to augment their children and conform with the hyper-competitive, achievement obsessed world of **Klara and the Sun**, the novel presents two examples: one of these is Josie's neighbour and teenage sweetheart Rick and his mother Helen, who live in a decrepit little house bereft of any hope of vertical mobility; the other example is the heavily armed "community" that Paul, Josie's father, lives in. The community's ranks are composed of "former professional elites" and are heavily armed because they need to defend themselves against "different groups […] should the need arise" as Paul puts it, which results in Helen accusing them of being fascists (Ishiguro, 2021: 207).

Once the children are subjected to genetic enhancement, they start understanding their course materials without the need of an in-person tutor. These children, however, do still require remote teaching. Josie, who is lifted, is instructed only through remote tutors, while Rick, who is not lifted, has to rely on old textbooks. Rick's mother, Helen, explains that these old textbooks happen to belong to an older time before the intrusion of genetic therapy into human life, hence they are the only suitable teaching material left for unlifted children such as Rick. The fact that there is a difference between the school textbooks of pre-genetic therapy world and post-genetic therapy demonstrates that there emerged massive gulfs in regard to equality between lifted and unlifted children. One of these divisions is the

unbridgeable gap between the intellectual capabilities of lifted children and unlifted children, so much so that the textbooks of the old are now made inefficient in the education of lifted children. The lifted children happen to eclipse unlifted children so much in their intellectual capacity that a child that has not been lifted has no hope of competing with lifted children, whether it be career-wise or education-wise. In the novel, except for a few universities, the majority of colleges do not accept unlifted applicants under no conditions. The competition is so dire that Rick and his mother have to rely on favouritism from an "old flame of hers" to get Rick accepted into a college (Ishiguro, 2021: 152). The other insurmountable gulf is an effect of the previous point, which is the social divide caused by the lack of opportunities offered to unlifted children. Because lifted children are offered such privileges in their careers and education, their social and economic expectations are much higher than those of unlifted children; thus, causing a massive gap between the quality of life among the two. The gap is so great that despite the potentially fatal outcomes of genetic therapy, many parents opt to have their children get genetically enhanced.

The social inequality introduced by technologies such as genetic editing and robotics is never explicitly mentioned; nevertheless, there are quite a lot of hints that point out how the world of **Klara and the Sun** is not quite peaceful. The most prominent hint is the fact that Paul lives in a heavily armed community. The other hint comes from Paul also, as he defends his way of life against Helen by mentioning an unnamed incident in the city, saying that whatever happened might also find its way into the suburbs and is reason enough for Chrissie and Helen to fear for their safety (Ishiguro, 2021: 210). The third hint is the project that Rick is working on in order to impress his possible benefactor; the project happens to be about surveillance drones (Ishiguro, 2021: 221).

Through these hints, it is possible to discern that the world of **Klara and the Sun** is not relatively stable. Paul himself has lost his job as a senior engineer at a chemical plant, along with the rest of his coworkers, because of being "substituted". Although what substitution means is never explained explicitly, it is hinted as being replaced by AI. This deduction is made possible by a certain comment made by a theatre attendant after she refuses Klara a seat in the theatre. The theatre attendant complains how AI has already taken over jobs and how they are now taking over

theatre seats. Another hint towards this comes from an activist who is handing out flyers protesting the demolition of an apartment block housing some two hundred people who are defined as being "post-employment", highlighting how these people were made unemployable by the fact of being substituted. The community that Paul lives in, which consists mostly of the former professional elite, also offers another hint towards the nature of these substitutions. The fact that a segment of society has been made redundant by the advances of technology shows that the world of this novel is incredibly unstable. This instability is caused by both the society's commodification of human bodies through genetic augmentation and by its disintegrating of human relationships through social divisions introduced by its technological advances.

Just as parents are willing to put their children's health at stake in hope of giving them better future prospects, they are likewise willing to sacrifice their social lives for the same goal. Children who are lifted are subject to so-called interaction meetings, as these children have no friends otherwise. Since these children do not go to school, they do not have peers that they can socialise with; henceforth, the parents of these children organise such meetings to help them socialise. Similar to how Suneung has the power to determine "future relationships", having been lifted or not also plays a similar role in the novel. Rick is ostracised to such a degree that he is not invited to an interaction meeting hosted by Chrissie. His sudden intrusion to the party causes both the attending children and their parents to be surprised, as these meetings are closed to unlifted children. Parents themselves treat these socialisation events as sorts of practice sessions with their ultimate aim being to aid their children's academic and career ventures. The sacrificing of social ties, family relations, and cultural stability align with Sloterdijk's vision of the posthuman future, in which the humanist project of taming and cultivating men would no longer be a cultural task aiming to create a fraternity of the educated, but instead it will be a scientific endeavour aiming to create more efficient and productive workers.

The existence of AFs also serves to prove how lonely the children are in the world of **Klara and the Sun**. So much so that there are products, robots, specifically marketed as companions for children. Children are socially isolated to such a degree that they need to be made social through robot companions and interaction meetings.

Klara seems to realise this too, as she makes a point of identifying loneliness as a fatal condition which she has to prevent at all costs. For her, loneliness is an ever-lurking menace, threatening children and adults alike.

