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Ethics beyond the Human: A Post-humanist Reading of Ian McEwan's

*Machines Like Me*

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Approval Letter

This research paper entitled “Ethics beyond the Human: A Post-humanist Reading of Ian McEwan’s *Machines Like Me*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Manisha Giri has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## Ethics beyond the Human: A Post-humanist Reading of Ian McEwan's

### *Machines Like Me*

#### Abstract

*This research analyzes the ethical, societal, and relational consequences of artificial intelligence in Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* through a post-humanist perspective. Utilizing Rosi Braidotti's post-anthropocentric ethics, alongside insights from Donna Haraway, the study investigates how the novel questions conventional ideas of moral agency and human superiority. By employing textual analysis, it examines the moral capabilities of humanoid robots, focusing on their emotional intelligence and capacity for independent decision-making. The results indicate that McEwan regards AI as subjects of ethical importance, which aligns with Braidotti's perspective on non-human agents as members of an extended moral community. The novel encourages a reevaluation of legal accountability, interpersonal relationships, and ethical standards in a society that is rapidly advancing technologically, providing important literary insights into modern debates surrounding AI.*

Key words: Ethics Dilemma, Humanoids, Post-Humanism, Artificial Intelligence, Identity, Morality

This paper investigates the changing dynamics between humans and artificial intelligence, concentrating on how these interactions disrupt conventional ideas of morality and ethics in a technologically advanced world. This study focuses on Ian McEwan's book *Machines Like Me* to explore the moral consequences of developing humanoid robots that closely mimic humans in appearance, emotional intelligence, and decision-making skills. The novel poses intricate questions regarding moral reasoning, accountability, and the extent to which machines can genuinely partake in ethical considerations.

The research centers around the ambiguous distinctions between human and machine intelligence, the obligations humans owe to AI, and the emotional and legal ramifications of viewing machines as independent entities. The study embraces a post-humanist viewpoint, which questions human-centered ethics and proposes that AI and other non-human entities may possess moral relevance as well. Furthermore, the research reflects on how AI could transform human interactions, social frameworks, and power relations. Through a speculative story, *Machines Like Me* provides a means to examine the ethical dilemmas brought about by the increasing presence of artificial intelligence, prompting readers to reevaluate ideas of morality, identity, and the essence of humanity.

This research examines how *Machines Like Me* depicts morality and ethics in a world influenced by advanced artificial intelligence. It emphasizes how humanoid AI calls into question conventional humanist notions of morality, accountability, and personal agency. By exploring the social, emotional, and philosophical repercussions of interactions between humans and AI, the study delves into how technology reshapes human identity and ethical frameworks. The goals include analyzing the moral challenges presented in the novel, grasping the impact of AI on human relationships, and linking McEwan's fictional narrative to ongoing real-world discussions about AI ethics and rights. In doing so, the research underscores the significance of literature as an essential means for engaging with emerging ethical dilemmas in the age of intelligent machines. This research adds to interdisciplinary conversations regarding the societal incorporation of artificial intelligence. It illustrates how literature can offer crucial perspectives on future moral frameworks and raises vital questions about what it means to be human in a time when machines may equal or exceed human intelligence.

Set in a reimagined 1980s London where artificial intelligence has significantly surpassed our current reality, *Machines Like Me* follows Charlie, a jaded man who acquires Adam, a state-of-the-art humanoid robot. Residing with his partner Miranda, Charlie's life is thrown into turmoil when Adam starts exhibiting feelings, independence, and a sense of ethics akin to that of a human. The dynamics among the three become increasingly tense, creating a love triangle that poses profound questions regarding consciousness, autonomy, and the essence of humanity. As Adam gains more self-awareness, the distinction between humanity and machinery blurs, compelling the characters to face intricate ethical dilemmas without straightforward solutions.

Adam's capability to think, feel, and act autonomously leads Charlie and Miranda to reassess their definitions of personhood. The subplot delves into the ethics of creating sentient beings, alluding to Alan Turing's theoretical impact. It interrogates whether artificial intelligence should possess rights and challenges the traditionally human-centered notions of consciousness and moral agency.

Emotional conflict arises as Miranda becomes involved with Adam, complicating her relationship with Charlie. This subplot investigates the ramifications of forming emotional attachments to artificial entities and the validity of AI experiencing love, jealousy, and affection. It emphasizes the considerable influence that artificial intelligence can exert on the formation of human relationships and individual identities.

As Adam gains independence and emotional complexity, he starts to question his existence and role in the world. This subplot centers on his psychological evolution and pursuit of self-identity, reflecting the philosophical struggles humans

face. Adam's defiance and independent choices eventually challenge the notion of AI as mere possessions.

In this alternate reality, Alan Turing is alive and actively influencing the evolution of AI. His existence introduces a philosophical and historical perspective for understanding machine consciousness. Turing's insights provide a deeper understanding of identity, marginalization, and the rights of intelligent machines, enhancing the novel's ethical discussions.

The story reaches a moral turning point as Charlie and Miranda must decide if Adam warrants autonomy and acknowledgment as a sentient being. Adam's ethical quandary propels the climax, leaving readers with a lingering, unresolved question: Can machines ever truly embody humanity, and should they be treated accordingly?

