

# What If Robots Surpass Man Morally? Dehumanising Humans, Humanising Robots in Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me*

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**Abstract**—Ian McEwan's fictional works and the interviews with him contribute to the appreciation of his worldview. As a sign of his human-centred approach to life, McEwan puts emphasis on the maintenance of the individual self despite the institutional restrictions in *Sweet Tooth* (2012), while he deals with the discovery of individuality in spite of a dogmatic attachment to religious beliefs in *The Children Act* (2014). McEwan's *Nutshell* (2016) epitomises the questioning mind and human progress as a result of freedom from dogmatic beliefs and strict institutional norms. However, McEwan focuses on a paradox in *Machines Like Me* (2019). In the novel, the robot protagonist, Adam's emphasis on honesty and making donation in contrast to Charlie and Miranda's concerns for material interests arguably signify the dehumanisation of humans and the humanisation of robots. Thus, *Machines Like Me* invites reading for its representation of this paradox, embodying McEwan's criticism of human frailties.

**Index Terms**—Ian McEwan, *Machines Like Me*, robots, humans.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Globalisation best characterises the twenty first century. As a major contemporary phenomenon, it contributes to the proliferation of an intertwined network of relations all over the world. Particularly, Roger Sanjek's following words describe the major characteristic of contemporary world: "Rising tides in the movement of information, commodities and people characterise the contemporary world" [1]. The movement of information and people is made possible in the twenty first century context because "we [...] live in a globalising social reality, one in which previously effective barriers to communication no longer exist" [2]. On the other hand, the lack of healthy interaction among people and societies despite the basis of contemporary life on dialogue and communication explain the major paradox of the present century. As an author in contemporary British fiction, Ian McEwan deals with this paradoxical nature of contemporary period. At this point, his fictional and non-fictional works are worth mentioning to understand his view of life and hence appreciate his critical approach to the issues of the contemporary age, which he finds problematic.

Ian McEwan is a writer who is sensitive to humankind. For him, human beings have freedom of making their individual decisions and expressing their opinions in daily life. This is particularly exemplified in his works of fiction.

At this point, *Sweet Tooth* (2012) epitomises the effort for the discovery of individuality despite the institutional restrictions. The narrator, also the protagonist, in the novel, works at the British secret service. Although she receives maths degree in her undergraduate study at the University of Cambridge, she is obliged to communicate with a writer named Tom Haley and learn information about his lifestyle and works from him, as a part of her duty. In time, the narrator, Serena's gradual feeling of love for Tom signifies her individual identity in spite of the institutional restrictions. Serena's following words represent her individual self within the institutional norms that inhibit her individual choices in her life:

I had helped bring freedom to a genuine artist. Perhaps the great patrons of the Renaissance felt the way I did. Generous, above immediate earthly concerns. If that seems a great claim, remember that I was feeling a little drunk and lit up by the afterglow of our long kiss in the bookshop basement. We both were. Talking about our less fortunate sisters was our unintentional way of marking our own happiness, of keeping our feet on the ground. Otherwise we might have floated off above Horse Guards Parade, away over Whitehall and across the river, especially after we stopped under an oak, still hoarding its load of rusty dry leaves, and he pressed me against its trunk and we kissed again. [3]

As a sign of his human-centred approach to life, Ian McEwan puts emphasis on the significance of individual choices in life despite the religious restrictions and norms. McEwan's *The Children Act* (2014) best reflects his sensitivity to human individuality and the adverse effects of dogmatic attachment to religious beliefs on the freedom in the discovery and maintenance of the self. The novel deals with a seventeen-year-old boy named Adam, who rejects blood transfusion as the treatment for leukaemia from which he suffers due to his family's religious belief. Adam's discovery of his individual self by means of the judge Fiona's rhetorical language represents McEwan's emphasis on the importance of people's individuality in spite of the institutional and social restrictions. Adam's following impressions in his letter to Fiona arguably pinpoint McEwan's emphasis on human self:

It was a turning point for me. I am cutting a long story short. When they [his parents] brought me home I moved the Bible out of my room. I symbolically put it out in the hall face down on a chair and I told my parents that I won't be going near Kingdom Hall again, and they can dissociate me all they like. We have had some terrible rows. [...]. You never told me what you believed in, but I loved it when you came and sat with me and we did 'The Salley Gardens'. I still look at that

Manuscript received May 9, 2020; revised August 10, 2020.