The fact that parents' main motivation in having interaction meetings is only improving their children's career prospects shows that interpersonal relationships within the world of **Klara and the Sun** are thoroughly materialistic. The very fact that socialisation has now become something to be practised shows the problematic nature of this society. As an example of this obsession, Klara retells an encounter during her time in the store as she observes the remarks exchanged by the store manager and a customer:

> 'He's a B2,' Manager said. 'Third series. For the right child, Rex will make a perfect companion. In particular, I feel he'll encourage a conscientious and studious attitude in a young person.' (Ishiguro: 2021, 11)

So even though the children in the novel are isolated to the maximum, their artificial companions are still not marketed under the banner of just being an outlet of socialisation but instead as being another gadget towards enhancing the child's capacity for study. The ultimate selling point of AFs happens to be encouraging children to study harder. In this world, all is cast under the juggernaut of social climberism.

However, Klara's position within the household as a companion to Josie gets more complicated as Josie's illness gets worse. It is slowly revealed that Chrissie has other plans for Klara. Subsequently, the novel delves into something deeper than just social commentary by specifically exploring how authenticity and the idea of consciousness should be defined, through the plot point to "replace" Josie in the event of her passing. This other plot point, which is revealed during the later chapters of the novel, has Chrissie try to meld Klara into a copy of Josie. Chrissie, who is deeply traumatised by the passing of her elder daughter, Sal, thinks that she will not be able to handle losing Josie also, as Josie has not responded favourably to gene-therapy and is now seriously ill. Sal happens to be memory holed by the family and goes almost completely unmentioned by Josie if it were not for Klara bringing her up after seeing a picture. Even in the picture kept by Josie, Sal appears with her back to

the camera with her face obscured. Furthermore, it is implied that what lies at the root of Paul and Chrissie's divorce might be their argument about whether they should go ahead with lifting Josie after Sal's death. However, Sal's fate haunts the characters within the novel, as they all suspect Josie might end up just like her.

This results in Chrissie hiring Capaldi to craft a highly accurate artificial body, an exact copy of Josie's, to transplant Klara's mind into. This project involves Josie and her mother frequently visiting Capaldi to pose for a "portrait", resulting in the more simple-minded housekeeper to identify Capaldi as some sort of pervert. For Chrissie, Klara's impeccable observational skills coupled with her intimacy with Josie make her a perfect candidate for a possible replacement of her daughter.

The idea of replacing Josie, which becomes a point of debate and contemplation for numerous characters within the novel, relates to age-old philosophical questions that have also been focal points of criticism for posthumanist critics. One of these questions is whether or not the individual is unique, and if he is, then what is unique about him? What role does embodiment play in the context of uniqueness? Would it be possible to separate consciousness from the body? The characters within the novel grapple with these questions due to Chrissie and Capaldi's project of having Klara replace Josie by transferring her consciousness into a specially crafted copy of Josie's body. Numerous scenes within the novel concern Chrissie calculating whether Klara is capable of being the replacement. At different points, Chrissie has play acting sessions with Klara as if she is Josie, with Chrissie being intimate with Klara in a way that is irregular for her. So the question remains (the possibility that Klara as Josie might not be successful in mending Chrissie's feelings in the event of Josie's passing notwithstanding) whether Klara would be able to replicate Josie completely and perfectly. Within the novel, Paul and Chrissie find themselves taking different angles at this question.

The character qualities of Paul and Chrissie become important when it comes to dissecting their attitudes in regard to having Klara as a substitute for Josie, as they have conflicting views on society. Paul is "substituted" from his engineering job and lives in an alternative community. He happens to have an extremely negative opinion about the state the world is in and is of the opinion that they have bequeathed a mess to the next generation. He believes that "there are all kinds of ways to lead a

successful life" and seeking success in a mainstream manner, that is through colleges and careers, is not the only path to a fulfilling life (Ishiguro, 2021: 210). Chrissie by contrast is a high-ranking employee in the law department of a company named "Goodwins" (Ishiguro, 2021: 171). Being a hard worker, she feels pity that Paul has been substituted and now no-one can make use of his talents. Upon a suggestion by Paul that her life is dominated by work and she should stop hanging on, Chrissie clarifies that she has to hang on because if she stops "Josie's world [and her] world, would collapse" (Ishiguro, 2021: 171).

Another crucial difference is their handling of stress and anxiety. Chrissie is more prone to outbursts and is unable to hide the fact that she is overstressed all the time. Klara, during her multiple observations of Chrissie, always notes tones of anxiety and stress. The fact that Chrissie is overstressed the majority of the time, coupled with Chrissie's sudden emotional changes, result in Klara's sensory systems categorising Chrissie's face as multiple boxes, sometimes even having the same organ such as her eye repeat. Sudden changes of mood that Chrissie goes through can be seen in two sessions of role playing that she and Klara have. In the first role playing session, Chrissie asks Klara to do an impression of Josie. After Klara goes on with the impression, Chrissie has an outpouring of emotion, but as "Klara as Josie" insists she will get better, Chrissie goes back on forth between asking Klara on how Klara knows Josie will get better since she is just a robot and to continue pouring her heart out to Klara as Josie.

