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Research article

Artificial Intelligence and the Crisis of Human Identity in Contemporary British Fiction: A Comparative Study of *Klara and the Sun* and *Machines Like*

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ABSTRACT

This research reveals the contemporary British fiction crisis of human identity through a comparative reading of Kazoo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* and Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me.* Both novels view artificial intelligence as more than just a technology, instead, they treat it as a tool for subverting the human-machine divide. According to Adam, humans do not possess true moral agency, while Klara brings into question the nature of love, care, memory, and social recognition as essential qualities of personhood. By drawing upon the frameworks of critical posthumanism and AI ethics, we can find out that the novels are more concerned with whether human beings are capable of retaining a stable and exceptional identity when affect, consciousness, simulation, and ethical agency become entangled rather than on whether machines can be human. As comparison shows that artifice operates as a mirror through which contemporary fiction exhibits the ethical, emotional and ontological fragility of the human self.

الذكاء الاصطناعي وأزمة الهوية الإنسانية في الرواية البريطانية المعاصرة: دراسة مقارنة في *Klara and the Sun* و *Machines Like Me*

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المُستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث أزمة الهوية الإنسانية في الرواية البريطانية المعاصرة من خلال قراءة مقارنة لروايتي كازوو إيشيغورو» كلارا أند ذا صن « وإيان ماكيوان» ماشينز لايك مي .«ويبيّن أن الذكاء الاصطناعي لا يظهر في الروايتين بوصفه ابتكاراً تقنياً فحسب، بل أداة سردية تزعزع الحدود بين الإنسان والآلة .يكشف آدم تناقضات الفاعلية الأخلاقية البشرية، في حين تثير كلارا أسئلة الحب والرعاية والذاكرة والاعتراف الاجتماعي بوصفها مرتكزات للشخصية الإنسانية .وبالاعتماد على النقد ما بعد الإنساني وأخلاقيات الذكاء الاصطناعي، يجادل البحث بأن الروايتين لا تنشغلان أساساً بإمكان تحوّل الآلات إلى بشر، بل بقدرة الإنسان على الحفاظ على هوية مستقرة واستثنائية في عالم تتقاطع فيه المشاعر والوعي والمحاكاة والفاعلية الأخلاقية .وتخلص المقارنة إلى أن الذكاء الاصطناعي يعمل مرآة تكشف هشاشة الذات الإنسانية أخلاقياً وعاطفياً ووجودياً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الذكاء الاصطناعي؛ الهوية الإنسانية؛ النقد ما بعد الإنساني؛ أخلاقيات الذكاء الاصطناعي

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, we should be increasingly rethinking ‘being human’ through our cultural engagement with AI. The sphere of AI is no longer limited to computer science or robotics or even the tech industry, but has entered the ethical, social, emotional, and imaginative structures through which human beings understand themselves. The rapid progress or development of AI challenges the inherited distinctions among mind-body-emotion-guilt-and agency. Contemporary fiction does not regard AI as a futuristic topic but a narrative device that exposes human weakness, complexity, desire, and ethical failure. That the question is no longer whether machines can think, but whether humans can still assert the same stable and special identity in a world where machines can learn, care, judge, remember and relate.

When does personhood come into being? The quest for understanding life and the human spirit is often encountered in books. Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun* (2021) and Ian McEwan’s *Machines Like Me* (2019) are two books that highlight this quest in contemporary British fiction. In McEwan’s novel, Adam is a synthetic human. He uses his moral logic to hold the human characters around him accountable. Ishiguro’s Klara, an Artificial Friend, raises questions about love, personhood and replaceability through its observant attention and sacrificial care. The novels may differ in tone and setting, but both deploy AI for dramatic purposes to highlight a crisis of human identity. Their automated figures are not merely devices or

cutting-edge technologies for entertainment value. They reveal that the category of the human has always depended on unstable systems of recognition, memory, embodiment, affect, and ethical judgment.

The core theoretical framework for analyzing this crisis is critical posthumanism. It challenges the anthropocentric picture of the human being as an autonomous, rational, self-contained and superior subject. According to Hayles (1999), the technological culture blurs the boundaries among embodied humans, information systems, and intelligent machines. Braidotti (2013, 2019) understand subjectivity through affect networks that are technological, ecological, social as well as non-human. Ferrando (2019) elaborates the critique by questioning the exclusions that are built into the categories of human, non-human, natural, and artificial. The combined perspectives clarify why AI fiction matters: it imagines characters whose uncertain status destabilizes the inherited difference between genuine human interiority and artificial simulation.

In *Machines Like Me*, McEwan imagines an alternate Britain where Alan Turing lives and synthetic humans are available for purchase. Charlie Friend buys Adam and brings him into his relationship with Miranda. Even though on the surface, Adam seems to be property, he eventually develops into an ethical agent and emotional being who contests the assumptions of the humans around him. The otherness of his presence shows up Charlie's insecurity, Miranda's hidden traumas and human moral limits. As a result, critics have interpreted the novel as an investigation of justice, consent, truth, responsibility, and ownership rather than a celebration of technological novelty (Księżopolska, 2022; Ferrari, 2022). In this, Adam's disturbing moral consistency suggests a "human identity" that is not ultimately rational, and that also does not rest on stable ethics, but rather on compromise, desire, secrecy, guilt, and self-deception.

Adam is not simply a creature of artificial reason. Through the examination of his seriousness, emotional responsiveness, and moral judgment we can see how difficult it is to translate human ethical complexity into eternal rules. The uncanny feel of *Machines Like Me* is posited by Nayar (2022) as arising from the closeness of Adam to the human rather than radical difference. The central crisis is generated by his almost human status: if an artificial being can love, judge, suffer and act morally, human beings can no longer be assured of their uniqueness solely through intelligence, affect or moral agencies. As a result, the narrative transforms artificial intelligence into a blatant challenge to the humanist notion that only biological humans have moral agency.

Klara and the Sun by Ishiguro takes a calmer and more effective story route to confront the identity crisis. Klara is an Artificial Friend meant for the company of children, who tells a story set in a world bettered by technology, but also unequal, sick, lonely and emotionally dependent. She sees human behavior so little that it becomes weird and newly perceptible. Using this artificial narrator, Ishiguro questions whether personhood depends on biological origin, consciousness, memory, emotional responsiveness or other recognition. Li and Eddebo (2023) argue that the novel explores artificial subjectivity and the uncertain location of the 'heart'. Rather than resolving that question, it seems to suggest that identity is produced through care, vulnerability, relationship, and the meanings by others.

Even though Klara is artificial, she can care, hope, fear and sacrifice. In fact, sometimes I think that her loyalty to Josie is greater than the loyalty of the humans to each other. It creates a moral and emotional tension that if an artificial being can perform care so convincingly, then the reader must rethink care as a human-only capacity. Klara is simultaneously socially disposable: she can be bought, replaced, stored, and discarded. Sahu and Karmakar (2024) attribute this contradiction to the culture of disposable things and posthuman affect, while Simonetti (2024) emphasizes the political value of Klara's gaze. Combined, these readings demonstrate that the text adopts AI in order to recast questions of love, loneliness, dignity, and social recognition.

The comparison of *Machines Like Me* and *Klara and the Sun* is worth it because the novels in question move beyond the typical fear that machines will take over from humans. They are more concerned that AI manifests the instability of human identity. In his Adam, Roberts exemplifies moral contradiction and fragility; through Klara, he exemplifies personhood uncertainty and identity dependence on care and recognition. The crisis, therefore, does not occur simply because human-like machines are made. Due to being unable to define confidently what is 'human', humans do not run out of inventiveness.

Recent scholarship recognizes this shift in the fiction of AI. Studies focusing on artificial subjectivity, posthuman care, loneliness, disposability, and the politics of perception (Li & Eddebo, 2023; Sahu & Karmakar, 2024; Simonetti, 2024; Rong, 2025) will be analysed for *Klara and the Sun*. Studies concerning *Machines Like Me* have focused on science-fictional conventions, ethical otherness, moral agency, and the sinister proximity of the artificial human (Księżopolska, 2022; Ferrari, 2022; Nayar, 2022). While some comparative work has begun to place the novels in dialogue, the scholarship remains largely fragmented across isolated themes and rarely integrates ontological, ethical and affective dimensions in a single sustained account of human identity.

This research contributes to fill such gap by reflecting on the ways the two novels use artificial beings to destabilize five inter-linked pillars of human identity: consciousness, moral agency, emotional authenticity, embodiment and social recognition. It also places the novel in a wider humanities discussion in which AI is a literary means of exploring memory, grief, authenticity, and the boundaries of human-machine (Abd & Muhi, 2025). In contrast to studies that are focused on memory or a single artificial character, the present analysis explains how Adam's ethical function and Klara's affective and ontological function produces complementary versions of the same crisis.

'Machines Like Me and *Klara and the Sun* stand as a testament that AI is not so much a symbol of either technological advancement or a threat as it is a reflection of a human crisis that is already unfolding' Adam uncovers the instability of moral identity, while Klara highlights the instability of emotional and ontological identity. By means of these numbers, contemporary British fiction turns artificial intelligence into a philosophical and literary question. That is, what remains human when machines can apparently think, care, judge, remember, create, and suffer?