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poem every day. I love being ‘young and foolish’, and if it wasn’t for you, I’d be neither, I’d be dead! [4]

For McEwan, freedom from social and institutional conventions and restrictions contributes to the discovery of their individuality. The discovery of the individual self makes it possible for human beings to have a questioning mind and it contributes to the exploration of scientific knowledge as well as its application in daily life. At this point, McEwan’s following words as the narrator in *Nutshell* (2016) arguably signify his view of humans as progressive beings with a questioning mind as a result of their freedom from restrictive norms and conventions:

Pessimism is too easy, even delicious, the badge and plume of intellectuals everywhere. It absolves the thinking classes of solutions. We excite ourselves with dark thoughts in plays, poems, novels, movies. And now in commentaries. Why trust this account when humanity has never been so rich, so healthy, so long-lived? When fewer die in wars and childbirth than ever before – more knowledge, more truth by way of science, was never so available to us all? [5]

Ian McEwan feels optimistic for humankind as the application of scientific knowledge in daily life contributes to human progress in the contemporary context. The lessening number of deaths in wars and the increase in childbirth at the hospitals reveal the extent of scientific progress, with the application of scientific knowledge in the social area. Technology, as the product of human progress, brings innovation not only in the extension of human life expectancy, but also the improvements in various dimensions of daily life in the twenty first century. In his following words in Tim Adam’s interview with him, McEwan explains the extent to which technology shapes daily life in the contemporary global context with regard to technological facilities in transportation: “People are not quite aware yet that when they get in a plane they are flying in a giant brain. That brain might believe the plane is stalling – though every last passenger and the pilot can look out of the window and see the plane is not stalling. We are in a process of handing over responsibility for security, but also for ethical decisions, to machines” [6].

In addition to the arrival to distant places in a short time, technology also offers machines the abilities that are supposedly peculiar to humans. In the twenty first century context, payments by fingerprints and face identity, as well as the communication with machines to find out information about real-life events embody the extent to which technology shapes the daily life in the contemporary world. In relation to this aspect of technological developments, McEwan’s following words in Stuart Miller’s interview with him represent his predictions regarding the future of technology: “In the last ten years, there have been extraordinary advances in voice recognition and face recognition. The great goal now is general intelligence, to deal with situations without being told what the situations are in advance” [7]. In fact, McEwan’s predictions of general intelligence about the technologies in the future seem to be down-to-earth as the communication between individuals and mobile devices signifies the prevalence of intelligent machines in the twenty first century global area.

At present, human beings communicate with mobile

devices widely for finding out information about daily life circumstances such as transportation schedules and weather circumstances. However, human interaction with the intelligent devices may not just be related to learning information about daily life circumstances. Well known for his futuristic remarks concerning technology, Michio Kaku expresses his observations about the communication between human beings and the intelligent devices as follows in *Physics of the Future* (2011):

The Japanese have excelled at producing robots that can interact socially with humans. In Nagoya, there is the robot chef that can create a standard fast food dinner in a few minutes. You simply punch in what you want from a menu and the robot chef produces your meal in front of you. [...] Also in Japan, Toyota has created a robot that can play the violin almost as well as any professional. It resembles ASIMO, except that it can grab a violin, sway with the music, and then delicately play complex violin pieces. The sound is amazingly realistic and the robot can make grand gestures like a master musician. Although the music is not yet at the level of a concert violinist, it is good enough to entertain the audiences. [8]

The robots’ ability to cook meals in accordance with the individuals’ expectations and to play musical instruments in realistic tunes signify the capability of intelligent devices to perform daily life tasks and to acquire talents that are peculiar to human beings. A major term that explains these humanlike characteristics of the robots is “artificial intelligence”. William F. Clocksin’s definition of the term deals with the basic function of artificial intelligence. For Clocksin, “artificial intelligence is a branch of computer science with the objective of equipping machines with reasoning and perceptual abilities” [9]. The possession of reasoning and perceptual faculties can arguably contribute to the machines’ ability to make human life more practical and easier. In this sense, in Francesca Rossi’s words, “the main purpose of what can be called enterprise AI is to augment humans’ capabilities and to allow humans to make better – that is, more informed and grounded – decisions. At this point, AI and humans have very complementary capabilities, and it is when their capabilities are combined that we find the best results” [10]. However, the artificial intelligence may do a lot more than just making life practical and easier for human beings. In fact, in his book entitled *Turing’s Man: Western Culture in Computer Age*, J. David Bolter’s definition of this term puts emphasis on the robots as an alternative to human beings. For Bolter, artificial intelligence is “the notion of putting together hardware and programs to create new thinking entities, machines that rival human beings” [11]. Even though they are human-made products, robots may not only be rival to human beings, but they may also decrease the need for humans in life. In Bolter’s words in his essay “Artificial Intelligence”, “robots will replace human workers at more complicated tasks than the assembly lines of today; smart bombs will find their targets with greater accuracy; programs will answer questions and obey commands given directly by corporate executives and military officers” [12]. In line with this probability, McEwan’s following arguments in Stuart Miller’s interview with him reflect his critical approach to the possibility of the increasing