In the second session of role-playing, Klara and Chrissie are alone in Chrissie's car after a visit to Capaldi. Here, Chrissie promises that she will love Klara like no one ever will while ruminating on how Paul did not want to go through with the lifting procedure after Sal, but Chrissie herself pressed on as she felt it was the best for Josie. Chrissie runs through a series of promises and absurd dreams as she lists possibilities such as her taking a new man or living in isolation with just her, Rick, Klara, and Helen. She makes repeated promises about how much she will love Klara, but only on the condition that she replaces Josie. Chrissie's promises of love bring to mind the warning given by Klara's store manager on how children will make promises of unwavering affection and a happy home to the AFs, which will not be kept by the children. The absurdity and desperation of Chrissie's demands are

emphasised with her quick, snappy replies to Klara. When Klara says she is sorry about what happened with Sal, Chrissie responds, “Feeling sorry’s not what I’m asking of you. I’m asking you to do what’s within your power” (Ishiguro, 2021: 190). When she lists a series of sentences about how much she will love Klara, Chrissie finishes her sentences by commanding her “Continue Josie for me. Come on. Say something” (Ishiguro, 2021: 190). Another element that contrasts with her somewhat schizophrenic displays of affection happens when Chrissie quickly dismisses Klara's question about what will happen to her current body:

> ‘I did wonder. If I were to continue Josie, if I were to inhabit the new Josie, then what would happen to…all this?’ I raised my arms in the air, and for the first time the Mother looked at me. She glanced at my face, then down at my legs. Then she looked away and said: ‘What does it matter?’. (Ishiguro, 2021: 191)

Chrissie assuming her same old attitude towards Klara exposes her total dismissal of Klara’s personhood. For Chrissie, the only important thing is Klara agreeing to become Josie; what happens to either Klara’s personality or body is irrelevant to her. Her dismissing the importance of Klara’s body also mirrors the attitude of the transhumanist society that they live in. This viewpoint is similar to Moravec’s claim that consciousness would remain unaltered when it is transmitted between different bodies, the point which outraged Hayles. Chrissie here mirrors Moravec’s opinion and the humanist view on embodiment, in which embodiment is a non-consequential aspect of life. However, what is being discarded here is not solely Klara’s body and personality but reality itself. Klara replacing Josie does not mean that Josie continues to live; it only puts on an illusion.

Chrissie’s willingness to live in such an illusion is an extension of her conformism, and her willingness is also linked with her unwavering belief that Josie must go through being lifted. Chrissie’s inability to imagine an alternative lifestyle for herself (as demonstrated by her rebuke to Paul’s suggestion that one’s career is not everything) and her daughter shows that she is thoroughly crushed by the capitalist system that she is living in. As Fisher points out, the primary instrument in capitalism’s arsenal is making people believe that there is no realistic alternative to capitalism. Likewise, Chrissie is unable to imagine an alternative lifestyle. Her hopelessness is to such an extent that she would rather construct a false reality in

which her dead daughter would be continued by a robot replica. Chrissie's willingness to disconnect herself from reality ties in with Fisher's argument on how capitalism can only exist in an artificial reality. Capitalism defines what objective reality is, hence, Chrissie's unshakeable belief that she has to have a career and that Josie must go through being lifted.

However, choosing not to confront reality is not a trait unique to Chrissie, as it has become the norm for the society they live in. A particular example of this is when Paul gifts Josie a mirror. The mirror is a rare item in this world, as Paul, despite being an engineer, has to consult another member of his community to learn how to craft such an object. As he gifts this item to Josie, Paul brags about how the mirror shows the beholder for what he or she is, unlike the other mirrors present in the world which happen to be screens that always apply filters. The father and daughter make the following exchange:

> 'Isn't it strange how we all tolerate it? All these mirrors that show you the wrong way round? This one shows you the way you really look. No heavier than the average compact.'
> 'That's brilliant! Did you invent this?'
> 'I'd like to claim it, but the real credit goes to my friend Benjamin, one of the other guys in the community. He came up with the idea, but he didn't know quite how to pull it off in real-world terms. So I did that part. Fresh out the oven, only last week. What do you think, Josie?'
> 'Wow, it's a masterpiece. I'm going to be checking my face in public the whole time now. Thanks! You're such a genius. Does this thing run on batteries?' (Ishiguro, 2021: 163)

Actual mirrors are so rare that Josie is completely oblivious of their existence, prompting her to ask Paul whether the mirror runs on batteries. This exchange shows that in the world of **Klara and the Sun**, people are unwilling to see their real selves, even though others see them for what they are. The people rather prefer to create an artificial reality than confront reality itself; therefore, Chrissie's inclination to create an alternative reality of her own is only a reflection of society at large.

Another example that points out how Chrissie might not stay loyal to her promises of love for Klara, while also highlighting her character which disposes things she has no use for, is the uncertain fate suffered by the "bereavement doll". This doll's existence is revealed by Capaldi when he tries to reassure Chrissie about

how Klara is a suitable replacement for Josie in the possibility that she passes away, and how Klara would be unlike the bereavement doll since she is a product of much more advanced technology. It is possible to deduce the doll's fate by an anecdote told by Helen and Rick. The mother and son relate to Klara that they have witnessed Chrissie trying to wrestle a humanoid figure that resembled Sal to the ground, dragging her back to the house. The fact that the doll is seen trying to run away hints at the toxic relationship fostered by Chrissie, in which she tries to replace a living being by an altogether different entity. As Chrissie is so subsumed by the consumerist society she lives in, she is unable to consider how a living person cannot be substituted by another. Chrissie even goes on to use violence when the substitute shows resistance. Her disregard for the individuality of this doll is another problematic aspect, as she disregards the doll's autonomy and treats her as being "less than". Henceforth, Klara is prepared as a more advanced form of substitution after the failure of the bereavement doll. The insistence of Chrissie's reliance on a robotic copy of her daughter to not have to live with the grief of her daughter's death aligns with her consumerist mindset, in which she cannot face the brutal reality, but has to construct an alternative one through the use of bought products such as dolls and AFs.