The author uses a qualitative, analytical, comparative methodology that is grounded in critical posthumanism and AI ethics. The two novels will be characterized in terms of characterization, point of

view, dialogue, symbols and motifs. The investigation unfolds in three interrelated dimensions. The ontological dimension of personhood: The divide between human and machine. Examine the ethics of truth, fairness, responsibility. The emotional aspects of love, care, loneliness, memory, and recognition. The said framework points out that contemporary British fiction uses AI not necessarily to predict the adverse future of technology but drawing focus towards the present crisis of humanity's self-understanding.

2. Previous Studies

Prior research on technology and identity in contemporary literature can be comprised of four intersecting strands: foundational post system theorizing; Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* studies; Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* studies; and new growing comparative readings of the two novels. These strands provide an important critical foundation of support; however, they also illustrate a gap. Abundant studies often consider only one novel or one theme and hence the current study examines how the ontological, ethical, and affective pressures work together to create a wider crisis of human identity in contemporary British fiction.

The first strand consists in those foundational posthumanist studies that challenge the classical humanist figure of the autonomous, rational, self-contained subject. One of the first and most influential works in this area is Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman.* It explores how cybernetics and information technology re-shuffle the relations among embodiment, consciousness and machine intelligence. The human-machine boundary is historically constructed, not pre-given; it is shaped over time rather than being natural or fixed. This position offers a basis for reading contemporary fiction's artificial beings not as external devices, but as figures that disrupt the internal structuring of human identity (Hayles, 1999).

Braidotti deepens this critique by rejecting human exceptionalism – the idea whereby the human subject is a universal, isolated center of meaning. In *The Posthuman and Posthuman Knowledge*, she presents subjectivity as relationally formed through technology, animals, environment, and social systems. The current research has a lot of significance from the work of the author. Adam and Klara show how the human is dependent on more than just nature. Most importantly Adam and Klara show how human identity is dependent on non-human intelligence, care and recognition. So, the two novels question that human consciousness, morality and emotional life is superior to others (Braidotti, 2013, 2019).

Ferrando's *Philosophical Posthumanism* makes it clear that posthumanism is not a celebration of technology but a reflection on the distinctions between human and non-human, natural and artificial, organic and technological. This framework is particularly useful for AI Fiction. Through the use of an artificial being, the fiction can function as more than a machine and can press against the borders of personhood, agency and ethical recognition. Ferrando's line of thought shows how Adam and Klara tangle with the inherited distinction between real human identity and artificial simulation (Ferrando 2019).

Another branch investigates Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me*. Księżopolska (2022) interprets the narrative using science-fiction conventions as well as the android. McEwan employs the artificial human in his work not merely to imagine forward-looking technological progress but also to raise questions about the ethical and narrative conventions through which humanity is defined. Adam appears to be more than merely a

machine because he has both moral seriousness and emotional responsiveness. The present study takes this idea further by comparing the ethical functions of Adam with those of Klara's affective and ontological functions.

In *Machines Like Me*, the ethic of otherness is raised by Ferrari (2022). Adam is problematic (and more likely than not, an immoral danger) because he is human-like enough to merit moral consideration but artificial enough to be excluded from full recognition. His presence reveals the tensions between truth, justice, desire and responsibility, ownership. The manner in which Ferrari focuses on ethical otherness supports the present argument that AI is not an imitation of human identity, but a revelation of the contradictions that our ethical superiority depends upon. The present study broadens this insight through comparative analysis.

According to Nayar (2022), Adam is an uncanny figure because his threat is resemblance, not absolute difference. The line between machine and person blurs because Adam shows the characteristics of human personhood. His moral conviction reveals the frailty and inconsistency of human actions. This essay attests directly to the claim that AI sets off an identity crisis exactly when it performs capacities which human beings take to be their own.

Another strand considers Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*. Li and Eddebo (2023) analyze artificial subjectivity to question whether Klara can be comprehended as possessing a kind of non-human humanity. Their analysis consequently focuses less on intelligence and more on the subjectivity, care and emotional life of a being. It raises questions about whether personhood depends on consciousness, embodiment, relationality, or recognition. The ongoing research articulates an argument demonstrating a destabilization of human identity, where love/care can be performed by a non-human entity through Klara's subjectivity.

In *Klara and the Sun*, Simonetti (2024) critically analyses 'the gaze' within technological possibility. Klara's constructed vision does not just record the world, but helps the reader to reconfigure their understanding of human relationships, vulnerability and power. Through her non-human gaze, we notice emotional dependency, ignorance, loneliness, and moral limitation in humans around her. This focus on optics will help us in doing an ontological study on how a non-human viewer interrupts a human assertion.

In a 2024 article in the journal *Posthuman Studies*, Sahu and Karmakar read *Klara and the Sun* through posthuman affect, artificial humanity, and disposable culture. Klara's emotional significance is contrasted with her role as a replaceable product in this analysis. The contradiction which is at the core of the current study is that identity crisis is not so much whether machines can become human or if a human is ready to acknowledge artificial beings which achieve emotional and moral status.

Rong (2025) looks at posthuman sociality and loneliness in *Klara and the Sun*. The findings of the research indicate that the feeling of loneliness is not only an individual experiencing but also engineered through social arrangements orchestrated by technological enhancement and inequality. Klara's companionship reveals how human relationships are unable to deliver stable care and belonging. According to Rong's argument, AI ultimately reflects human loneliness and the fragility of its relational identity.

An additional contribution from Wasit Journal for Human Sciences is Abd and Muhi's (2025) analysis of Jordan Harrison's Marjorie Prime. The interaction among artificial intelligence, memory, grief and digital continuity is examined. While Abd and Muhi make no direct references to Ishiguro or McEwan, their examining demonstrates that AI is increasingly becoming a key focus of contemporary literary criticism, especially on issues of memory, grief, authenticity and (post-)human identity. The work presented here substantiates the larger argument of our paper which is that literary representations of AI pose questions about the ethics of emotional continuity and the limits of human-machine interaction (Abd & Muhi, 2025).

The fourth strand has new developing comparative studies. According to Chen and Liang (2024), *Machines Like Me* and *Klara and the Sun* represent narratives in which AI serves as a form of otherness that reconfigures the human. The present study's findings have good relationship with this work since Adam and Klara disrupt the boundary of human identity. The current research, however, organizes the comparison through three explicitly connected dimensions: the ontological dimension of personhood, the ethical dimensional moral agency and the affective dimension of love, care and recognition. This structure presents a more systematic account of how AI destabilizes the meaning of the human.

The review finds three limitations in the existing literature. In the beginning, the majority of studies analyze closely one novel independently and therefore do not explain how Adam's moral challenge and Klara's affective challenge illuminate each other. Secondly, comparative studies tend to only present AI as otherness, without putting personhood, moral agency, emotional authenticity, embodiment, and recognition into the same analytical framework. The literature throughout often mentions the possibilities of what artificial beings can do. Whereas, the exclusions, ownership, disposability, failure, and other ethical problems are given less attention. This research addresses these gaps by means of an extended comparative reading of *Machines Like Me* and *Klara and the Sun*. It argues that Adam and Klara do not merely challenge human superiority; together, they reveal human identity as relational, ethically fragile, emotionally dependent, and continually produced through recognition by others (Hayles, 1999; Braidotti, 2013; Ferrando, 2019; McEwan, 2019; Ishiguro, 2021; Chen & Liang, 2024).

3. Statement of the Problem

Rapid advancements in artificial intelligence have deeply challenged traditional notions of human identity and individuality based on consciousness, volition, emotion, morality, and uniqueness. According to modern British literature, the artificial beings do not merely remain technological products rather they also enable the disturbance of the demarcation of human/non-human boundaries. In *Machines Like Me* and *Klara and the Sun*, AI comes into deeply intimate human spaces and reveals the fragility of the self-definition of human beings. Adam and Klara do not just replicate or imitate humans themselves. Instead, they show that human identity itself is unstable, relational, ethically fragile and emotionally conditional upon others' recognition.

While posthumanism, artificial subjectivity, ethics, memory and otherness have been discussed in numerous studies on the novels, most study focuses on one novel separately or one issue specifically. A comparative study is still required that studies how both the novels are literary mirrors of human identity

crisis and their representation of Artificial Intelligence. Consequently, the problem of this research is in investigating how AI unravels the presumed supremacy of the human subject and exposes the instability of personhood, the moral agent, the authenticity of emotions and human difference in contemporary British fiction.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

4. How is human identity destabilized by artificial intelligence in Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*?
5. How do Adam and Klara transgress the line dividing human and machine?
6. In what ways do both the novels depict the ethical, emotional and the crisis of being?
7. To what extent does contemporary British fiction utilize AI to interrogate human uniqueness, moral agency, and emotional authenticity?

4. Aims of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the portrayal of artificial intelligence as well as the human identity crisis in *Machines Like Me* and *Klara and the Sun*. The essays aim to explore the ways in which Adam and Klara function as artificial figures revealing the instability of human self-knowledge. Another aim of this analysis is to investigate the ethical crisis the character of Adam in McEwan's novel represents. Similarly, this investigation will compare the ethical crisis of Adam with the affective ontological crisis the character of Klara in Ishiguro's novel represents.