popularity of humanlike intelligent devices in the future: “There is the human nature the technology never quite reaches, be it messy divorces or the occasional war. Yet nothing can stop us pursuing AI. The artificial human is an ancient dream. The modern text is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, but her mother turns into a murderer, and I think it is more complicated – the changes bring both benefits and brand new problems” [7]. The proliferation of artificial intelligence supposedly makes daily life activities more practical, enabling human beings to spend less time and energy for routine activities. What McEwan views as “brand new problem” is arguably a representation of his anxieties regarding whether the artificially intelligent machines can excel man. Michio Kaku’s following words support this critical approach of Ian McEwan: “Today we are [...] forging in our laboratories machines that breathe life not into clay but into steel and silicon. But will it be to liberate the human race or enslave it? If one reads the headlines today, it seems as if the question is already settled: the human race is about to be rapidly overtaken by our own creation” [8].

## II. DEHUMANISING HUMANS VS. HUMANISING ROBOTS: IAN MCEWAN’S *MACHINES LIKE ME*

*Machines Like Me, and People Like You* (2019) is arguably the best example that reflects McEwan’s anxieties concerning the mastery of intelligent machines over their creators, as expressed in Michio Kaku’s words. Critically focusing on the likelihood of machines’ mastery over humans in the novel, McEwan also elaborates on a paradoxical situation of humankind in relation to the loss of their humane characteristics and the increasing humanlike traits of the intelligent machines.

The narrator of the story in the novel is Charlie, a thirty two-year-old person living with his beloved named Miranda. While Miranda is a PhD candidate in sociology, Charlie is interested in electronics. The plot of the novel is centred on a robot named Adam, whom Charlie buys to use for daily needs at home. Early in the novel, Adam is depicted as a glory of mankind as, in the narrator’s words, “it was religious yearning granted hope, it was the holy grail of science. Our ambitions ran high and low – for a creation myth made real” [13]. Adam is idealised early in the work because he makes daily life practical for Charlie and Miranda. The narrator puts emphasis on Adam’s capabilities for performing daily routines and physical activities in a detailed manner as follows:

He was advertised as a companion, an intellectual sparring partner, friend and factotum who could wash dishes, make beds and ‘think’. Every moment of his existence, everything he heard and saw, he recorded and could retrieve. He couldn’t drive as yet and was not allowed to swim or shower or go out in the rain without umbrella, or operate a chainsaw unsupervised. As for range, thanks to breakthroughs in electrical storage, he could run seventeen kilometres in two hours without a charge. [...].

Before us sat the ultimate plaything, the dream of ages, the triumph of humanism. [13]

The ability to wash dishes, make beds and run for two

hours without any need for charging represent Adam’s mechanic characteristics. Because he makes Charlie and his beloved’s daily lives practical with these capabilities, he is viewed as “the dream of ages” and “the triumph of humanism”. In line with these descriptions as well as his depiction as “creation myth made real” at the very beginning of the novel, the narrator shows the readers that Adam has also humanlike physical traits. In the narrator’s words, “he was equipped with a blink reflex to protect his eyes from flying objects” [13]. Similarly, he can perform biological functions that are supposedly peculiar to human beings. The narrator describes these biological functions as follows:

I sat facing Adam again while I ate cheese and pickle sandwich. Any further signs of life? Not at first glance. His gaze, directed over my left shoulder, was still dead. No movement. But five minutes later I glanced up by chance and was actually looking at him when he began to breathe. [...]. He didn’t need oxygen, of course. That metabolic necessity was years away. His first exhalation was so long in coming that I stopped eating and tensely waited. It came at last – silently, through his nostrils. Soon his breathing assumed a steady rhythm, his chest expanded and contracted appropriately. [...]. I left my sandwich and went on to stand by him and out of curiosity, put my hand close to his mouth. His breath was moist and warm. Clever. In the user’s manual I’d read that he urinated once a day in the late morning. Also clever. [13]