Thus, for Chrissie, aligning with her view on life, the body or even persons are disposable. Despite the agony of losing one daughter and possibly losing another, Chrissie cannot shake off her materialistic outlook. She is unwavering on her stance on this issue, as at a later point in the novel Chrissie has another outburst to Rick when Josie is quite ill on her deathbed, asking him whether he feels that he won because he had not gone through with the lifting process. Chrissie argues to an outraged Rick that he should not feel that he is victorious, for, although he lives, his life is mediocre.

As the other parent, although he does not have custody of Josie, Paul has completely differing views on both life and the prospect of Klara taking over Josie. One stellar example of this is seen when Paul takes Klara for a ride in Chrissie's car. He turns the engine on by inserting a key in the ignition socket, meaning that the car is not a hybrid or an electric vehicle. Subsequently, Paul brags about how he picked this vehicle back when the couple were still married. It is possible to deduce that

electric vehicles must exist in this universe since one of the main selling points of AFs is that they are solar-powered, meaning they use clean, green energy. Paul choosing to buy a vehicle that runs on gas instead of electric reflects his dislike of contemporary society.

During the car ride, as the duo contemplate the prospect of having Klara replace Josie, Paul questions whether Klara could ever be capable of imitating his daughter perfectly. Human character, according to Paul, unfolds like a series of rooms within rooms. He argues that no matter the perseverance of the explorer, it would be impossible to chart out the plans and learn fully the qualities of each and every room. The room analogy here being a reference to Klara's quirk of memorising house plans intimately, Paul argues that every human has something in them that is unknowable, and because of this factor it would be impossible to imitate another human being perfectly, as the pretender would always be ignorant of this one unknowable element. Klara in turn says that ultimately, with patience, one could exhaust these endless rooms, leaving no stone unturned. Paul, despite seemingly being the more sentimental of the two, meaning between him and Chrissie, comes to claim that even he has the odd chance of going along with pretending Klara is Josie, while Chrissie could never believe in this charade, as she is too “old fashioned”.

The conversation ends with Paul expressing that because of his engineering background, he might still lead himself to believe that his daughter really is not so unique, further adding that there is a part of him that does believe how science finally discovered that there is nothing so unique in a person, in this case his daughter. The mastery of science over the individual means that no one is irreplaceable. Paul claims that this is why he hates people like Capaldi because he fears their arguments about the commonness of the individual might be true:

> I think I hate Capaldi because deep down I suspect he may be right. That what he claims is true. That science has now proved beyond doubt there’s nothing so unique about my daughter, nothing there our modern tools can’t excavate, copy, transfer. That people have been living with one another all this time, centuries, loving and hating each other, and all on a mistaken premise. A kind of superstition we kept going while we didn’t know better. That’s how Capaldi sees it, and there’s a part of me that fears he’s right. (Ishiguro, 2021: 200)

Relatedly, Descartes has asserted that it is impossible for machines to replicate

humans since the infinity of complexities would come to mean that man is impossible to impersonate. In fact, Paul's analogy about the infinity of rooms mirrors Descartes in that he also argued that the godly perfect human body harbours an infinity of parts that would be nigh impossible to be imitated by a man-made machine. However, Klara and her series of AF robots already demonstrate that they can imitate human consciousness, to the degree of having both Paul and Chrissie contemplate the possibility that Klara could serve as a continuation. Additionally, Paul and Chrissie forget that Klara's perfect impersonation of Josie is in looks and behaviour only; therefore, they disregard the importance of embodiment. Even if Klara was a perfect impersonator of Josie, that still would not reduce the uniqueness of individuality that Klara and Josie have. The other irony is the fact that the impersonator would have an infinite complexity to themselves too. Klara perfectly demonstrates that she is a thinking and feeling individual; therefore, she is not less than Josie. In other words, having an indecipherable nature is not only unique to the human subject but also to the posthuman subject which in this case is the android Klara.

Furthermore, Paul's argument relies on the impenetrability of the other. As psychoanalysis would tell us, it is not possible to know oneself, so how could one claim to know another fully? Our perception of the other is merely a reflection in one's consciousness, being unrelated to the existence of this subject in the real material plane. Paul's comment that it might be possible for him to delude himself that Klara really is Josie is done in ignorance of the fact that a perfect replacement of Josie could not be told apart by Paul in the first place if it were not for Paul knowing that this "Josie" was a pretender. The uniqueness of the other is something impossible to be understood by the subject. As Paul hints that there is something in Josie that could never be replicated by Klara, he presumes that as an observer he would be aware of this unique factor despite not being able to name it. This idea of indecipherable uniqueness is not something that belongs to Josie in the real material plane, but it is something that exists in people's perception of her. As Braidotti would argue, each individual is unique not because they fit into certain identities such as daughter, relative or human, but because they possess the bare force of life, zoe, within them. Division of life based on their perceived uniqueness is an arbitrary

anthropocentric notion, hence Braidotti, Plant, and Haraway's vehement opposition to the concept of categorisations.