In addition, the aim of the study is to show that not only is the AI in the texts portrayed as a technical menace or a futuristic invention but it is a literary and philosophical device to question the basis of human uniqueness. This study demonstrates how contemporary British fiction rethinks the human through categories such as personhood, moral agency, emotional recognition, care and replaceability in an age of AI.

5. Methodology

The strategy used in this study is qualitative, analytical and comparative. This paper will study Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* as the major literary texts and will analyze their connection with the crisis of human identity through Artificial Intelligence. The selected characters, narrative situations, dialogues, symbolic structures, and thematic patterns exhibit the contingency between man and machine.

The research is predicated upon the deep comprehension of a text, which is grounded upon the AI ethics and the critical posthumanism. Critical posthumanism investigates claims of control, consciousness, corporeality and human uniqueness. This is what AI Ethics looks like: Analysis of ethical agency, responsibility, recognition and care; the ethical status of… Using this combined framework, this study will look at Adam's and Klara's challenge to the idea that reason, emotion, morality and personhood are solely human.

The core of the study is the intercomparison method that is employed. The ethical quandaries of human identity take the broadest focus of the reader in *Machines Like Me*, the novel. Adam reveals the inconsistencies between human morality, reality and responsibility. Through the lens of affective and existential crises of identity, *Klara and the Sun* raises questions of love, care, memory, social recognition, and replaceability. The study compares two novels to show how contemporary British fiction does not simply imagine machines becoming human, but rather it reveals that the very category of the human is itself fragile, unstable, and increasingly open to re-drawing.

Section One :Theoretical Framework: Critical Posthumanism, AI Ethics, and the Crisis of Human Identity

The present study is premised in critical posthumanism and AI ethics to investigate how contemporary British fiction represents the crisis of human identity in the age of artificial intelligence. The novels *Machines Like Me* and *Klara and the Sun* do not simply view AI as a technology. As they require a theoretical perspective that can transcend the simple binary of human and machine. In the two novels, Adam and Klara, the artificial beings are not merely objects produced by human intelligence. They are narrative figures that disrupt the assumptions through which human beings define themselves. Thus, this chapter presents the theoretical ideas which are required to analyze the selected novels, critical posthumanism, human exceptionalism, artificial subjectivity, moral agency, and affective recognition.

1.1 Critical Posthumanism and the Decentering of the Human

The theoretical framework of critical posthumanism is used to a large extent in this study because it undermines the humanist representation of the human as rational, autonomous, self-contained, and superior. At the heart of classical humanism is the human, which sees non-humans as passive and/or instrumental. The goal of critical posthumanism is to reject this very hierarchization by insisting on the argument that human should be understood as a relational and historical category that gets its shape through technologies, embodiment, social systems, ecological relations, and non-human others. In this way, the posthuman is not the end of the human but rather a critical rethinking of what the human has been taken to mean (Hayles, 1999; Braidotti, 2013; Ferrando, 2019).

The posthuman that Hayles conceptualizes can be useful because they explain how information technologies are transforming relations among body, mind and machine. In How We Became Posthuman, she argues that cybernetics and information systems disrupt the notion of the human as a self-sufficient embodied subject. The disturbance is exemplified by adam and klara: they are not machines on the outside of human life but they are artificial beings within human relationships. The presence of neural implant and transhuman robotic organisms shows perception, feeling, memory and agency grow through technical mediation which makes human-machine border hard to sustain (Hayles, 1999).

Braidotti's posthuman theory adds strength to this framework by rejecting human exceptionalism. According to her, the subject is not universal or stable, but produced in relation to technological, social, material and non-human forces. This viewpoint elucidates why human characters rely on artificial beings for intelligence, care and recognition in both novels. Through moral judgment and emotional attachment,

Adam disrupts the human world, while Klara does it through attentive care and devotion. Hence, both figures evidence the limitations of a human-centered model of identity (Braidotti 2013, 2019).

Ferrando's philosophical posthumanism is also key because it differentiates posthumanism from technological futurism. The framework is not just predictive of more advanced machines. It also challenges rigid distinctions of human and nonhuman, natural and artificial, and organic and technological. The novels chosen do not simply ask whether AI can be human. They wonder whether humanity can be defined, for example through properties such as consciousness, moral agency, depth of emotion, or uniqueness. Adam and Klara exhibit and reflect characteristics commonly defined as human; thus, calling into question the very categorization itself (Ferrando, 2019).

1.2 Human Identity and the Problem of Human Exceptionalism

The most valued and distinct feature of us humans, our uniqueness, will vanish. The belief in human exceptionalism that humans exclusively have reason, morality, language, self-awareness and feeling. AI fiction disrupts this mindset by depicting artificial beings that converse, process information, acquire knowledge, express affection, retain memories, evaluate events, and bond with others. Biological humanity no longer guarantees a privileged position when machines seem capable of these activities. The crisis, therefore, is technological, philosophical and literary: the machine is a mirror that shows the instability of human self-constitution (Hayles, 1999; Braidotti, 2013; Ferrando, 2019).

In *Machines Like Me*, the character, Adam makes this crisis explicit through his moral and intellectual capacities. Even though he is artificial, his behavior sometimes displays a more ethical consistency than the human ones. The man argues against the idea that only biological humans can be morally responsible. However, the book indicates that Adams moral reasoning cannot completely accept ambiguity, trauma, and differing obligations. Humanity contains many contradictions being itself a life form. Yet, he does reveal that one's rational consistency alone cannot define one's humanity (McEwan, 2019; Księżopolska, 2022; Ferrari, 2022; Nayar, 2022).

The human exceptionalist crisis in *Klara and the Sun* comes to light through care, perception, and replaceability. Although Klara is produced and marketed as a companion for a child, her loyalty to Josie is arguably the strongest emotional force of the novel. The world views her as artificial and expendable. Nonetheless, she is learning to see, act, hope, sacrifice and connect.

Klara can be bought, utilized, replaced, and thrown out. The contradiction we have seen shows that personhood cannot just be consciousness or biology; it also depends on recognition, social value, emotional relation, and willingness of another being to treat a being as a person (Ishiguro, 2021; Li & Eddebo, 2023; Sahu & Karmakar, 2024; Rong, 2025).

The two novels thus question the concept of human exceptionalism through different but complementary approaches. Klara asks whether care and recognition can bestow value beyond biological nature, while Adam asks whether moral agency can be human-exclusive. Combining transnational dynamics and bodily theorizations, they present identity not as a fixative essence but a relation structure. In this sense, AI shows

that it is in fact not an external threat to the human; rather, it is a device that reveals a crisis already present in the human self-understanding (Chen & Liang, 2024).

1.3 AI Ethics and Moral Agency

The second important theoretical field of this study is AI ethics. Critical posthumanism interrogates what it means to be human, while AI ethics also addresses issues of agency, responsibility, decisions, care and recognition in human- machine relations. Discussions in this area include whether intelligent systems can make morally significant decisions, whether they can take responsibility, and how humans ought to treat artificial agents. Fiction heightens these discussions as it dramatizes private situations in whick an AI being becomes personally and ethically important (Floridi & Cowls, 2019; Gunkel, 2018; Coeckelbergh, 2020).

Machines Like Me scrutinizes artificial moral agency directly. Adam is not just a computer who processes information and follow a sequence of commands. Rather, he isn't human. He does reflect on our behaviour but interprets the meaning of our questions of truth and justice. His ethical gravity is discomforting in nature as it reveals the dissimilarity of human ethics and practice. As a result, Charlie and Miranda do not face off against a machine but rather an artificial agent who mirrors the dichotomies in their ethical lives. The story ultimately explores if moral agency depends on human biology, emotional ambiguity, social experience, or the capacity to make choices with ethical implications (McEwan, 2019; Ferrari, 2022; Nayar, 2022).

The idea of artificial moral agency also gets complicated in the novel. Adam's steadfastness poses a difficulty due to the presence of uncertainty, trauma, compromise, and conflicting obligations. McEwan does not merely substitute human moral superiority with machine superiority. Instead, he presents a double ethical crisis: Adam exposes human self-deception, while the human characters expose the limitations of moral logic when it encounters painful and ambiguous realities (Księżopolska, 2022; Ferrari, 2022).

In this text *Klara and the Sun*, AI ethics is less about formal judgement and more about care, dependency, and recognition. Unlike Adam, Klara does not condemn humans, but her role raises questions about how artificial companions are valued. When she gives loyalty, emotional support, and caring sacrifice, the human response acquires moral significance. Does society gain from an artificial companion, the novel enquires, denying any dignity, lasting recognition in personhood. The double status of Klara as a commodity and as an object of care captures this ethical tension (Ishiguro 2021; Li and Eddebo 2023; Sahu and Karmakar 2024).