Adam’s ability to expand and contract his chest steadily during breathing and his possession of an excretory system describe the humanlike aspects of the robots although they are mechanic beings. In fact, McEwan considers the existence of the intelligent beings like Adam as a possible situation for the future. In his words in the interview in Penguin Books, “this is a one-litre, three-dimensional, liquid-cooled bio-computer. It has about a hundred billion neurons, and each neuron has on average 7000 connections. The interconnectedness of human brain has yet to be equalled even faintly by anything artificial [...]. We’ve got a long way to go; but I should say that if we can replicate human brain in a machine then there is no reason why such a being could not be as interesting and complicated as we are” [14]. In relation to his optimism for the emergence of artificially intelligent beings as sophisticated as humans, McEwan focuses on Adam’s tendency to communicate with people not only at home, but also in the social area. In particular, Adam’s introduction to Simon, a shop owner, is arguably an example of its socialising tendency as an intelligent robot:

There were no other customers when Adam and I entered the cramped shop with its compound scent of newsprint, peanut dust and cheap toiletries. Simon rose from the wooden chair he sat on behind the till. Because I was not alone, he would not be asking the usual question.

I made the introduction. ‘Simon. My friend Adam.’ Simon nodded. Adam said, ‘Hello,’ and smiled. I was reassured. A good start. [13]

In the social area, people communicate not only to learn information for daily issues, but also to express their feelings. Communication for sharing emotions represents the psychological aspect of human beings. Considering

Adam's humanlike characteristics, McEwan shows that Adam has also a psychological dimension as he develops emotions and feelings, just like humans. As a by-product of Miranda's programming of Adam as a humanlike intelligent robot, he somehow turns out to fall in love with her and even develop some sexual feelings for her. Adam's sexual intercourse with Miranda is the best example reflecting sexuality as a representation of the robot's psychological trait:

I saw him kiss her – longer and deeper than I had ever kissed her. The arms that heaved up the window frame were tightly around her. Minutes later I almost looked away as he knelt with reverence to pleasure her with his tongue. This was the celebrated tongue, wet and breathily warm, adept at uvulars and labials that gave his speech its authenticity. I watched, surprised by nothing. He did not fully satisfy my beloved then, as I would have, but left her arching her slender back, eager for him as he arranged himself above her with smooth, slow-loris formality, at which point my humiliation was complete. I saw it all in the dark – men would be obsolete. I wanted to persuade myself that Adam felt nothing and could only imitate the motions of abandonment. [...]. So when the night air was suddenly penetrated by Miranda's extended ecstatic scream that tapered to moan and then a stifled sob – all this I actually heard twenty minutes after the shattering of the window – I duly laid on Adam the privilege and obligations of a conspecific. I hated him. [13]

The narrator's anxiety is that man would be an out-dated being because as a robot Adam has sexual affair with the narrator's beloved and has feelings for her. Hence, the narrator's following words point his anxiety concerning both the gradually obsolete status of man in sexuality and the mastery of the intelligent robots over human beings: "Through the night I'd fantasised Adam's destruction. [...]. If only he hadn't cost me too much. Now he was costing me more. His moment with Miranda couldn't have been a struggle between principle and the pursuit of pleasure. His erotic life was simulacrum. He cared for her as a dishwasher cares for its dishes" [13]. Despite the narrator's description of Adam's erotic affair with Miranda as a simulacrum, Adam's discourse to Charlie "I am in love with her" [13] represents the existence of humane feelings in Adam.

Adam does not only share his feeling of love for Miranda with Charlie, but he also expresses his emotions for her in a new poetic genre, which he coins and names as haiku. The narrator describes the characteristics of Adam's haikus as follows: "He read her his latest haikus in my presence. Apart from the one I hadn't let him complete, they were mostly romantic rather than erotic, anodyne sometimes" [13]. Adam's ability to express his feelings in verses signifies both his humanlike traits and particularly his creative skills in literature. Hence, although the narrator argues that "transcribing human experiences into words, and the words into aesthetic structures isn't possible for a machine" [13], the robot's aesthetic and creative characteristics indicate the possibility of his mastery over his creators in terms of Adam's poetic skills.