Another irony is the fact that despite Paul going on about how there must be something unique in each individual, he fails to see how Klara might be a unique individual on her own. The conversation just revolves around Josie, disregarding the fact that Klara would have to sacrifice her own personhood if she is to become Josie. Because she is an AF, a robot, people surrounding Klara do not even consider that she might be a conscious being. Thus, the vitality that is possessed by Klara is seen less than the human "bios".

However, Klara is aware of the fact that even if she were to continue Josie for her parents, such an outcome would be suboptimal. Therefore, Klara, with all her power, does her utmost to make sure Josie lives. Her strong desire to save Josie also affects Klara's relationship with the Sun. Klara comes up with the idea that the Sun has the power to save Josie just as he saved the Beggar Man. Klara reasons that an all-powerful figure such as the Sun could have abandoned a child like Josie to death only because of anger. She reasons that if she were to ask a favour from the Sun, in this instance ask him to cure Josie, she must give something in return. This results in Klara developing the idea that if she were to destroy a Cootings Machine, the Sun would grant Klara's wish of curing Josie.

The machine in question happens to be a construction vehicle, emitting a great deal of smoke while operating. Klara broadly refers to the smoke emitted by the vehicle and the environmental damage it causes as "pollution". During Klara's time in the store, such a vehicle operates in front of the store for some time. The smoke generated by the vehicle blocks sun rays from reaching the store, causing Klara to identify the vehicle as a source of evil since it prevents the Sun from giving the AFs nourishment and blocks the Sun's visage. The construction vehicle is not the sole object identified as evil by Klara, as she also encounters a bull, of whose "signals of anger and the wish to destroy" give Klara quite a scare. Klara feels that the very existence of this creature must be a mistake (Ishiguro, 2021: 93):

> At that moment it felt to me some great error had been made that the creature should be allowed to stand in the Sun's pattern at all, that this bull belonged somewhere deep in the ground far within the mud and darkness, and its presence on the grass

could only have awful consequences. (Ishiguro, 2021: 93)

It is possible to deduce that Klara has some conception of good and evil from her identification of both the machine and the bull as opposing forces to sunlight. Klara's grasp of the concepts of good and evil functions only in reference to the Sun which gives it religious undertones. This is similar to how religions also base their definitions of good and evil only in reference to God. The fact that Klara believes the bull should belong somewhere deep in darkness also points out that she has formulated a concept of hell, of an abyss or of an inferno which would house things that are hostile to the almighty, which in Klara's case happens to be the Sun. Furthermore, Klara believes that this evil creature should be deprived of God's grace, as she wishes it should not be allowed to stand beneath sunlight.

Klara first communicates her offer of destroying the Cootings Machine in exchange for Josie's health to the Sun in a particular barn. The barn belongs to a certain McBain, and hence is called McBain's barn, which is, when viewed from Josie's house, the last place the sun passes by before setting down, inadvertently becoming a place of quasi-worship for Klara. As she visits the barn, Klara follows strict courtesies to demonstrate utmost respect for the Sun. Klara even bows her head as she asks for help. Whenever she refers to the Sun, Klara mentions its "great kindness". In the visit in which she wants help from the Sun for Josie, Klara prays to the Sun, even though she does not name the act as praying:

> So I gathered my thoughts and began to speak. I didn't actually say the words out loud, for I knew the Sun had no need of words as such. But I wished to be as clear as possible, so I formed the words, or something close to them, quickly and quietly in my mind.
> 'Please make Josie better. Just as you did Beggar Man.' (Ishiguro, 2021: 149)

Klara displays all the qualities of a believer terrified in the face of his object of worship. Klara constantly praises the Sun's greatness and wishes for him not to spare his kindness from Josie on account of his anger for mankind. Her assumption of God being angry at mankind mirrors the Old Testament's God who is repeatedly agitated by the idolatry and transgressions of his creations.

As Josie's illness gets worse, Klara decides to act on her mission to destroy the machine. Towards this end, Klara enlists Paul's help. Klara's zeal in destroying

the machine is so great that she is even willing to endanger her health for it. Upon arriving to the lot where the machine is parked, Paul, an expert engineer, explains that the only way to destroy the machine with the tools available to them is to use a certain chemical compound stored in Klara's head. Klara decides to go ahead with the sabotage despite Paul's warning that using some of this liquid might endanger Klara's systems. Klara stands out from the rest of the cast with her decision to go through with the sabotage, as she is willing to sacrifice something from herself for the sake of others with no expectation of material return. The process of "lifting", in terms of sacrifice, is the exact opposite of Klara's decision, as even though parents risk the lives of their children for their benefit, they still do not put their own lives on the line.