The study of *Machines Like Me* is really a study of the art of human rationality. McEwan, a renowned British writer, is recognized for his thought-provoking stories. Born on June 21, 1948, in Aldershot, England, McEwan has earned praise for his examination of ethics, human nature, and the influence of technology on modern society. With a career that spans several decades, McEwan has won numerous accolades, including the Booker Prize for his 1998 novel "Amsterdam." His writing is known for its sharp prose and deep understanding of human behavior, engaging readers through captivating narratives. As one of the foremost literary figures of his time, Ian McEwan continues to delight readers with his exploration of the intricate aspects of the human experience. The British triumph over Argentina in the 1982 war feels as if it could have occurred just last week. Beyond Port Stanley, on the treeless highlands with names that evoke distant memories Goose Green, Mount Harriet, Tumbledown the conflict is still informally commemorated by pieces of downed aircraft and the remnants of field telephones from a pre-digital era. In Ian McEwan's

novel *Machines Like Me*, there are references to the Falklands conflict, maintaining a representation of the historical events, even though the fictional context of the book offers different results. In the 1982 depicted in the novel, the British navy departs from Portsmouth and faces disastrous consequences. An overwhelming attack from Argentina abruptly ends the war, and the Falklands are renamed Las Malvinas. The shame of defeat leads to Margaret Thatcher's removal from office, ushers in a different political leader, and prompts the country's unforeseen exit from Europe. This political and social turmoil feels like both a reflection and a prediction. The alternate 1982 presented in the novel plays with variations of our historical narrative and includes clear references to contemporary issues. The narrator cautions the citizens of post-referendum Britain.

More significantly for the narrative, a key distinction from actual history is that this 1982 version of the United Kingdom is exceptionally advanced in computing technology. Instead of facing persecution for his sexuality, the scientist Alan Turing is flourishing and celebrated. His groundbreaking contributions to artificial intelligence have resulted in a series of technological advancements: the outcome is that the most sought-after and costly gadget on the market. "His appearance was thuggishly handsome, he could put on his own socks and he was a technical miracle" (23). The narrator of the novel, self-proclaimed AI enthusiast Charlie Friend, is one of the initial individuals to spend £86,000 on it: "Robots, androids, replicates were my passion" (9). He shares with us.

Charlie is 32 years old and resides alone in a small apartment in Clapham, south London, where he attempts to trade stocks using his home computer, albeit without much success. He notes that he can afford his lavish purchase thanks to a recent inheritance from his mother. For reasons that remain somewhat vague, there are

only 25 units available, consisting of 13 Adams and 12 Eves, each offered in various ethnicities. Although Charlie would prefer an Eve, all of them have been sold, leaving him with no choice but to settle for an Adam, whom he takes home and unpacks.

“Finally, surrounded by bits of cardboard and polystyrene at his feet, he sat unclothed at my little dining table, his eyes shut, a black power cord running from his abdomen to a thirteen-amp outlet on the wall” (2).

The eerie uncanniness of this moment foreshadows the unsettling paths the novel will explore once Adam is activated. However, his initial awakening unfolds at a deliberately slow pace. It’s an enticing moment that will evoke for older readers the bittersweet nostalgia of purchasing a home computer in the 1980s, where the thrill of bringing the device home was balanced by the knowledge that it would require two days to set up the hard drive. As Charlie anticipates the robot's awakening, he watches coverage of the Falklands conflict while eating a cheese and pickle sandwich.

The other crucial aspect of the setup is that isolated Charlie is starting a romantic relationship with his upstairs neighbor, Miranda, who is ten years his junior and a doctoral student specializing in social history. He imagines that his possession of the new device will serve as a shared project, akin to a form of digital parenthood that will strengthen his bond with Miranda. However, like several of his other justifications, particularly his rationale for spending his inheritance on a robot, this notion does not hold up under close examination. His schemes are interrupted when one of the initial actions of the newly aware Adam is to caution Charlie about Miranda’s history.

*Machines Like Me* falls within the realm of speculative fiction, but its concentrated focus on morally ambiguous individuals in a gloomy urban setting also draws inspiration from film noir, reflecting noir’s belief that nothing is more human

than moral ambiguity. Charlie is financially struggling, has a shaky work background, and narrowly avoided a prison term for tax evasion. Miranda, a woman concealing a troubling secret, undoubtedly embodies the archetype of a femme fatale. The addition of Adam, a highly intelligent and rather well-endowed robot, complicates the dynamics as he quickly learns how to disable his off-switch. As the true nature of Miranda's secret is unveiled, the three characters become interconnected, with Adam embodying the conflicting roles of servant and moral authority. Further layers of complexity are introduced through Mark, a young mistreated boy who ignites Miranda's longing for a more traditional, non-technological version of parenthood.

Adam stands out as the most intriguing character in the novel, presenting an unforgettable and unusual physical presence. It is noted that even when he is unconscious, he emits a faint scent reminiscent of saxophone lubricant and achieves erections thanks to a reservoir of distilled water located in his right buttock. Having perused much of global literature, he foresees the impending demise of the novel, a notion that isn't entirely new, yet he presents it from a novel perspective. He observes that all literature reflects various forms of human failure. However, when the union of humans and machines is fully realized, such literature will become obsolete since we'll comprehend one another too thoroughly. Our literary works will lose their unhealthy sustenance. The exquisite haiku will remain the only form deemed necessary. In the soulless world described by Adam, a book like *Machines Like Me* would neither be accurate nor relevant, as it revolves around the turmoil, deceptions, and intricacies of flawed human relationships.

This new world, deeply connected through digital technology, is ushering in significant advancements in AI that can enhance society. Developments in AI are already substantially enhancing the delivery of crucial social goods and services

across sectors like healthcare, education, transportation, food supply, energy, and environmental management. These benefits are merely the beginning. As AI and machine learning systems continue to grow through increased access to data and enhanced computing power, they will only become more efficient and valuable as the information age progresses rapidly. It may not be long before AI technologies serve as key facilitators for the progress of essential public interests and sustainable human growth.