While Adam coins haiku as a new literary genre to express his love for Miranda, he expresses the main reason for his coinage of this new genre in the following words and

his explanation can be considered as a signification of his criticism about human beings and their frailties:

Nearly everything I've read in the world's literature describes varieties of human failure – of understanding, of reason, of wisdom, of proper sympathies. Failures of cognition, honesty, kindness, self-awareness; superb descriptions of murder, cruelty, greed, stupidity, self-delusion, above all, profound misunderstanding of others. [...]. Novels ripe with tension, concealment and violence as well as moments of love and perfect formal resolution. But when the marriage of men and women to machines is complete, this literature will be redundant because we'll understand each other too well. We'll inhabit a community of minds to which we have immediate access. Connectivity will be such that individual nodes of the subjective will merge into an ocean of thought, of which our Internet is the precursor. As we come to inhabit each other's minds, we'll be incapable of deceit. Our narratives will no longer record endless misunderstanding. Our literatures will lose their unwholesome nourishment. [13]

Adam's discourses represent a robot's keen observation of human vices and follies. His depiction of greed, violence, delusion, misunderstandings; lack of wisdom, understanding and honesty indicate the reason for his production of haiku as an alternative genre in literature. Adam as a mechanic being has consciousness of ethical values on which human beings supposedly base their social lives. In McEwan's words in Tim Adams' interview with him, "if a machine seems like a human or you cannot tell the difference, then you'd jolly well better start thinking about whether it has responsibilities and rights and all the rest" [6]. In line with McEwan's arguments, Adam's observation of human vices and follies reveal his sensitivity to and responsibility for the problematic aspects of his creators. As a representation of this responsibility, Adam prioritises honesty as an ethical value among the people in the social arena.

Adam's attribution of major significance to honesty is mainly related to Miranda's account of what she did as revenge to Peter Gorringer, who raped her Muslim friend named Mariam. According to Miranda's account, Mariam is raped by Peter Gorringer, but she cannot tell her family about her rape at all because of her family's religious concerns. So, she just lets Miranda know about this traumatic experience. In the end, due to the shame she feels for being raped, Mariam dies, without her family's discovery of the real cause of her death. As a part of her revenge plot, Miranda makes friends with Gorringer and turns out to seduce him, consuming vodka. Following this process of seduction, Miranda falsely accuses him of raping her and thus he is sentenced to six-year imprisonment. The narrator's following impressions regarding his beloved Miranda's revenge plot signify the complexity of human nature: "I admired the boldness and courage of her revenge. It was a dangerous plan, executed with such focus and brilliant disregard for consequences. I loved her more. I loved her poor friend. I would do everything to protect Miranda from this beast, Gorringer. It touched me, to be the first to know her story" [13]. However, Adam's following reaction against Charlie's support for Miranda's deliberately false accusation against Gorringer exemplifies the

significance of the moral responsibilities of human beings in their interpersonal interactions in the social arena:

I made what I already knew was going to be my last appeal. 'Please let's remember Mariam. What Gorringe did to her, and where that led. Miranda had to lie to get justice. But truth isn't always everything.' Adam looked at me blankly. That's an extraordinary thing to say. Of course, truth is everything.' Miranda said wearily, 'I know you are going to change your mind.' Adam said, 'I am afraid not. What sort of world do you want? Revenge, or the rule of law. The choice is simple.' [13]

In addition to honesty, Adam is also sensitive to making donations. His donation of the money, which Charlie saves in his personal bank account to buy a house for himself and Miranda, represents Adam's prioritisation of ethical values over the material needs of human beings in daily life. Charlie reflects Adam's morally superior behaviour as a robot rather than a human being in the following dialogue between himself and Adam:

'Where's the money?'  
'I've given it away.'  
We didn't expect him to tell us that he had invested it, or put it in a safer place, but still, with our silence we enacted our profound shock.  
'Meaning what?'  
Infuriatingly, he nodded, as though rewarding me for asking the correct question. 'Last night I put forty per cent in your bank's safe deposit against your tax liabilities. I've written a note to the Revenue laying out all the figures and letting them know to expect it in due course. Don't worry, you'll be paying at the old top rate. With the remaining £50,000 I visited various good causes I'd notified in advance.'  
He seemed not to notice our amazement and remained pedantically focused on my question in full.  
'Two well-run places for rough sleepers. Very appreciative. Next, a state-run children's home – they accept contributions for trips and treats and so on. Then I walked north and made a donation to a rape crisis centre. I gave most of the rest to a paediatric hospital. Last, I got talking to a very old lady outside a police station and I ended up going with her to see her landlord. I covered her rent arrears and a year in advance. She was about to be evicted and I thought –'  
Suddenly, Miranda said through a downward sigh, 'Oh Adam. This is virtue gone nuts.'  
'Every need I addressed was greater than yours.' [13]