Paul deciding to assist Klara in her mission to sabotage the Cootings Machine happens to be the only moment of glory enjoyed by him. Klara, as she recalls the moment, describes Paul in a heroic aura, his figure and shadow blending into a single elongated shape, a piercing phallus as it were. Klara describes the moment as:

> And I remembered the Father talking in the car about the human heart, and how complicated it was, and I saw him standing in the yard, directly in front of the low Sun, his figure and his evening shadow entwining into a single elongated shape as he reached up and unscrewed the protection cap from the nozzle of the Cootings Machine. (Ishiguro, 2021: 220)

In her continuation of the same memory, Paul carries on the splendour of a hero who slew a terrible beast, of which he makes an explicit analogy. Klara recalls:

> I thought then about the Father, closing the door of this very car, looking beyond me towards the yard and the Cootings Machine, saying, 'Don't worry, I heard it. The little fizzing sound. That's the telltale signal. That monster won't rise again.' (Ishiguro, 2021: 225)

Paul's heroic, knight like slaying of some terrible beast gives out an aura of religiousness, having Klara describe Paul as if he is a warrior of God, a knight devoted to divine service. Paul's surname, which is Arthur, contributes towards this reading, recalling the king Arthur, a warrior king likewise famed for his knightly virtues. Paul is the only figure that is inspired by Klara's devotion, as he drives Klara to the Cootings Machine with great dedication upon seeing Klara's wholehearted

belief in how destroying it might cure Josie. Even though it does not make sense to Paul, he nonetheless follows along, believing in "hope" just for the sake of it.

The novel ends with Klara's wish being answered. After a series of days that Josie spends on her deathbed, Klara asks for the curtains of Josie's room to be opened. As the curtains are opened, cloudy weather dissipates and sunlight pours on to Josie, filling her with new strength. The story is concluded with Josie moving on to college, with Rick likewise moving on to higher education. Rick and Josie's paths in life are separated, and their teenage love likewise ends. After Josie moves on to college, Klara is moved into the utility closet and is rarely brought out, with the only stimulation available to her being the small window in the closet that looks outside. Eventually, Klara is brought to the scrapyard.

The only alternative path presented to Klara after Josie leaves for college comes from Capaldi. During a visit to Chrissie's house, Klara is asked by Capaldi whether she is willing to be a part of a greater ideological crusade, in which Klara will serve as a sacrifice to further decipher the inner workings of artificial intelligence. Capaldi explains that people came to fear AI, telling Klara that by volunteering as a sacrifice for an autopsy of sorts, she could help people like him alleviate people's fears. Klara is open to the idea but Chrissie, on behalf of Klara, insists that Klara deserves her slow fade, which, it turns out, means that she will rot in a scrapyard. If this incident is to be taken at face value it will appear that Chrissie, who demonstrates an appetite for vertical social mobility, going as far as to accuse Rick on the verge of her daughter's death whether he feels that he has won because he did not receive gene therapy, suddenly seems to have developed a sentimentalist streak. However, Capaldi is quick to point out that Chrissie's refusal is not out of love for Klara but rather is a means to get back at Capaldi. Chrissie in fact does not do Klara a favour by denying Klara an opportunity for an even greater sacrifice, as Klara's sole motivation in life is to help others. Klara is yet again denied her subjectivity, as she does not get to decide for herself.

Klara is repeatedly asked to sacrifice herself for the wishes of humans, for the first time by Chrissie to replace Josie and the second request coming from Capaldi. These requests which disregard Klara's personhood are in accordance with the rule of robotics as devised by Isaac Asimov, which has the lives of human beings and

their commands placed in a superior position than the lives of robots themselves.[2] Although Klara is asked to make such sacrifices by humans, the sacrifice she ultimately decides to make, that is sabotaging the Cootings Machine to save Josie, is something that she decides on her own accord. Klara's plan to save Josie is something that she comes up with on her own and makes sense only to her as it concerns the special communion between her and the Sun. Her zeal, selfless devotion, and empathy make her, among a cast of human characters, the most compassionate. Likewise, the very fact that Klara can present a narrative demonstrates the depth of her emotional world. Klara identifying the Cootings Machine and the pollution it generates as something bad that ought to be destroyed illustrates how she feels a duty towards doing things that are just, not out of an empty obligation but from a deep-seated feeling of right and wrong. Her strong ethical inclination to the point of breaking the law contrasts sharply with the materialistic world that she lives in. Therefore, even though the series of robots that she belongs to is named Artificial Friends, Klara's friendship, unlike Charlie Friend of **Machines Like Me**, is not artificial at all.

Klara, despite the irony of her being a robot, remains the most tender and compassionate in contrast to other human characters. According to anthropocentric notions, it would be Klara the robot that would lack spiritual and intellectual depth; instead, she maintains a compassionate inner world despite being designed and referred to as a "product". So even if Klara is a commodity that is sold, she does not abide by the materialistic values of the society that she happens to be in. This particular quality of hers is the most striking, as the human characters of the novel lack the spirituality of Klara and are more deeply entrenched in materialism than the non-human robot. Despite having a vibrant inner world, Klara is nonetheless denied her subjectivity, and throughout the novel, she remains in the clutches of a plot to have her "continue" an actual human being in the event of her passing. However, even though the human characters that surround Klara do not realise it, the very fact

[2] The Three Laws of Robotics, as devised by Asimov in his **I, Robot**, are: "One, a robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. […] Two […] a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. […] And three, a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws." (Asimov, 2004: 41)

that they can consider Klara as having the capacity to imitate a human being proves that Klara is a conscious entity. The inability of people surrounding Klara to see the complexity of her character notwithstanding, Klara proves that her strand of idealism has become a rare trait in the world she inhabits. Thus, her existence proves that emotional and spiritual zeal can no longer be thought of as traits unique to humans.