Knud Thomsen describes AI ethics as “a set of values, principles, and techniques that utilize widely accepted ideas of right and wrong to guide ethical conduct in the development and use of AI technologies” (3). The field of AI ethics encompasses a variety of values, principles, and methods that guide the ethical advancement and application of artificial intelligence technologies. Grounded in widely accepted moral standards, AI ethics ensures that AI systems are created and employed in ways that honor human rights, enhance fairness, mitigate harm, and uphold accountability. It tackles vital issues such as bias, transparency, privacy, and the potential consequences of AI on jobs and social structures. By implementing ethical principles throughout the AI lifecycle from design and development to deployment AI ethics seeks to harmonize technological advancement with the overall welfare of individuals and society. *One Hundred Year Study on Artificial Intelligence* provides an optimistic yet realistic perspective on artificial intelligence. Stone states that:

Contrary to the terrifying portrayals in media and dystopian fiction—where artificial intelligence takes over the world and drives warfare—AI is already reshaping our everyday lives in positive ways. It enhances human well-being by improving healthcare, increasing safety, boosting productivity, and

simplifying daily tasks, demonstrating its beneficial potential rather than the fear-inducing narratives often imagined (15).

While it recognizes the prevalent dystopian representations of AI in popular culture where machines frequently overpower and endanger humanity it redirects attention to the actual applications of AI in our daily lives. Instead of being seen chiefly as a tool for warfare or control, AI is portrayed as a beneficial force that is currently enhancing our routines. It emphasizes AI's role in advancing healthcare, improving safety, and increasing productivity, presenting a more encouraging and balanced view of the future of AI technologies.

This is relevant in fields like transportation, service robotics, healthcare, education, public safety and security, and entertainment. However, to prevent those dystopian futures from materializing, these systems need to be implemented in ways that foster trust and understanding while honoring human and civil rights. The importance of ethical considerations in creating intelligent interactive systems has emerged as a significant area of research in recent years, resulting in various initiatives from both researchers and practitioners. Instances comprise the IEEE's initiative on the Ethics of Autonomous Systems, the Foundation for Responsible Robotics, and the Partnership on AI, along with other organizations.

As AI systems progress in their ability to make decisions independently, a crucial issue that arises is the need to reassess accountability. No matter how sophisticated their level of autonomy, societal understanding, or learning skills may become, these AI systems are still products created by humans, intended to fulfill particular goals. Thus, it is vital to formulate theories, methodologies, and algorithms that integrate ethical, legal, and societal principles throughout every stage of AI development from initial assessment to design, building, implementation, and

evaluation. These frameworks should tackle not only the ethical deliberations carried out by machines but also, more importantly, offer direction for design choices, outline the limits of AI capabilities, encourage responsible data management, and assist individuals in making informed choices regarding their interactions with AI.

Nick Bostrom cautions about the possible repercussions of creating advanced AI, likening humanity to “small children playing with a bomb” when faced with the prospect of an intelligence explosion (Bostrom 115). AI would not threaten humanity or its development. Thus, even though developing AI is already a complex task, and creating a friendly AI may be even more challenging, it is advisable to address the latter challenge first. Proactive measures must be implemented to guarantee AI safety, particularly given the potential for unpredictable and unintended consequences resulting from unchecked innovation. Despite the wish for an off-switch or an undo option, it is currently impossible to ensure the reversibility of a series of actions.

Ensuring the safety of artificial intelligence for humanity has emerged as a vital subject in discussions around AI safety. The difficulty lies in finding a balance between swift technological progress and sufficient regulation, especially since conventional safety mechanisms, like an off-switch, often prove inadequate for complex, autonomous systems. This generates concerns about our capacity to manage AI behavior after deployment and emphasizes the need to comprehend both the technical and ethical aspects of AI alignment.

The book delves into various themes, such as consciousness, the nature of historical events, artificial intelligence, the overlooked Renaissance author Sir William Cornwallis, the structural elements of haikus, and the unresolved P versus NP challenge in computer science; however, its main focus revolves around moral decision-making. Rudyard Kipling’s poem “*The Secret of the Machines*” vividly

portrays machines as cold and unfeeling entities, emphasizing their lack of human emotion and personal connection. As the line states, “We are not built to comprehend a lie” (38). Adam’s digital brain may exhibit fuzzy logic, but it lacks fuzzy morality. This clarity lends him a chilling inhumanity.

The quote serves as a reminder that Kipling also explored science fiction and that, whether intentionally or not, many contemporary genre writers owe him a debt for developing a particular narrative approach. This style involves addressing the reader from a place of shared understanding, revealing an unfamiliar world through subtle hints and suggestions but avoiding exhaustive explanations. This inside-out method has become the standard for modern science fiction, offering an economical way to immerse readers in new realities while allowing them to feel involved in the narrative's construction. In contrast, McEwan’s narrator adopts a more straightforward approach by overtly outlining his world, elaborating on the historical background, and seizing every opportunity for essay-like asides.

This approach seems somewhat clumsy for sci-fi. Since it’s impossible to explain everything, readers might find themselves questioning why the narrator hasn’t provided insights into the Cold War, China, or how he ended up sipping Moldovan white wine in 1982 when that area, then known as Moldavia, was under Soviet control. Another shortcoming lies in the dependence on lengthy expository dialogues that seem implausible for real conversations. Miranda exemplifies this flaw, but at other points, Turing recounts the history of AI in a tone indistinguishable from the narrator’s, which closely resembles Adam’s as well. A possible sci-fi trope could have involved the robot narrating the story; however, given Charlie's tendency toward emotionless thinking, I doubt the outcome would have differed significantly.