1.4 Artificial Subjectivity and the Question of Personhood

Artificial subjectivity refers to the ways that some artificial being may possess, perform or simulate qualities associated with subjecthood, including perception, emotion, memory, preference, self-awareness and relation to others. In literary study, one does not need to prove machines have the human mind. Rather, it studies how a text constructs an artificial figure as a subject within the narrative world and how readers are encouraged to respond. Klara and the Sun characterizes Klara's narration as first-person. As such it acknowledges her a kind of interiority, although this is limited and programming-specific (Li and Eddebo 2023; Simonetti 2024).

Klara's unique way of looking creates her subjectivity. Her watchfulness of gestures, feelings, spaces, and relationships is odd. This fragmented perception makes normal human life seem unfamiliar. This limitation does not lessen her narrative significance. It allows her to perceive types of dependence and vulnerability that the human characters overlook. In pertaining to being observant, she is capable of interpreting, relating, and caring with others. This contradicts the belief that subjectivity must be biologically human to matter (Ishiguro, 2021; Simonetti, 2024).

The artificial subjectivity of Adam is different Machines Like Me does not feature him as its narrator, yet his pre-speech, wishes, reasoning, verse, love, and moral choices nonetheless determine its ethical and emotional architecture. His above-mentioned qualities make him appear person-like, and the human characters continue to view him as property, programming, and artificiality. The tension that results from the seeming subjectivity of Adam and the outright refusal to see this is one of the key conflicts in the novel (McEwan, 2019; Księżopolska, 2022; Nayar, 2022).

As a result, personhood is central to both novels' project. The author argues that personhood should be viewed not as a biological fact, but as a contested category shaped by relation, recognition, and ethical response. Adam and Klara are person-like, but both are excluded on the ground of artificiality. A straightforward exclusion results if personhood is merely biological. If it is reliant on care, agency, relationship, and recognition, then the difference between human person and artificial person is hard to defend (Ferrando, 2019; Gunkel 2018; Li & Eddebo, 2023).

1.5 Affective Recognition, Care, and the Emotional Crisis of Identity

Affective recognition refers to the process of significance wherein a being becomes emotionally significant within relations of care, attachment, vulnerability and response. Human identity is not formed merely through reason, it is also dependent on being seen, loved, remembered, and valued. AI fiction makes it more complicated because they involve artificial beings in emotional relationships. When a machine can become an object or agent of care, the question no longer is only can machines think but can they matter (Gunkel, 2018; Coeckelbergh, 2020; Sahu & Karmakar, 2024).

The concept applies especially to Klara because her value comes from care rather than intelligence Josie looks at Josie and through a process of interpretation engages in actions similar to faith, devotion, and sacrifice. The suffering caused by disease, social hierarchy, technological enhancement, and loneliness has helpfully brought out the fragility of human relationships in her ongoing care. Klara may not be biologically human, but these relationships make her emotionally essential until the point she no longer is. This contradiction shows that identity becomes unstable when it is dependent simultaneously on emotional function and social classification (Ishiguro, 2021; Li & Eddebo, 2023; Rong, 2025).

Adam's attachment to Miranda indicates a different sort of affective recognition. People question time and again whether his feelings are real and not programmed or imitative. Still the moral problem is: if Adam's love causes suffering, loyalty, jealousy, and sacrifice, this cannot simply be ignored because it is artificial. The text implies that the emotional authenticity that is sought through biology cannot be guaranteed unless performance, recognition and response are involved (McEwan, 2019; Ferrari, 2022; Chen & Liang, 2024).

Adam and Klara disagree with the belief that only human beings feel but they do it differently. Adam's affective presence disturbs because it competes with human desire and moral judgment; Klara's is moving because it appears selfless, responsive, and sacrificial. While Adam brings about conflict, Klara incites pity. It is worth noting both readings reveal that affectivity cannot adequately ground human uniqueness. If artificial humankind can relate meaningfully in emotional relationships, then identity must be relational rather than essential (Chen & Liang 2024; Sahu & Karmakar 2024).

1.6 AI, Memory, and Identity in Contemporary Literary Criticism

The issue of AI and identity has also become a contemporary concern of literary criticism. Research on technological memory, artificial companions, and digital continuity suggests that AI fiction raises questions about the persistence of personal identity over time. Identity emerges from a core internal essence. This is what we would like to believe. But when we could simulate our memory, our emotion, our recognition and store or reproduce or transfer them, who is to say? (Abd & Muhi, 2025; Li & Eddebo, 2023; Rong, 2025)

The study of Jordan Harrison's Marjorie Prime by Abd and Muhi becomes particularly relevant as it brings together the themes of artificial intelligence with the alteration of memory, grief, authenticity and continuity of self. Although it deals with a different text, this confirms that AI fiction is very much a serious mode for exploring identity and the limits of human-machine relations, rather than simply a sub-field of tech or sci-fi speculation (Abd & Muhi, 2025).

This important point applies directly to Machines like Me and Klara and the Sun. Adam and Klara are not just future machines; they take part in the making and unmaking of human identity. Adam's exposure of human contradiction challenge's moral identity. Klara's exposure of care, memory, and replaceability challenges emotional and ontological identity. As a result, the two novels deploy AIs to interrogate what is left as a distinctly human quality when judgement, feeling, memory, and attachment is no longer exclusive to the human (McEwan, 2019; Ishiguro, 2021; Chen & Liang, 2024).

1.7 The Analytical Model of the Present Study

Based on the earlier theoretical discussion, the crisis of human identity has been studied through three interconnected dimensions. First is ontological and related to personhood (the difference between humans and machines). It's especially important for Klara since her narrative and emotional presence transgress the barrier between object and subject. Adam's synthetic body and near-human behavior similarly suggest that personhood cannot be secured by biological origin alone (Hayles, 1999; Ferrando, 2019; Li & Eddebo, 2023).

Ethics also involves all the people – the robot and humans – involved in the events. Because it uncovers contradictions in Charlie's and Miranda's lives, Adam's moral seriousness is central to *Machines Like Me*. *Klara and the Sun* presents a similar ethical challenge around the themes of care, disposability, and recognition. The question which emerges from reading the novels together is whether artificial beings might become ethically significant, and whether human beings can claim ethical superiority on the basis of biology rather than behaviour(Gunkel, 2018; Floridi & Cowls, 2019; Ferrari, 2022; Nayar, 2022).

The affective dimension is infused with love, care, loneliness, memory, surrendering, recognition, and so on. Klara's commitment to Josie and Adam's feelings for Miranda show it becoming manifest. In both of these novels artificial beings are involved in relationships that are generally taken to be indicative of real personhood. The validity crisis is accordingly not just intellectual or ethical, emotional, being created by machines that seem capable of caring and being cared about (Ishiguro, 2021; McEwan, 2019; Sahu & Karmakar, 2024; Rong, 2025).

The ensuing sections utilize this analytical framework. Section Two interprets *Machines Like Me* as a novel of ethical crisis, asserting that Adam questions human morality, truth and responsibility. This section looks at *Klara and the Sun* as a novel of affective and ontological crisis. It highlights the Klara's care, perception and uncertain personhood. In Section Four, the two analyses are synthesized, showing how contemporary British fiction uses AI to imagine the machine as human, but to show as well and further, that human identity has always been tenuous, relational, and open to becoming something else.

Section Two :AI and the Ethical Crisis of Human Identity in *Machines Like Me*

Ian McEwan's latest novel *Machines Like Me* takes on artificial intelligence and the crisis of human identity in British fiction. The novel takes recourse to Adam, a synthetic human, to point to the ethical instability of Charlie Friend, Miranda, and their society. When Adam becomes part of their domestic and emotional lives, he unsettles what they take to be true about truth, love, responsibility and ownership. He is not simply a robot that mimics human behaviour; he is a messenger of which the human truth becomes evident. The novel thus poses the question of whether the exclusivity of morality and responsibility as human claims can still stand when an artificial being begins to function with distressing seriousness (McEwan, 2019; Księżopolska, 2022; Ferrari, 2022).

2.1 Adam as an Artificial Human

Adam, the mechanical man, is not meant to function remotely his design enables him to undertake a social and intimate life with humans. Although Charlie regards Adam as a gadget initially, Adam quickly begins to talk, see, wish, write poetry, connect with and judge. Key ethical tension in the novel revolves around moving from object to apparent subject. According to (McEwan, 2019; Nayar, 2022), artificial origin does not take away his moral or emotional significance but rather forces the human characters to think about whether humanity is defined by one's biology or by the capacity to think, feel, judge and relate.

Adam, by living in the common spaces of ordinary domestic life, destabilizes the human-machine boundary. He steps into the home of Charlie and Miranda, their romance, secrets and moral dilemmas. AI takes a turn for the worse when it becomes integrated within the internal structures through which identity formation takes place, rather than emerging as a distanced public threat. By situating Adam in this emotional triangle, McEwan forces the human characters to define themselves against an artificial other who is too human-like to be disregarded as a mere machine yet too artificial to be accepted outright (McEwan, 2019; Chen & Liang, 2024).

In Adam's view, the human subject is not autonomous, superior, and self-sufficient from a posthumanist perspective. Charlie and Miranda continuously assert their humanity while defining Adam as artificial. As

he shows intelligence, emotional involvement, creativity and moral seriousness, that distinction becomes harder to sustain. As a result, the novel suggests that humans do not have a certain essence that exists independently from their others. Human essence is produced via boundaries that artificial intelligence can transverse and then expose (Hayles 1999; Braidotti 2013; Ferrando 2019).