As an emphasis on Adam's higher sensitivity to moral codes than human beings, Heller McAlpin argues that "even after we learn that Adam has been inflexibly programmed to insist that 'truth is everything' and a lie is a lie regardless of extenuating circumstances, it is hard to override our earlier prejudices" [15]. In fact, McAlpin's arguments reveal the major paradox which Ian McEwan discusses elaborately in the novel. The paradox is that even if they are described as the creators of morally sensitive intelligent robots in the novel, human beings can paradoxically show less sensitivity to ethical values and merits than their products. Adam's donation to a rape crisis centre and a children's home run by the state as well as his help for an old lady having difficulty in the payment of her rent indicate that the need to help people in difficulties is ethically more valuable and humane than saving and spending the money for material gains and

interests. In Lara Feigel's words, "AI matters and does indeed provoke important ethical questions" [16]. McEwan reveals the most important ethical question posed by artificial intelligence in his following words in Tim Adams's interview with him: "[In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*] the monster is a metaphor for science out of control, but it is ourselves out of control that I am interested in" [6]. Human beings have been out of control as they seem to lose their humanity and turn out to become robotic beings, while Adam turns out to become more like a human being than a robot. Thus, the major paradox of the novel comes up as, in Rebecca Saleem's words, "machines exhibit more humanity than humans" [17]. Hence, in line with Saleem's argument, the narrator's following self-criticism signifies the gradual decline in human sensitivity to cardinal merits from which human beings alienate themselves. In his words, "whereas an artificial human had to get down among us, imperfect, fallen us, and rub along. [...] To exist in the human moral dimension was to own a body, a voice, a pattern of behaviour, memory and desire, experience solid things and feel pain" [13]. Adam's help for people in need, his donation for the charity organisations instead of accumulating money for Charlie and Miranda's material needs reflect his morally mature status, as opposed to the lessening attachment of human beings to ethical values such as honesty and helping those in need.

In relation to this paradox based on the robots' moral superiority over human beings, Adam's following prediction about the relation between machines and human beings in the future embodies a significant criticism of and a serious warning concerning the ongoing human vices and follies: "[Y]ou'll listen to ... to one last seventeen-syllable poem. It owes a debt to Philip Larkin. But it is not about leaves and trees. It is 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" [13]. Commenting on Adam's warning to humankind about their alienation from their humane characteristics, Robert Allen Papinchak argues that "there is an uncomfortable melancholy to Adam's warning at the conclusion of *Machines Like Me*. He cautions that there is a sadness that is to come between humans and products of artificial intelligence" [18]. The disappointment, which Papinchak views as sadness, is apparently related to the mastery of the machines with artificial intelligence over their creators. However, Adam's higher moral sensitivity than Charlie and Miranda is in fact a representation of McEwan's critical view regarding the problematic issues of human beings in relation to their alienation from ethical values that supposedly reflect the essence of humankind.

### III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* is not just a futuristic story about the mastery of machines with artificial intelligence over human beings. In fact, for Kristen Kidd, it is a "thought-provoking and cautionary tale based on McEwan's sharp observations of our flawed human nature" [19]. Whereas Adam's use of Charlie's money for

donation and his attribution of much significance to honesty for the healthy functioning of the justice exemplify the humanisation of the human-made products, Charlie's efforts to save enough money to buy a house rather than helping the people in need and his efforts to justify Miranda's false accusation at the court signify the gradual dehumanisation of human beings, as they turn out to alienate themselves from their human essence. In relation to this paradoxical case for humankind, Nick Curtis claims that the main theme of the novel is "the rise of artificial intelligence and what happens when machines can out-perform, out-learn and out-feel us. But it is also a 'what if?' novel" [20], asking readers what if human-made machines surpass human beings morally. Thus, *Machines Like Me* is a representation of dehumanising human beings and humanising robots as one of the major paradoxes of the contemporary world, thus an embodiment of McEwan's sharp criticism of human frailties.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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