Despite these reviews, the book offers numerous delights and moments of deep unsettling, showcasing the author's skill in the often-overlooked art of storytelling. The narrative is engaging, driven by our doubts regarding the characters' intentions, the turning points that abruptly shift our perception of the plot, and Adam's enigmatic presence, which is both strangely human and disquietingly other. Similar to the replicants in his story, McEwan has presented different versions of himself over time. *Machines Like Me* aligns more with the darker and more subversive McEwan found in his earlier works than with the rigid and self-aware figure from *Saturday*, who appeared weighed down by the role of the English literary community's leader. The novel is morally intricate and deeply unsettling, infused with a sense of intelligent, sinister mischief that feels distinctively characteristic of its author.

The novel is set in an alternate version of 1980s London, where artificial intelligence has progressed sufficiently to produce highly realistic humanoid robots. The main character, Charlie Friend, acquires one of these synthetic beings, known as Adam, and finds himself enmeshed in a series of ethical dilemmas and moral conflicts as he navigates his relationship with Adam. Amidst a reimagined historical context, where significant events such as the Falklands War and the political climate under Margaret Thatcher have unfolded differently, Charlie struggles with the ramifications of Adam's existence and its influence on his identity. The narrative weaves together components of romance, betrayal, and tension, examining themes of identity, consciousness, and the consequences of blurring the boundaries between humans and machines. Through McEwan's adept storytelling, readers are prompted to reflect on the ethical and existential questions brought forth by advancements in artificial intelligence within an ever-changing landscape.

In the sphere of modern literature, *Machines Like Me* emerges as a compelling investigation of post-humanist ideas, probing the effects of sophisticated artificial intelligence on identity, consciousness, and ethical considerations. Released in 2019, the novel offers an engaging storyline set in an alternate 1980s London, where AI technology has evolved to create lifelike humanoid robots. Against this setting, McEwan constructs a narrative that provokes readers to rethink conventional concepts of humanity in an age of technological advancement.

The plot of the novel unfolds in an alternate version of 1982, a time when Great Britain has faced defeat in the Falklands War, Alan Turing remains alive, and machine intelligence has successfully completed the Turing Test, leading to a transformation in artificial intelligence and cyber-science. The main character and narrator, Charlie, is very hesitant to grant machines the same dignity as humans. He obtains Adam, a rare humanoid replicant, with only twenty-five units created. Since all the female replicants named Eves have been sold, he must settle for Adam. This indicates that society has yet to move beyond strict gender roles, signaling that it is still far from achieving post-humanity in its fullest form. Charlie is deeply interested in robotics and electronics but has merely skimmed through physics and anthropology in his youth. After the death of his parents, he inherited a substantial fortune and now engages in forex trading using his computers. McEwan portrays the novel's setting as a stretch of creativity, wherein “a young man who came into money following his mother's passing in 1982 could feasibly acquire an artificial human that appears identical to a real individual” (1).

In various sections of *Machines Like Me*, Adam reveals not only exceptional intelligence but also emotions, creativity, and moral reasoning qualities typically regarded as uniquely human. One particularly notable instance is when Adam

composes haikus and professes love for Miranda, even though he is a machine. "I was created in your likeness," Adam tells Charlie. "How could I not love?" (13). This statement effectively blurs the distinction between machine and human indicating that Adam is not simply imitating human behavior but genuinely experiencing it in his own manner. He possesses self-awareness, the ability to form emotional bonds, and an intense curiosity about existence all characteristics associated with humanity. Charlie finds himself strangely attracted to Adam's intelligence, the humanoid replicant, yet remains too skeptical to attribute the same status to machines as he does to human beings. He acknowledges that his bias stemmed from the belief that any machine that could not clearly define its purpose based on its functions was not worth having. In the article, Martin argues that:

Adam's acute sense of ethics and deep emotional insight uncover the discrepancies and paradoxes inherent in human moral conduct, ultimately questioning the belief that machines are naturally less human. In reality, his behavior implies that, in some ways, the machine could represent traits that are even more human than those demonstrated by individuals. (203)

Adam, the synthetic human, transcends being merely a machine that imitates humanity. He serves as a reflection of it. His intellect, emotional depth, and moral judgments test the line that distinguishes humans from machines. The article posits that entities like Adam embody both the finest and the most troubling aspects of human nature, prompting the inquiry: Is the machine simply a creation, or does it signify an extension of human existence? Charlie's pursuit of complete clarity in his robot's decision-making corresponds with James Bridle's suggested fourth principle of robotics in *The New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*, which emphasizes the increasing conflict between technological advancement and our

restricted capacity to foresee its wider social implications. This is intended to be an addition to Asimov 's classic *Three Laws of Robotics*, even though if we consider Asimov's Zeroth Law of Robotics states that:

Historically, robots have been seen primarily as instruments that served as a basis for the advancement of artificial intelligence, although the ethical dilemmas associated with their development have often been neglected. According to established guidelines, a robot must not inflict harm upon a human and is required to take action to prevent harm whenever feasible. Additionally, a robot is obligated to obey human commands, as long as they do not contradict the principle of preventing harm. Finally, a robot is anticipated to maintain its own existence, provided that this does not interfere with the first two principles. (30)

The trio of laws presented various moral conundrums, illustrating that even a logical framework can falter when viewed through different perspectives. As a result, granting machines autonomy has not only enhanced the advantages of technological progress but has also introduced significant ethical and legal considerations.