CONCLUSION

One cannot deny the tremendous impact the latest developments in AI technologies have left on both human life and culture. Latest models of AI have proved beyond doubt that human species can no longer hold themselves to be the only living beings capable of functions such as intellectual reasoning and artistic creativity. Up until our contemporary era, humans held themselves to be unique because of the fact that they possessed the aforementioned traits. Humanism, in particular, evolved to become an ideology that placed the human being in the centre of the universe. Moreover, since humanism believed it was the mind that exalted mankind over other species, it created hierarchical categories which divided being according to its own subjective criteria. As our contemporary age is witnessing a breaking down of interspecies boundaries, in response to humanism, posthuman critical theory focused on formulating an alternative way of viewing the world and culture without placing humans at the centre. Through using a posthuman critical lens, it is possible to argue that the contemporary British novel reflects the idea that humans have been indeed dethroned from being the sole creatures capable of possessing emotions, intellectual capacity, and artistic creativity.

Towards this end, as examples of contemporary British novel, this study examined McEwan's **Machines Like Me** and Ishiguro's **Klara and the Sun**. Both novels have non-human characters that are more idealistic than their human associates. **Klara and the Sun**'s Klara has a profoundness that is of a religious variety while Adam of **Machines Like Me** has a depth to his character that is of a more secular nature. Both of these non-human characters come to espouse characteristics that were thought to be held only by humans. Both Adam and Klara are more idealistic, tender, and passionate than the cast of human characters that they are surrounded with, and they, along with their respective novels, further share a multitude of elements.

Adam and Klara possess some particular elementary traits that make them special. Adam is able to and likes to form complex opinions and tastes about art and philosophy while Klara remains ever curious about humans and the way their

relationships function. As mentioned by Pepperell, it is the ability to perceive contradictory signals and formulate a synthesis from these stimuli that makes it possible for these posthuman personas to possess a three dimensional character. However, due to them being outsiders to the human world, the synthesis that these characters come up with in these circumstances is outlandish and incomprehensible to humans. Adam is able to perceive contradictions regarding reality and his inner world, such as his love for Miranda coupled with his wish to do what he believes to be the most beneficial for all humanity; however, the solution he comes up with in face of this dilemma is radically unorthodox, which has him reporting his beloved to the police despite the fact that her crime could arguably be justified. Klara, because of her worship of the Sun, likewise believes that sabotaging a construction vehicle would convince the Sun to cure Josie. Klara never wavers from believing in her plan and tells no human character of its details. Adam with his unusual perception of morals and Klara with her devotion to Sun's ability to bestow miracles both demonstrate that both of them possess a utopian and idealistic outlook on life.

The posthuman entities in both novels suffer the same fate of being objectified. The AFs are categorised and named according to race and gender and so do the Adam and Eves. While the former are made as companions for children and have fabric bodies, the latter are made to look like actual humans, sexually attractive ones at that. The former's looks are crafted to appeal to children with their cuteness factor while the latter are covertly marketed for sexual use. Nonetheless, the bodies of these robots are commodified from the get-go. Although the purpose for which these robots are objectified is different, they still result in humans trying to assign particular traits onto these entities that they do not possess in reality. This holds particularly true in the context of identities. For example, Klara is a robot and a "girl" but in what sense? The word girl refers to a biological female, a human, while Klara only imitates the appearance of a human girl, her inner workings; in all ways meaning biological, intellectual, and her sensory organs remain completely different from that of a human. **Machines Like Me**'s Adam is identical in this regard. He is indistinguishable from a human male from the outside, yet his actual nature does not fit the classic definition of a man. As Braidotti points out, subjectivities that were applicable solely to human subjects in the past have now escaped interspecies

boundaries. Because of this contradiction, both of these characters have to live on with identities assigned to them by humans that contradict what they are in reality.

One element that converges in both novels is their mention of humanity's fear of these new posthuman entities. In **Klara and the Sun** this point is made by Capaldi in his visit to Chrissie, the visit in which he explains his desire to reverse engineer Klara for research. Capaldi explains that there now is a massive backlash against AFs and that this prejudice is caused by people not understanding how AFs operate intellectually, that people fear how clever AFs have become. He mentions that people accept AFs' judgements to be wise and reliable, "[b]ut they don't like not knowing how [AFs] arrive at them" (Ishiguro, 2021: 261). Therefore, he proposes that they reverse engineer them not only to ease humanity's fears, but also to expand scientific knowledge. Although Klara is eager to assist, Chrissie refuses to hand over Klara, claiming that her Klara deserves her "slow fade" (Ishiguro, 2021: 262). Capaldi protests Chrissie's opposition in vain by making a more ideological appeal, exclaiming that they "have to resist this backlash" (Ishiguro, 2021: 262). This happens to be a trope that is not only consistent in posthuman literature but also in Ishiguro's writing, as he inserted a similar fear of humans against clones in **Never Let Me Go**. However, the primary source of misery in both novels is not monstrous posthumans but instead crumbling of social ties which is caused by an ultra-materialistic and capitalist society, with advancing technology having accelerated its downfall. Similarly, the alternate history 1980s portrayed by **Machines Like Me** is a witness to numerous protests against widespread automation. Depicting a society that has already been gravely wounded by war, fear of being replaced by robots serve as an instigator of social chaos. Both novels feature social unrest as a result of robots and AI replacing human jobs with the only difference being that Ishiguro's novel adds genetic editing to the mix. The soul crushing effect of capitalism that these novels depict mirrors contemporary circumstances. To better understand this phenomenon and how it plays into the plots of their respective novels, theorists such as Žižek, Wark, and Fisher were cited.