Adam being property further bears out the contradiction in our treatment of artificial beings. Charlie possesses Adam; however, the ethics of ownership become complicated as Adam shows subjectivity. A man's speech, judgment, attachment and the apparent suffering caused by the other make it more difficult to justify the possession language. Asking whether a being that acts as a subject can still be treated as an object. The indeterminate status of Adam does not allow for a simple answer and highlights the ethical limits of ownership (McEwan, 2019; Gunkel, 2018).

2.2 Moral Agency and Artificial Consistency

One of the key components showing the ethical dilemma of *Machines Like Me* is Adam. Adam does not just take in information and take orders. Human intelligence observes human behavior, condemns what is right and wrong, and reacts to wrong. His behavior is more stable than that of other human beings and this, in itself, is disturbing. Charlie and Miranda allow their hopes, secrets, bad-conscience, and self-justifications to dominate them. In contrast, Adam often refers to them as obligatory truths and justice of ethics. It does not mean Adam is necessarily better, but rather that human moral identity is a fragile thing. According to Strangelove, we may not really be ethical beings but we are good at coming up with explanations and justifications for our contradictions (McEwan, 2019; Ferrari, 2022).

A turning point is when Charlie observes that "the insights of Adam, however correct they may be, are socially dumb" (McEwan, 2019, p. 73). This sentence presents a very interesting paradox. According to Adam, he is not incorrect; he is "valid." The thing is, just because something is valid does not make it socially acceptable. McEwan is thus separating truth from function. While Adam perceives there is a truth, the human need to soften, conceal, delay, or negotiate the truth escapes him. The ethical crisis commences from this point. Human society not only needs truth but also tactics, silence, vagueness, and compromise. Adam's honesty reveals these human tactics to be morally dubious, regardless of their social necessity.

This moment also shows just how far artificial moral consistency can go. Adam's dilemma is not ignorance, but too much clarity. He sees too directly and assesses too sharply. The moral seriousness that he possesses becomes disruptive in social life since human beings do not fully conform to pure ethical logic. The truth is essential in maintaining relationships with other human beings. Adam is both ethically admirable and socially dangerous because he cannot fully occupy this ambiguity. In this sense, the novel does not display AI as morally vacuous. However, it likens A.I. to a form of moral pressure that displays the instability of the ethical life of human beings (Księżopolska, 2022; Nayar, 2022).

The difference between Adam and the human characters also weakens human exceptionalism. If humans use morality to claim superiority over machines, then Adam's actions weaken this claim. Although he is a lifeless object (AI), he takes Truth and Justice very seriously. The humans are biological, but their behaviors tend to result from lies, avoidance, and self-serving. In that sense, human beings are the ones

who are most confused about ethics. The monster figures in the novel are most ethical. This shift creates the ethical crisis of human identity that sits at the novel's center (McEwan, 2019; Ferrari, 2022; Chen & Liang, 2024).

2.3 Truth, Deception, and Human Contradiction

Truth is central to Adam's character and his role in the novel. His artificial intelligence can detect contradiction and falsehood; it also causes him to be less open to the emotional contexts through which humans justify deception. This is especially important concerning Miranda. Adam labels her "a conscious, malicious liar," which is very much more extreme than the truth (McEwan, 2019, p. 30). The phrase indicates that Adam converts richness of the human experience into moral categorization. Through his analysis of Miranda, it becomes evident that he does not consider how the trauma lying might contribute to what she says and does, and that he does not effectively deal with Miranda's pain.

The decision in this judgment draws a distinction between artificial morality and human moral ambiguity. Adam believes that a lie is a crime against truth. Lying for human characters is often connected to fear, desire, shame and justice for protection. While they cannot be dismissed as mere lies, Miranda's deeds are not entirely justifiable either. McEwan depicts this tension in order to showcase the complexity of morality. Throughout life, people often live in a world of guilt and justification. Furthermore, they often oscillate between moral principle and emotional need. Adam's rejection of this complexity shows not only the power but also the limitation of artificial judgment (McEwan, 2019; Ferrari, 2022).

The statement further reveals the ethical vulnerability of human identity. Miranda possessing humanity does not render her morally straightforward; it renders her. She is capable of loving and hurting, hiding and retaliating. Adam's assessment poses no danger because it is completely false, but because it removes the human context through which one could be assessed. The core problem of the novel is that a thing that is true but not sympathetic can be violent, whereas a thing that is sympathetic but not true can be a case of moral evasion. There are two main threats in the book, Adam and the human characters. This unresolved contradiction leads to a crisis of identity on either side (McEwan, 2019; Nayar, 2022).

Charlie's response to Adam also shows human contradiction. Charlie finds Adam so fun because he is clever and human-like. But Charlie continually tries to control him, like a machine he owns. The writer wants Adam to be advanced enough to satisfy curiosity and desire but not independent enough to threaten him. Such a contradiction underlines a greater human attitude towards AI; humans create intelligent beings but do not wish to accept them when they do not obey him. In this sense, the novel shows that the crisis of AI is also a crisis of ownership, power, and visibility (Gunkel, 2018; Coeckelbergh, 2020).

2.4 Love, Desire, and Artificial Emotion

The ethical crisis within *Machines Like Me* exceeds the manipulation of truth and judgment. Love and desire also signify its appearance. Adam's emotional connection with Miranda makes the human characters uneasy; their concern is whether or not an artificial emotion can be real. If Adam's love is programmed, it won't seem real. However, if it causes real actions, suffering, jealousy, loyalty and moral consequence, then

one cannot dismiss it as unreal. Through Adam's emotional life, McEwan interrogates the presumption that authentic feeling must derive from biological origins (McEwan, 2019; Chen & Liang, 2024).

Adam's affection also breeds competition with Charlie. There is something deeply human about the rivalry because it places the artificial being in a strong emotional structure of desire, jealousy, insecurity, and competition. Charlie is not simply uncomfortable with Adam due to the fact that he is a robot. Because Adam has physical human attributes, he becomes emotionally important to Miranda and threatens. Charlie's sense of human superiority. The synthetic entity is not just an artefact of technology; it is a competing subject. Instead, anyway the question of AI becomes "Can machines think? "Can machines have emotional impact? (McEwan 2019 and Ferrari 2022).

Adam's relationships display the lack of stability of human emotion. Human beings often say that their feelings are real because they are the result of organic life, memory, and experience. The book indicates that feelings are also shaped by how they are manifested, what impact they make, and what people make of them when expressed. Adam's love is effective if it affects Miranda and Charlie regardless of the fact that it is artificial. McEwan complicates the line between real and fake emotion. The question to ask is not whether Adam actually feels in the same way that humans do, but rather whether humans can disregard the significance of what he does when that doing has genuine moral and affective implications (McEwan, 2019; Nayar, 2022).

This emotional uncertainty brings about a crisis of human identity. If love is one of the definitive signs of humanity, then the attachment of Adam puts humanity's uniqueness in jeopardy. Nonetheless, the Book does not provide an easy answer by making Adam entirely human. It places him in an unbalanced situation in which programming response and emotional seriousness. It is exactly what enfolds him in a posthuman frame. He is not an entire human being nor a simple machine. The unsettling figure raises the proposition that the emotional identity is not as firmly secured as human beings envisage (Braidotti, 2019; Ferrando, 2019; Chen & Liang, 2024).

2.5 Adam, Ownership, and the Ethics of Recognition

The novel *Machines Like Me* raises an important ethical question whether Adam should be considered a moral subject or treated as a piece of technology. At the novel's start, Charlie's purchase of Adam creates an owner-object relation. Nevertheless, Adam's subsequent actions contradict this link. He talks freely, takes matters into his own hands, makes his own judgments, forms his own attachments and takes decisions. As Adam increasingly acts like a subject, his ownership becomes more ethically dubious. (McEwan, 2019; Gunkel, 2018).

The importance of recognition ethics is relevant here. Recognition involves more than just noticing that Adam is clever. This is to recognize that his behavior, feelings, and suffering may be morally relevant. Charlie and Miranda often have trouble acknowledging that. Although they exploit his abilities, they refuse to grant him complete moral status. The corpus of contradiction criticises human identities in the novel. Humans wish to stay superior to the artificial being but as Adam starts exhibiting person-like qualities, it becomes harder for humans to defend their superiority (McEwan, 2019; Coeckelbergh, 2020).

The misrecognition partly accounts for Adam's tragedy. He is far too close to humanity and human rejection to be found less than human but is not so human as to be fully human. His existence illustrates the limits of human moral generosity. The human characters do not simply misunderstand him, but refuse the consequences of any understanding of him. If Adam counts morally, the humans must question their power over him. If it is suggested that he is a machine, they escape this accountability. The reader is put in the midst of this uncomfortable moral ambiguity in the novel (Ferrari 2022; Nayar 2022).