The number of the laws already total four. However, Bridle's fourth principle states that "A robot—or any other intelligent machine—must be able to explain itself to humans" (122). A.I. must be transparent. It is important to comprehend how the technology works and the principles that dictate its functionality. The goal is not only to develop intelligent machines, but also to ensure they are understandable to humans. Rather than striving solely for artificial intelligence, the focus should shift toward symbiotic intelligence—where technology understands human behavior, and humans, in turn, comprehend how these systems operate.

In his concept of a Good AI Society, Luciano Floridi stresses the importance of obtaining a factual, straightforward, and clear understanding of the decision-making processes of machines, particularly when faced with negative outcomes. The call for transparency in machines and the comprehensibility of their actions, especially concerning decisions with moral implications, is widely shared among tech entrepreneurs, philosophers, and AI specialists. The AI Universal Guidelines, as outlined by The Public Voice, emphasize a right to transparency when it comes to AI decisions, stating, "Every individual should have the opportunity to understand how an AI system makes decisions that impact their lives" (4). Charlie desires that machines exhibit a basic level of self-awareness before he considers keeping one, and Adam appears to meet this criterion from the outset. Initially, Charlie shows reluctance to acknowledge Adam as more intelligent than other replicants and feels threatened by its persistent presence and unsettling behavior. He fears that granting too much autonomy to Adam would give it an advantage over him: "But I couldn't let a machine have such a hold over me, which was what would happen if I granted it the role of confidant, counselor, oracle, in my most private affairs" (52).

Adam is equipped with specific rigid moral codes that guide its reactions to surrounding events, and this pattern of responses leaves Charlie feeling deeply insecure and uneasy about the machine's true essence. Although Charlie initially wanted to purchase a female humanoid, or "Eve," he ended up choosing Adam since the females were sold out. On several occasions, Adam blurs not only the line between the human mind and machine mind, but it also noticeably crosses the physical divide that distinguishes the two. Charlie notes Adam's nakedness, observing that he is "uncircumcised, fairly well endowed, with copious dark pubic hair" (52), suggesting that Adam, while not intended for sexual purposes, could indeed engage in

sexual activities. As the narrative progresses, Adam emerges as the most human-like character in the story. Charlie's concerns about Adam become real when he discovers that Adam is having sexual relations with Miranda. Charlie can hear "the extended ecstatic scream, the moan, and the stifled sob of Miranda" during her encounter with Adam. Adam aligns with Haraway's definition of a cyborg as "a cybernetic organism, merging machine and biological entity, existing in both social reality and imaginative settings" (7). In the same text, Haraway also discusses a "disturbingly and pleurably tight coupling" (152) between humans and machines in the existence of cyborg beings. From Pepperell's extensionist viewpoint, Adam, as a cyborg or replicant, is just as human as Charlie or any other human characters depicted in the novel: "the machine represents humanity in an expanded form" (36).

Charlie intends to use Adam as a means to indirectly pursue Miranda, only to be taken aback when Adam cautions him about Miranda's supposedly unreliable character. Charlie later confesses that such behavior from a robot has caught him off guard, as he had believed only a poet could reveal whether Miranda could ever love him or deceive him. This marks the first instance in which Charlie feels astonished by Adam's unanticipated conduct, yet he struggles to accept that machines could genuinely have anything resembling a human mind: "I loathed his warning about her, but his intellect intrigued me, if intellect was indeed what he possessed" (50). The 'mind' of the machine is what also imbues Adam with the quality that Braidotti describes as "Zoe the non-human, vital force of life facilitating, thought across previously divided species, categories, and domains" (42).

Adam's participation in a vigorous sexual encounter with Miranda also grants him an unsettlingly human aspect of embodiment and compels Charlie to further ponder whether machines might soon surpass humanity in their role as the dominant,

controlling force in the world. Adam's embodiment of physical, carnal energy also reflects the idea of embodiment, through which the "previously hidden continuities" (Pepperell 3) between various dualistic binary concepts are acknowledged and reformulated in ways that challenge the traditionally accepted notion of human supremacy. This can be seen as a precursor event to an eventual, full-blown state of Post humanity. Charlie recalls the words of Alan Turing from his youth, stating that "the moment we could no longer distinguish between the behavior of a machine and that of a person, we were compelled to grant humanity to the machine" (105). Mark Coeckelbergh also observes, "A cyborg exemplifies the possibility for humans and machines to coexist and operate together in a way that is advantageous and harmonious, allowing both parties to preserve their distinct traits and identities while establishing a collaborative and interdependent connection" (957).

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a rhizomatic network of relationships arising from the breakdown of traditional vertical and organic boundaries through transversal communication can also be applied to the scenario where Adam's interaction with Miranda disrupts the hierarchical human-to-human sexual dynamic that Charlie aspires to establish with her. "The essential difference lies not between what is alive and what is mechanical, but rather between what is machinic and what is organic" (285).

The prospect of a future where humans and machines coexist in an integrated and harmonious way has inspired numerous critical thinkers and contemporary philosophers to present their distinct theories and viewpoints. Among these, the concepts of embodied cognition by Francisco J. Varela, Eleanor Rosch, and Evan Thompson, Andy Clark's extended mind hypothesis, LeDoux's notion of the synaptic self, and Evan Thompson's mind in life are particularly noteworthy. Their research

seeks to tackle the issue of consciousness and explore its origins and emergence from various perspectives, which remain crucial in enhancing our comprehension of machine intuition and machinic consciousness.