Machines Like Me's Turing and **Klara and the Sun**'s Capaldi, being scientists, both play the role of being doctors of robots, meaning that they take it upon themselves to not only diagnose and tamper with robots, but that they also

choose to perform pseudo-autopsies on them. Both of them go on about their research on AI through dissecting and analysing the bodies of "dead" robots. They both recognise AI to be technological marvels and stand as advocates of their brilliance. To them, AI contains thought processes not yet understood by science; therefore, the robot mind and consciousness stand as an uncharted field to be explored. Because of the mystery of the artificial mind, they both share the same curiosity about robots, and they think their thought processes are something that offers a treasure trove of research opportunities. This curiosity leads Turing to believe that Adams and Eves are conscious entities, further causing him to condemn Charlie for having murdered a living being, while Capaldi turns to picking up the cause of championing the marvels of AI. The cerebral nature of both Turing and Capaldi causes them to approach the posthuman characters of their respective novels with more reverence in comparison to the way other human characters do. Capaldi could be argued to have a more exploitative approach to robots due to factors such as him crafting an alternate body for Klara and making a bereavement doll; nevertheless, the very fact that he asks Klara for her consent to be part of his cause in proving AI as being something not to be feared shows that he does have some fundamental respect for posthumans. As Klara throughout the book demonstrates selflessness as one of her characteristic traits, being asked to participate in a cause that concerns the whole of society is, at its core, Capaldi offering a more dignified end for Klara rather than the alternative which has her rusting away in a scrapyard. Chrissie's denial to surrender Klara to Capaldi at the micro level shows the chasm between how Klara and Chrissie respectively view the world. Klara, being more idealist, is willing to sacrifice herself for a cause, while Chrissie views events from a more individualist point of view, asserting that what Klara deserves is actually a "slow fade". Nonetheless, at the end of both novels, AFs and Adam & Eves are discarded for their instability. AFs in particular are feared by mankind for their intelligence as per Capaldi.

Overall, coupled with era defining changes that range from climate change, the rise of artificial intelligence, numerous wars throughout the globe, and the rise of right-wing politics, contemporary novel finds refuge in the posthuman to describe compassion and idealism. In our jaded contemporary era, the British novel finds it

difficult to depict the sentimental passions that these posthuman characters exhibit to have been shown by humans themselves. While during enlightenment or past ages when humanism still held sway, it was possible to foster such hopes about humanity and its potential, the contemporary novel and the contemporary writer is incapable of finding such warmth in humanity. Unlike the science fiction authors of the post-war era, the contemporary British novel is not suspicious of the machine and the artificial. Instead, the contemporary novel seeks to ascribe posthuman creatures with intellectual, ethical, and emotional depth that they see humanity lacking today.

Therefore, it is possible to argue that the contemporary novel demonstrates that although the classical humanist tradition has allocated emotional depth and religious sensitivity to an exclusively anthropocentric dimension, it is now possible to paint a world in which it is humanity that lacks this sensitivity, while a sentient AI can hold and prize these sorts of emotions more than humans. The posthuman entities that have entered human life demonstrate that humanity can no longer continue to believe that only it possesses intellectual depth and emotional complexity. These virtues possessed by said posthuman characters are much more powerful than the emotions expressed by the human characters in their respective novels. This difference highlights the fact that the posthuman characters within these novels are much more passionate about their beliefs. Humanity, in contrast, is much more selfish and materialistic. The posthuman AI is much more selfless, and in their actions and worldviews, they are much more idealistic. These novels depict posthuman entities that possess a variety of attributes such as love, empathy, and compassion that were thought to be exclusively human traits; hence, it is no longer possible to argue that humanity towers over other forms of life because it can think or feel. Henceforth, these novels could be argued to evidence the idea that human attitudes towards posthumans do not have to be based on fear and suspicion, as it is not the posthumans that endanger humans as a species, but humanity's own prejudices.

The speed at which AI technologies continue to develop is truly shocking, so it is possible to say that posthumanism as a branch of critical theory and its reflections in literature will remain a fertile field for further study. Future works could take a more meta approach to literature; since AI authors and intervention of

AI elements in the writing process continue to become more common, the role of the human author in an AI assisted writing process could be dissected. Another area of study could be examining whether ideas such as creativity or art would be defined the same way as they have been in the past. Deriving inspiration from the section in **Machine Like Me** where Charlie questions whether Adam could be truly creative because he as a machine cannot transcribe human emotions, to which Miranda replies "Who said anything about human experience?" (McEwan, 2019: 172), future scholars could investigate what consequences AI created art and AI authors would have in the field of literature. I strongly believe that these suggestions are only a fragment of what could be achieved in this field, as the future of posthuman critical studies in literature, owing to the breakneck speed in which AI technologies develop, still remains uncharted territory.

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