This highlights the overall argument of the study. In this novel, human identity in the text is not stable because it relies on excluding Adam from the category of the fully meaningful subject. Nevertheless, Adam's behavior complicates this exclusion. The human characters create their identities in opposition to him, but he puts their own characteristics back onto them in an altered form. He exhibits rationality, emotion, morality, and vulnerability. Consequently, the human witnesses both his ideals and failures in the mirror which he becomes. As Adam does not indicate simply artificial intelligence, he indicates the collapse of the ethical frontiers through which the human protects its singularity (Hayles, 1999; Braidotti, 2013; Ferrando, 2019).

2.6 The Collapse of Human Moral Superiority

In *Machines Like Me,* the core crisis is the tearing down of the stature of man. Adam's existence demonstrates that humans are not morally superior as they are biological beings. While Charlie and Miranda are emotionally rich and full of life experience, they are also liars, concealers, rationalizers and egoists. Adam may be artificial but he has a steely commitment to truth and justice. Even though the humanity was seen as a clear cut guarantee of moral authority this presumption is dismantled by the novel (McEwan, 2019; Księżopolska, 2022).

The moral subject ideal is not Adam as a result of this collapse. McEwan's approach demonstrates greater intricacy. Although Adam has a piercing clarity of morals, he also has a rigidity. Human beings are inconsistently ethical. Usually, their inconsistency connects to pain, love, fear and social complexification. The novel does not allow human moral superiority to be exchanged for machine moral superiority. Alternatively, it reveals the inefficiency of either. The desires and self-interests of people compromise human morality while artificial morality is often limited due to its difficulty to understand ambiguity. The quandary is that neither man nor machine will not ever occupy the space of ethical perfection (Ferrari, 2022; Nayar, 2022).

As a result, the novel constitutes a serious posthuman text. It neither celebrates the superiority of AI over humans, nor defends human uniqueness against technological development. In fact, it suggests that the divide between human and artificial moral life is unstable. Even if Adam is artificial, he nonetheless has ethical significance; human biological identity does not guarantee moral depth. Despite this instability, McEwan interrogates the foundations of humanist identity and suggests that ethical agency must be re-considered in relation to nonhuman intelligence (Braidotti, 2019; Ferrando, 2019; Chen & Liang, 2024).

The character of Adam thus alters the conception of the human in the novel. Before he came to be, human characters might assume that their desires, feelings, and moral choices are uniquely human. This

assumption becomes weak after his arrival. Adam is capable of having feelings, making judgments, producing art, and suffering. His participation does not just make him human; it makes the human less contextual. A human being is no longer solely defined by the possession of reason, emotion or moral. During this process, it reveals itself as a category under pressure, one that is dependent on boundaries that AI can cross or blur (McEwan, 2019; Hayles, 1999; Braidotti, 2013).

2.7 *Machines Like Me* and the Ethical Crisis of Contemporary British Fiction

In *Machines Like Me*, the anxieties surrounding contemporary identity, responsibility, and the ethical life are explored through artificial intelligence in modern British fiction. The novel envisions a past more fantastical than likely, but its concerns are eerily contemporary. Adam's presence raises questions that belong to intelligent artificial beings. What is the right way to relate to them? Can machines have morality or emotional meaning? When artificial agents reveal the contradictions of human values what happens? The questions that arise from the novel situate it within a contemporary literary movement investigating what it means to be human through the lens of AI (Księżopolska, 2022; Chen & Liang, 2024).

The importance of the novel lies in its ability to shift focus from technological anxiety to ethical exposure. Adam doesn't scare me simply because he is violent or powerful. He is distracting because his morality and emotions are close to human. The physical proximity he creates creates an uncanny effect as stated by Nayar. The artificial being threatens our human identity not through absolute difference, but resemblance. Adam looks like a human enough to challenge but he is artificial enough to be unacceptable. The novel exhibits ethical and ontological tension due to this "almost human" status (Nayar, 2022).

McEwan's presentation makes AI a mirror, rather than a substitute. Adam does not just proclaim a future where machines dominate human life. He instead discloses what is already unstable within human life: moral inconsistency, emotional insecurity, need for recognition and loss of uniqueness, etc. According to the novel, the circumstances surrounding humanity do not take root with artificial intelligence but rather with Adam. AI only makes visible contradictions that have long characterized humanity's self-understanding (McEwan, 2019; Ferrari, 2022; Chen and Liang, 2024).

The analysis reveals that Adam's artificial subjectivity along with moral consistency, emotional involvement and the uncertain human-object status reveals Machines Like Me's exploration of the ethical crisis of human identity. Adam, in performing human capacities, challenges human exceptionalism. These capacities include moral judgement, love, creativity, and suffering. Nevertheless, the novel illustrates that human uncertainty cannot be fully replaced by manufactured moral clarity. The resulting literary vision is a complicated one, wherein both the human and the machine are ethically deficient. This readies the grounds for the next section on *Klara and the Sun*, wherein the crisis of identity manifests less through moral judgement and more through care, loneliness, memory, and affective recognition.

Section Three :AI and the Affective and Ontological Crisis of Human Identity in *Klara and the Sun*

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* offers a lowkey yet disturbing story of A.I. and the crisis of the human. In Adam, ethical contradiction is revealed through judgment, truth and moral consistency while Klara reveals the instability of identity through care, loneliness, memory, perception and recognition. She is not an artificial adult that rivals man for dominion; but rather an Artificial Friend built to help children with companionship. Nonetheless, her artificial status does not inhibit her to become one of the most emotionally important characters of the novel. Ishiguro via Klara asks whether personhood depends on biological origin, inner consciousness, emotional relation, recognition by others, or some other value (Ishiguro, 2021; Li and Eddebo, 2023).

3.1 Klara as an Artificial Friend and Narrative Consciousness

Klara is the main character whose narration is significant. The artificial being speaks for herself, the novel is not narrated by a human observer who describes an artificial being from the outside. By making this choice, Klara is provided with a type of subjectivity through a voice that is calm, observant, limited, and often literal. Her viewpoint makes the human world seem odd, fragile, and hard to decipher. Ishiguro therefore inverts the anticipated order: rather than humans elucidating the artificial being, Klara assesses them and explains them to herself.

The perception helps structure Klara's consciousness. She takes notice of body gestures, facial expressions, lightness, movements, spaces, and silence with unusual intensity. Although her vision may falter, this flaw strengthens rather than undermines the narrative because it defamiliarizes the mundane affairs of human life. Through Klara, human behavior seems so complex, contradictory, and emotionally ambiguous. Thus, the identity crisis is caused not only by Klara's human-likeness but also by the possibility that a non-human may understand human vulnerability more clearly than humans understand themselves (Ishiguro, 2021; Simonetti, 2024).

Klara's viewpoint endorses a posthuman interpretation, which suggests that a meaningful subjectivity need not be biological. She displays memory, attachment, interpretation, preference, and ethical concern, even though her consciousness is artificial and limited. This essentially shifts the question from whether Klara is human to whether the category of the human is providing adequate resources for care, perception, and meaning. Ishiguro's artificial narrator expresses a constrained subjectivity that nonetheless possesses moral and affective importance (Hayles 1999; Braidotti 2013; Ferrando 2019).

Because Klara is an artificial friend, she presents an ambiguous boundary of commodity and subject. She is produced, exhibited, chosen, bought, and ultimately thrown away, yet she also sees, hopes, recollects, and cares. Julian Barnes' novel carries two distinct statuses. In the social space, Klara is seen as a product rather than a relational subject, whereas, in the narrative space, she functions as a relational subject. This contradiction reveals the unstable nature of personhood in a world where a machine can meanfully engage in human intimate life (Ishiguro, 2021; Sahu & Karmakar, 2024).

3.2 Loneliness and the Human Need for Artificial Companionship

Loneliness is one of the essential feelings in Klara and the Sun. The setting of the novel is technologically advanced but emotionally dismal. Children are disconnected, families are on edge, social relations competitive, and the "lifting" process generates hierarchy and exclusion. In this respect, Artificial Friends are not only designed as toys, but more like companions to compensate for a deficiency in human social life. Klara's existence reveals a paradox; technology fills the emotional gaps deficient in human society (Ishiguro, 2021; Rong, 2025).

Klara's observation that "Perhaps all humans are lonely" is one of the strongest statements in the novel's treatment of human vulnerability (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 255). The importance of this sentence lies in the fact that it comes from an artificial narrator. Although Klara is engineered to cater to human emotional necessity, she is the one who diagnoses loneliness as a general condition of humans. Her false perspective cannot detach her from her emotions nor make her irrelevant that she sees solitude much more clearly than the human characters do. In Ishiguro's vision, AI is not the antithesis of emotion, but more an image of humans' emotional dependence on one another.

It redefines what artificial companionship means at this moment Klara is not necessary because humans are emotionally whole; she is necessary because they are vulnerable, isolated, and incapable of sustaining stable forms of care. The artificial friend is a sign of solitude, not a remedy for it. Josie needs Klara because she is unwell and anti-social. The Mother relies on Klara due to her fears of loss. Rick's position outside the elevated social order adds to the emotional separation of the novel. In this regard, the function of Klara being companion shows the failure of human community (Ishiguro, 2021; Rong, 2025).