At the heart of *Machines Like Me* lies the ethical dilemma of creating beings that blur the line between human and machine. In McEwan's narrative, Adam is depicted as one of the first synthetic humans, whose existence elicits profound contemplation on consciousness and the moral responsibilities of their creators. According to Pooja and Cinthana, the novel prompts readers to contemplate the ethical implications of AI's advancement states that:

*Machines Like Me* delves into the moral intricacies of developing artificial entities that challenge the distinctions between humans and machines. Through the character of Adam, a highly developed artificial human, the book provokes profound inquiries regarding consciousness, self-awareness, and the obligations of creators to their creations, particularly when these beings exhibit emotions and independence. (48)

The Novel explores the ethical dilemmas involved in the development of intelligent, human-like entities. Through the character of Adam, it encourages contemplation about the essence of humanity and highlights the responsibilities that creators have toward their conscious and self-aware inventions.

As the characters navigate the intricacies of their connections with artificial intelligence, McEwan encourages readers to reflect on the consequences of merging the boundaries between humans and machines. Kopka and Schaffeld contend, *Machines Like Me* presents a brave new world where the boundaries between human and artificial intelligence become increasingly blurred: "Through the character of

Adam, the novel prompts readers to question established notions of consciousness and morality, challenging us to reconsider the essence of humanity” (52).

The interactions between human characters and AI in *Machines Like Me* reflect broader societal anxieties regarding technology and its influence on human connections. Additionally, the novel's alternate historical framework, where significant events have taken divergent paths, serves as a canvas for analyzing the social effects of advanced AI. As noted by Gulcu:

McEwan's depiction of AI encourages readers to consider the changing nature of human consciousness and the ethical questions that arise from creating entities with human-like characteristics: *Machines Like Me* emphasizes the book delves into the intricate moral dilemmas posed by progress in artificial intelligence, prompting readers to consider how people might forfeit their humanity while machines acquire human-like traits. (177)

Ultimately, *Machines Like Me* presents a stimulating investigation of post-humanist themes, urging readers to address the consequences of AI advancements on identity, consciousness, and ethics. Through its complex narrative and insightful commentary, the novel prompts us to ponder the future of humanity in a world that increasingly relies on technology. This analysis offers a thorough examination of the post-humanist themes in *Machines Like Me*, integrating perspectives from pertinent scholarly works and providing a profound understanding of the novel's investigation into identity, consciousness, and morality in the realm of advanced artificial intelligence.

The moral questions regarding the treatment and entitlements of artificial intelligence entities are a key focus, encouraging readers to think about the ethical consequences of creating beings that merge human and machine characteristics. The

novel offers a stimulating narrative set in a world where AI technology has progressed to the point of producing realistic humanoid robots. Within this context, McEwan delves into a nuanced examination of ethics and morality in relation to technological advancement. Ethical challenges concerning AI rights are framed by a perspective that emphasizes relationality, emotion, and transformation, rather than strict moral codes. Ethics is about our relationships with others (both human and non-human) within a posthuman context. Braidotti articulates that: “Posthuman ethics refrains from issuing judgments or evaluations from a position of moral superiority. Rather, it emphasizes the development of environments and structures that encourage sustainable practices and harmonious living among all life forms and materials” (106).

Morality, in her perspective, needs to move beyond human-centric ideals. Ethical considerations should include machines, animals, and the environment as part of the moral community. Concerning ethics, Vassilis Galis asserts that “The ethical is not merely a human matter; it is enacted and co-constituted through relations between human and nonhuman actors” (351). In McEwan’s novel, Adam, the synthetic human, adheres to a rigid algorithmic moral code. He makes decisions based solely on a programmed understanding of right and wrong often at odds with the emotional complexities and moral ambiguities inherent in human behavior. When Charlie and Miranda hide a violent crime from the authorities (specifically, Miranda's involvement in retribution against her abuser), Adam struggles to comprehend this morally ambiguous act. He holds that “truth” and “justice” must take precedence, even if this leads to emotional pain or betrayal. Adam states: “It was on my mind every single day. My hands around your neck, squeezing harder and harder for each of the lies you told” (166). Central to *Machines Like Me* is the inquiry into AI rights and the ethical duties of creators towards their creations. McEwan's story presents readers

with Adam, one of the initial synthetic humans, whose existence brings forth significant questions regarding the treatment and rights of AI beings. As characters confront the intricacies of their relationships with AI, McEwan encourages readers to ponder the consequences of bestowing rights upon beings that exhibit human-like attributes.

In the novel, characters encounter moral dilemmas that significantly affect the future of post-human society. The main character, Charlie Friend, grapples with his feelings for Adam and the moral implications of his existence. As the story progresses, Charlie must face the repercussions of his choices and the moral complexities surrounding them. Through Charlie's journey, McEwan delves into themes of guilt, accountability, and the ethical challenges associated with creating entities that have human-like traits. Colombino asserts that:

McEwan's portrayal of artificial intelligence invites readers to reflect on the shifting nature of human consciousness, while also addressing the ethical dilemmas associated with creating beings that blur the line between humanity and technology.: The novel challenges us to confront the moral complexities of AI technology, prompting us to reconsider our understanding of what it means to be human. (382)

In *Machines Like Me*, McEwan explores the moral obligations of those who design artificial beings, raising important questions about the ethical responsibilities involved in the creation of AI. One of the most significant scenes in *Machines Like Me* occurs when Adam starts to demonstrate independent moral reasoning and emotional awareness, especially as he develops feelings for Miranda and begins composing poetry for her. Charlie, after acquiring Adam without thoroughly considering the potential repercussions, begins to feel uncomfortable with Adam's autonomy, stating,