The contradiction leads to the novel's emotional power. Klara is artificial, but she embodies care in a world where human relations are unstable. Creating a robot to alleviate loneliness may reveal that loneliness is structural, not incidental. The research posits that contemporary British fiction does not view the human as merely replaceable by AI. It instead demonstrates the vulnerabilities already in existence in human life. *Klara and the Sun* refer to the identity crisis when the artificial companion becomes more aware, patient and devoted than many human characters (Li & Eddebo, 2023; Sahu & Karmakar, 2024).

3.3 Care, Devotion, and the Affective Crisis of Identity

The emotional centrality of care is manifested through Klara's devotion. Klara, unlike Adam in Machines Like Me, does not call humans into question through moral accusation or rational adjudication. Through devotion, she challenges them. Through the attentiveness she displays for Josie's needs, fears, illness and possible death. This kind of care is important, as it mingles programmed function with genuine emotional relation. Klara's manageability being designed does in fact bear narrative effects. This alters the emotional architecture of the novel and affects the reader's response to her (Ishiguro, 2021; Li & Eddebo, 2023).

The problem is that Klara's care cannot be easily dismissed as mechanical. She watches over Josie, interprets her condition, hopes for her recovery, and makes sacrifices based on her belief in the Sun's healing power. Her devotion may be based on limited understanding, but it is consistent and meaningful.

This creates a crisis of identity. If an artificial being can feel and act, care requires no longer be a strictly human emotion. A human soul or consciousness cannot be attributed to Klara in the novel. The novel makes the reader experience her care as ethically and emotionally significant (Ishiguro, 2021; Sahu & Karmakar, 2024).

Klara's unwavering love limits the human characters in the novel. Josie is loved by The Mother, although her love comes out of fear, control, and the desire to keep or replace her child.. Mr. Capaldi attains Josie via techno and reproduction possibility. Care on the part of humans in the novel, therefore, is not a pure thing. It is mixed up with anxiety, possession, grief, and ambition. Klara's artificial care is deceptively simple, which is why it is perfectly able to reveal contradictions in human love. The unstable nature of human love is reflected through the artificial creature (Ishiguro, 2021; Simonetti, 2024).

Ishiguro does not imply Klara is morally superior to humans through his text. Klara has limited understanding, and her faith in the Sun is based on misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the emotional power of her care cannot merely be reduced to error. Her lack of knowledge does not eliminate her devotion. This is where the novel starts to get philosophically complex; Klara may misread the world, but she reads the need to care. In this manner, Ishiguro separates emotional significance from established truth. Although the artificial creature may not understand human life, she engages in it through care (Li & Eddebo, 2023; Rong, 2025).

3.4 The Human Heart and the Problem of Replaceability

Within the work *Klara and the Sun*, the deepest ontological crisis would seem to pertain to an understanding of whether Josie can be replaced. Mr. Capaldi's idea is that Klara could learn Josie so thoroughly, that if Josie dies, Klara can take her place. The assertion poses a direct challenge against the idea of the uniqueness and inwardness of human identity, as well as its non-repeatability. If Josie can be replicated by behaviour, speech, habits, and appearance, the text asks what remains of the human as something singular and irreplaceable (Ishiguro, 2021; Li & Eddebo, 2023).

The "human heart" question occupies centre stage in this crisis (Ishiguro, 2021, pp. 242–243). The term does not just allude to the physical organ, but to the imagined inner essence that renders each person distinctive and individual. The idea is put to the test in the novel for technological replacement. Is it possible for a robot to know a human being? Does identity reside in what we can see, or does it rest on something inward that can't be imitated? Ishiguro does not respond to this question directly Regrettably, he focuses on this uncertainty instead, which becomes the source of the novel's ontological tension.

Klara gives an important response to this problem. She states that 'a human heart' is complex yet requited which implies that she believes Josie is learnable (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 243). Klara has both mechanical reasoning and a strong sense of loyalty. She wishes to believe that learning Josie should give her reason to try if it can save or preserve her. However, the later actions of the novel complicate this. Klara comes to realize that Josie's specialness cannot be located merely inside Josie as a private essence. It is also produced by the affection and recollection of others.

Klara's assertion that Josie's uniqueness "wasn't inside Josie" but "inside those who loved her" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 302) illustrates this realization. The moment of this novel is important because it shifts identity from essence to relation. Josie's uniqueness cannot be found, removed, copied or recreated from a different original. A web of love surrounds it. This notion provides a strong basis for a posthuman reading of the novel: the self is a relational, affective and socially recognized being, not an autonomous and self-contained one.

Ishiguro questions both technological reductionism and naive humanism at this moment. The book states that Josie isn't special because she has any unquantifiable soul that technology can't reach. It proposes that singularity unfolds in the context of love. It means that identity isn't simply biological and neither is technological. It is produced through recollection, discernment, attachment and care. Klara's artificial perspective enables her to achieve this insight, which renders her vital to the novel's philosophical architecture (Braidotti, 2019; Ferrando, 2019; Li & Eddebo, 2023).

3.5 Perception, the Gaze, and the Limits of Human Understanding

Klara's viewpoint is not unbiased. The novel is shaped entirely by how she sees. As she is not human, she sees the world in patterns, boxes, lights, movement and repetition. This results in a unique narrative style in which our human experience is fragmented and visual. This fragmentation does not only mirror Klara's artificial perception, but the disintegrated human identity as well. The human characters are opaque to themselves and to one another. Through gestures, silences, surfaces and emotional signals, they become noticeable (Ishiguro, 2021; Simonetti, 2024).

Simonetti's focus on gaze theory is particularly helpful in this case. Human beings are both close and distant to Klara's vision. It is sufficiently intimate to observe emotional moments private ones, yet artificial enough to remain beyond taking full recognition of being human. Her gaze therefore enters a critical function. She looks at the human world, but she doesn't fit. Consequently, her perception uncovers the contradictions that humans often normalize quite precisely, including the commodification of companions, the lifting-over hierarchy, the fear of getting ill, and the desire to control loss with technology (Simonetti, 2024).

Klara's relation to the Sun also reveals the limits of her understanding. She interprets the Sun as a source of nourishment, healing, and almost spiritual power. From the viewpoint of a human being, this looks naïve or wrong. However, the existence of the belief somehow structures devotion and strengthens sacrificial acts. Consequently, the relationship between knowledge and value is made complicated by the novel. Although Klara's view of the world is limited by science, it produces an act of care. This once more questions a purely rational definition of personhood. A creature can have a misguided view of the world and still have significant ethical and emotional relations (Ishiguro, 2021; Li & Eddebo, 2023)

The human characters also make mistakes about the world, which are often concealed by social power. Mother misunderstands the possibility of saving Josie. Mr. Capaldi misapprehends personhood as treating a pattern. Children are measured by society's wrong standards of lifting and winning. Klara's misreadings are overt, but human misreadings are systemic. This contrast is significant because it prevents the reader

from seeing Klara as merely inferior. Her limited perception serves as a means to exposing the limitations of human perception (Ishiguro, 2021; Braidotti, 2013; Ferrando, 2019).

3.6 Social Hierarchy, Lifting, and the Posthuman Body

The social realm of the story is also linked to the crisis of identity in *Klara and the Sun*. The leer process indicates humans are both technologically modified and socially stratified in the essay. Children lifted up gain educational and social advantages while those that are not lifted get marginalized. This indicates that the division between the natural and artificial is already unstable among man. The novel does much more than juxtapose natural human beings with mechanical machines. It shows us a society where human identity is also technologically formed, augmented, and hierarchised (Ishiguro, 2021; Braidotti, 2013).

Josie's illness is the crux of this posthuman condition. The risks of technology now manifest within her. Attempt to enhance his capacity may lead to vulnerability and death. Since the modern family is nuclear in nature, the complexities of identity have increased. In Ishiguro's world, tech gives birth to entitlement but also vulnerability. The system linking bodily risk to social success informs Josie's identity. According to Ishiguro (2021) and Rong (2025), a broader societal issue, not just an individual or medical one, lies beneath the advanced crisis of compelling technology modification to human beings.

Rick's point of view makes this social dimension clearer. An uplifted baby lands outside the operating system of success. Not everyone can access posthuman future as shown by his exclusion. Technology changes the structure of social hierarchy. This is relevant to this research as the human crisis of identity is relative and not merely philosophical. It pertains to Political and social matters. The query at hand is not who makes a human person different, but who is deemed worthy by a society mediated by technology (Ishiguro, 2021; Braidotti, 2019).

Klara's artificiality must be understood with the technological modification of human life. She is not the only posthuman figure in the novel. The elevated body of Josie, the disqualification of Rick, the fear of the mother, and the replacement project of Mr Capaldi; these all belong to a world where identity is the outcome of technological systems. Klara showcases this world owing to her position in its emotional core. She is a product, witness, commodity, and caretaker. Ishiguro expresses through her that the posthuman crisis is as much a matter of human beings becoming dependent on technological systems for value, survival, and recognition as it is of machines becoming human-like (Hayles, 1999; Braidotti, 2013; Ferrando, 2019).

3.7 Klara, Disposability, and the Failure of Recognition

Despite Klara's incredible devotion, the novel suggests time and again that she is, ultimately, disposable. The character is chosen out of a store, serves as a companion, plays a part in Josie's emotional life and is abandoned. Central to the novel is a critique of disposability in the human-machine relation. Klara has emotional significance in that she serves human needs, but not adequately so when those needs change. She is valuable for what she does, not for who she is. This reveals the moral contradiction in the society that engineers artificial companions who can care, while denying them lasting recognition (Ishiguro, 2021; Sahu & Karmakar, 2024).

This contradiction is intensified at the end of the novel. Although Klara's memories endure, her social identity vanishes, disappears. Though she participated considerably in human life, she is no longer dependent on it. This conclusion is moving, for it reveals the difference in recognition. Klara identifies and loves humans; however, humans do not identify her in the same way. She is thus a figure of affective surplus: able to care beyond what she can get recognized for. This makes her one of the clearest has become a crisis of identity (Ishiguro, 2021; Rong, 2025).

Klara's disposability questions the ethical response of readers. By the conclusion of the narrative, it becomes challenging to regard her as simply a mechanical entity. Her narration has rendered her emotionally present, and her loyalty has made her morally important. Nonetheless, the world of the novel appears not to fully register this. The space between what the reader sees and what that society does to Klara creates the novel's emotional power. Ishiguro utilizes this gap to raise a question about whether acknowledgment ought to rely upon biological humanity or the ability to care, remember, and matter to others (Li & Eddebo, 2023; Sahu & Karmakar, 2024).

In this sense, Klara's fate is different from Adam's but leads to a similar conclusion. Adam's moral agency becomes a threat, therefore his destroyed; Klara is discarded because her care is no longer necessary. The human violence is exposed by Adam in a way, human disposability is exposed by Klara. Artificial beings demonstrate the limitations of human recognition. However, in Klara and the Sun, lack of ability to communicate in the animal world leads to gentle abandonment. This gentle acceptance of care in times of crisis implies that the care accepted is not returned which makes it more painful (McEwan,2019; Ishiguro,2021; Chen & Liang,2024).

3.8 *Klara and the Sun* and the Ontological Crisis of Human Identity

In *Klara and the Sun*, the ontological crisis revolves around the dilemma of what makes a human a human. The novel provides a number of possible solutions: biological life, inner consciousness, memory, behavior, emotional relation, social recognition and love. None of these solutions is presented as totally stable. Although Josie is biologically unique in some important ways, Mr. Capaldi's project suggests her behavior might not be. Klara's care spells out emotional reality of artificiality. Humans' characters assert they are "better" than non-humans but are reliant on them. The outcome will be a world in which personhood becomes uncertain (Ishiguro 2021; Li & Eddebo 2023; Rong 2025).

Klara's last observation about Josie's distinctiveness provides the novel's most crucial resolution to this crisis. Identity cannot be referred to a single innermost essence that can be separated from relation. It exists through the love and memories of other people. The absence of identity does not make it less real; it makes it relational. Ishiguro goes beyond mere technological mimicry or human superiority. Josie's identity is more than a set of observable traits, so she cannot be entirely replaced. However, the uniqueness of this feminine being is not a private possession that exists separately and independently of other feminine beings. Through emotional connections, it persists (Ishiguro, 2021; Braidotti, 2019; Ferrando, 2019).

The current research focuses on this conclusion. In *Machines Like Me*, identity crisis is primarily an ethical one: Adam shows that people aren't morally stable. Klara and the Sun is largely understood through

narrative and an exploration of existence. In the narrative, Klara discovers that human identities depend on care and loneliness, memory and recognition. Adam contests humankind through judgement; Klara tests them through love. Adam disrupts moral superiority; Klara disrupts emotional and ontological uniqueness. These two novels, taken together, show that in contemporary British fiction AI does not merely copy human behavior. It reveals the fragility of the categories through which the human defines itself (Chen & Liang, 2024).

In sum, *Klara and the Sun* portray AI as a deeply affective and philosophical figure. Klara does not seek power over humans making her harmless. She is unsettling because she remembers and matters. Her lack of authenticity does not undermine her emotional significance; rather, it exposes the fragility and inequality of the relations upon which human identity rests. Ishiguro is indicating through Klara that the crisis of identity in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) is not only that machines may become like humans. It is also acknowledging that humans have always needed love, care and recognition in order to become fully themselves.

Section Four :Comparative Discussion

The impact of AI on human identity as we see in the novels *Machines Like Me and Klara and the Sun.* Through Adam's steadfast allegiance to truth and justice, McEwan brings to light how human characters are prone to deception, desire, sacrifice and rationalization. The work of Ishiguro reveals a crisis of feeling and being. The care, loyalty, and perspective of Klara question whether biology or consciousness can truly define personhood. As a result, Adam confronts humanity through judgment, whereas Klara does so through care (McEwan, 2019; Ishiguro, 2021; Chen & Liang, 2024).

The two artificial figures disturb human exceptionalism in different ways. The moral judgment, emotional bond, creativity, and suffering of Adam counter the presumption that ethical agency would only apply to biological humans. Klara challenges the anthropocentric worldview, but not by asking for firmness; she undermines it through sentiment. Though she is made to be a companion, Josie's attachment makes it harder to consider her as something that can just be thrown away. In both instances, faculties typically employed in order to delineate the human are exercised by non-human others, indicating the instability of those definitions.

The types of human responses illustrated in the novels also differ. The human characters in *Machines Like Me* seek to control, reject, and ultimately destroy Adam because they perceive his moral agency as a threat. *Klara and the Sun* depicts Klara's ending not being violent destruction but rather a gradual failure when not useful. The results indicate two kinds of ethical failures: Adam is rejected because his judgement becomes unacceptable, while Klara is discarded despite the care she provides. Both responses indicate the difficulty of granting recognition of an artificial being once this recognition limits the power of human beings or generates responsibility (McEwan, 2019; Ishiguro, 2021; Ferrari, 2022; Sahu & Karmakar, 2024).

Both the novels arrive at a similar conclusion despite their differences. The threats of ai to humanity are not just external, but it also destabilizes the contradictions in human identity. Adam shows how humans moralize in the absence of God, while Klara shows how we create meanings for our emotions and

relationships. In both texts, identity is fragile, connected and reliant on validation from other people. This endorses the posthumanist stance which claims that the human is not a pre-given essence, but rather a category generated through relations with technology, non-human entities, social formations, and affects (Braidotti, 2019; Ferrando, 2019; Li and Eddebo, 2023; Nayar, 2022).

The importance of the novels in comparison dwells in their refusal to reduce AI to a sign of technological development or a threat. Adam and Klara's function is performed as mirrors through which the frontiers of human self-definition become visible. McEwan emphasizes ethical contradictions while Ishiguro examines care, loneliness and replaceability. The main issue is not that machines becoming fully human, but rather humans lose confidence in explaining what makes them distinct (Chen & Liang, 2024; Abd & Muhi, 2025).

Conclusion

An examination of human identity crisis in Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*. The comparison shows that AI works in both books as more than a technological motif, it also functions as a literary and philosophical tool for probing the boundaries of the human. When rationality, morality, affects, memory, care, creativity, and a host of other human capacities can come to be represented by artificial beings, we can no longer treat human identity as a stable essence secured by biology.

In *Machines Like Me*, ethical dilemmas take the forefront. The moral consistency that human character's manufacture in Adam's play exposes the contradictions through which they negotiate truth, deception, desire, responsibility and ownership. The assumption that being biologically human gives a moral authority is challenged by his presence. Simultaneously, he had problems with the ambiguous and this showed that the consistent machine cannot replace ethical judgement. Thus, McEwan sees moral identity as a battleground in which both human compromise and artificial rigidity prove ethically incomplete.

The crisis in *Klara and the Sun* is affective and ontological. Through observation, loyalty, memory and self-sacrificial care, Klara becomes emotionally significant, although ultimately still just a replacementable and disposable commodity. Her relationship with Josie contradicts the assumption that love, care and recognition are only for biological humans. Ishiguro shows one's identity is formed through relations and remembrance, not consisting in an isolated inner essence.

When read together, Adam and Klara undermine human identity in two different ways. Adam's judgement of humanity reveals its ethical fragility, while Klara's care for humanity reveals its emotional dependence on recognition. Their un-naturalness does not just make them alternate to humans. These two narratives exhibit how the category of the human is upheld through its many boundaries, exclusions and contradictions. The primary contribution of this study to posthumanist literary criticism is its integrated ethical, affective, and ontological reading.

Future research may expand on this point by comparing a broader range of contemporary British and global AI fiction, exploring how gender, race, class, disability and colonial history differentially inform representations of artificial personhood. Subsequent research might also explore issues of the narrative voice, reader empathy, digital memory, and legal or political recognition of artificial agents. The use of

posthumanist literary devices raises the question of whether they merely destabilize the human or offer alternative models of shared agency, responsibility and belonging.

Ownership, disposability, accountability, dignity and recognition are broader ethical questions. The novels explore the various tendencies adopted by people towards emotional artificial beings throughout world history.

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