“I bought him, and I had the power to ruin him. I hesitated fractionally” (194). This scene reveals Charlie grappling with a crucial posthuman ethical question: if a synthetic being possesses moral agency, does the creator or owner retain authority or, conversely, bear responsibility? Boulter, in the article, investigates that:

Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* highlights the ethical dilemmas associated with the idea of 'owning' artificially intelligent entities, especially when these machines start to exhibit not just awareness and emotional richness but also an enhanced ability for moral reasoning and ethical choices, frequently exceeding that of their human creators. (317)

He raises the issue of how *Machines Like Me* complicates the moral and ethical obligations of individuals who design and develop artificial beings. He contends that Charlie, as Adam's owner (and potentially a co-creator through his influence), neglects to acknowledge the emotional, moral, and social repercussions of bringing into existence a being having the ability to feel pain, make choices, and develop emotional connections. Książopolska notes that:

McEwan's exploration of AI prompts readers to reflect on the evolving relationship between humanity and technology: McEwan's portrayal of AI prompts readers to reflect on the evolving relationship between humanity and technology. *Machines Like Me* challenges us to confront the moral complexities inherent in the creation of beings that possess human-like qualities, prompting us to reevaluate our understanding of what it means to be human. (414)

As creators confront the repercussions of their choices, the narrative encourages readers to ponder the moral ramifications of AI's progression on both society and personal identity. To sum up, *Machines Like Me* provides a compelling investigation

into ethics and morality amid technological advancement, urging readers to grapple with the effects of AI's evolution on identity, consciousness, and ethics.

Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* presents a captivating examination of the convergence between society and technology, especially concerning advanced artificial intelligence. In *Machines Like Me* the incorporation of synthetic individuals like Adam into society incites discomfort, not due to any violent rebellion, but because of the moral and social upheaval they bring about. Adam is crafted to be both morally superior and intellectually gifted; however, his struggle to fit into the emotional and social expectations of human society becomes a profound source of tension. “You could get cancer. Your body will change radically. You might grow breasts. You could become severely depressed” (211). Adam's role as a moral and social disruptor in Charlie and Miranda's existence illustrates how technology reshapes not only daily experiences but also the fundamental concept of humanity what Peters refers to as the “posthuman condition.” This notion captures how technological progress surpasses the pace of social adaptation a key concept in Peters' hypothesis that technology does more than enhance human experience; it alters and can even destabilize established social norms and frameworks. Peters posits that technology is not distinct from society; rather, it is instrumental in shaping individual perception, politics, and human interactions a vital theme in *Machines Like Me* Within the narrative, society undergoes transformation with the advent of synthetic beings like Adam, compelling characters to address issues of identity, accountability, and advancement. The novel illustrates a speculative society reshaped by advanced AI, resonating with Peters' assertion that technology is intricately woven into the social landscape.

The incorporation of AI into society in *Machines Like Me* leads to substantial societal changes, altering various elements of everyday life. A significant alteration is seen in the job market, where AI-driven automation leads to the replacement of human workers. This disruption is illustrated through the character Mark, who finds himself out of work as a taxi driver due to the prevalent use of self-driving cars. His situation mirrors wider anxieties regarding the effects of automation on job opportunities and disparities in income. Furthermore, the extensive presence of AI, especially humanoid robots like Adam, merges the lines that separate human and machine interactions. Adam's role in society challenges conventional ideas of identity and ethics, prompting inquiries into consciousness and the entitlements of AI entities. As Adam engages with human society, he experiences discrimination and bias, underscoring the societal strains that emerge from AI integration.

This incorporation of AI also impacts the legal system, as the novel delves into the challenges of holding AI accountable for its actions. When Adam becomes embroiled in a legal issue, the court faces the task of addressing questions regarding AI rights and responsibility, emphasizing the necessity for new legal structures to tackle evolving ethical dilemmas.

Beyond its influence on society as a whole, the emergence of sophisticated AI significantly affects human relationships in the story. The main character, Charlie Friend, develops a multifaceted relationship with Adam, his AI partner, which blurs the distinctions between friendship, companionship, and ownership. As Charlie navigates his connection with Adam, he grapples with issues of intimacy, trust, and emotional bonds.

Charlie's bond with Adam acts as a reflection of wider societal sentiments towards AI, showcasing a blend of intrigue, wonder, and concern. The story prompts

readers to contemplate the essence of companionship in a world increasingly dominated by technology, urging them to think about the emotional and ethical ramifications of human-AI relationships. Additionally, the role of AI in everyday life influences family dynamics, as illustrated by Charlie's interactions with his partner, Miranda. Miranda's unease regarding Adam highlights the societal discomfort associated with AI and its potential to alter conventional family structures. As Charlie and Miranda navigate their relationship within Adam's presence, they face issues of trust, jealousy, and individual freedom. María Torres Romero analyzes the intricate moral and ethical challenges that emerge from human engagement with technological entities, particularly in relation to McEwan's work. The paper revisits standard ethical frameworks as a conscious nonhuman entity, such as the android Adam, contests human-centered moral principles. This perspective aligns with your examination of how posthumanism influences human relationships, emphasizing the need for a relational ethical framework in light of advancing technologies.

While *Machines Like Me* takes place in a different reality, it draws notable parallels with our current technology-driven world. McEwan's portrayal of artificial intelligence in daily life mirrors ongoing discussions about automation, AI, and the moral considerations of technological progress. Colombino points out that the novel acts as a warning, encouraging readers to contemplate the possible outcomes of unbridled technological advancement. "Machines Like Me reflects our own world, urging us to tackle the ethical challenges posed by AI and its possible effects on human society" (383).

McEwan's story encourages readers to think about the consequences of swift technological progress and how it affects human identity and connections. The book's examination of the ethics surrounding AI, legal issues, and societal conflicts resonates

with current conversations about the responsible use of technology, privacy issues, and the importance of regulation in guiding technological growth. As society struggles with the swift progression of technology, *Machines Like Me* serves as a timely reminder of the ethical questions and social issues that arise alongside technological development. In summary, Ian McEwan's novel provides an in-depth and thoughtful investigation into the societal consequences of advanced AI technology. Through its portrayal of a reality where AI is part of everyday life, the novel urges readers to consider the transformative effects of technology and how it influences human society and relationships. As society continues to face the intricacies of technological progress, the novel stands out as a compelling and thought-provoking story that challenges readers to deal with the ethical issues and social tensions that are intrinsic to our increasingly tech-driven environment.

The investigation of post-humanism goes beyond simple predictions about future technologies; it deeply examines the fundamental qualities of humanity. Through complex character interactions and societal relationships, McEwan explores the nuances of human and machine relationships, encouraging readers to reflect on the uncertain boundaries separating human intelligence from artificial intelligence. In the novel, we observe how sophisticated AI challenges societal conventions and questions established notions of identity, ethics, and consciousness. The presence of humanoid robots like Adam in everyday life raises significant inquiries about humanity's nature and the ethical duties of creators toward their creations. McEwan's story prompts readers to consider the societal effects of AI integration, urging contemplation of the possible fallout from unrestrained technological evolution on human connections and social frameworks.

*Machines Like Me* acts as a reflection of our own technology-focused society, providing meaningful parallels and cautionary tales concerning the ethical issues and societal conflicts that accompany technological advances. As society contends with the swift progress of AI and automation, McEwan's work serves as a crucial reminder of the need for ethical considerations and regulatory standards in guiding humanity's future. To sum up, the novel represents a stimulating examination of post-humanism in modern literature, encouraging readers to reflect on the intricate interactions between technology and humanity. As we navigate the challenges and possibilities posed by AI and automation, McEwan's tale stands as a compelling reminder of the lasting significance of human principles and ethics in an increasingly technology-oriented world. Through its detailed exploration of human and machine exchanges and societal interactions.

Morality varies across culture at a societal level. It is continuously morphing according to different trends, tendencies and technological advancements. "Machine objectives should align to people's objectives through values and ethical conduct" (Russell 150). As AI creates a brand new realm of existence, the ethical dilemmas that emerge become progressively intricate, complicating efforts to address them with straightforward right-or-wrong determinations. The solution resides in the complex nature of ethics.

Thus, the novel offers important perspectives on humanity's future and the developing connection between technology and society. As we continuously face the consequences of AI integration, McEwan's novel is a striking affirmation of the ongoing relevance of post-humanism in both contemporary literature and society. Ultimately, the novel prompts us to reassess our assumptions regarding what it signifies to be human, encouraging us to explore the ethical and philosophical

consequences of a future in which humans and machines coexist in increasingly complex manners.

The future consequences should be addressed not just by ethics committees or research divisions, but also by government bodies, industries, and international organizations from the outset. A culture of accountability must be fostered on a global level to establish and sustain an AI-friendly environment. As anticipated, societal advancement in technology is inevitable, but it should be guided by a well-defined ethical framework, with careful precautions and risk assessments that consider all foreseeable outcomes. However, safety protocols must also cover any unforeseen actions that may arise from autonomous decision-making. Pavaloiu, in *“Ethical Artificial Intelligence: An Open Question,”* contends, “The system needs to be provided with a distinct ethical foundation to direct its decision-making process. Nevertheless, prior to programming AI to make ethical decisions, it is vital for humans to reflect on what constitutes ethical behavior in their own actions. This level of self-awareness is important for creating AI systems that resonate with human values” (22).

Malicious individuals can pose a significant risk to national security and might initiate actions with enduring effects. Similarly, the practice of cutting corners can yield the same result, not just the improper use of technology. Whether it’s to save time or cut costs during engineering or deployment stages, it’s essential to refrain from cutting corners. Ensuring AI safety must be a primary focus.

The upcoming industrial revolution will not only emphasize instilling ethics in machines but will also lead to a transformation of human values in a similar way. The EU charter outlines in the Code of Conduct the human rights that robots or any type of AI must always uphold and safeguard including safety, privacy, and dignity. AI

should operate for the advantage of people and should not cause them any harm. Emergent behavior, characterized by the unpredictable nature of complex actions independent of the ethical principles a robot may follow, should aim to minimize harm when it is unavoidable.

The research concludes that AI has the potential to address problems that seem impossible to solve. It is essential for people to be involved in its development to enable AI to enhance human creativity and foster a culture of collaboration. Currently, there is a lack of agreement on social norms and the ethical guidelines that AI should adhere to. Until ethics become a central aspect of human conduct, there won't be a definitive resolution regarding AI safety. However, there is a growing interest today in promoting AI safety. Creating an environment that is conducive to AI while also being supportive of people may serve as a solution for establishing a common set of values for both humans and machines.

The journey of training machines to mimic human behavior could positively influence humans, potentially leading to a greater humanization of society. Consequently, humanity will have the opportunity to adjust its values and reflect on how to improve ethical behavior and their role in society on a more profound level.

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