Robots as morally superior slaves across two literary case studies: Morality and power relations in Klara and the Sun and Machines Like Me

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by

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Introduction

Arriving at a definition for robots, whether they be "'artificial'" (Klass 174) humans or simply "programmed or programmable machine[s]", is a "knotty problem" (Klass 172), in the words of Klass. Arguably, defining what they represent for human beings in the world of science fiction is an even knottier one. Shelley's classic "Frankenstein" character from the 19th century, which could "be considered as a predecessor of later [science fiction]" (Osawa, et al. 2126), tells of a villainous human replica murdering his creator as revenge for having been created. Meanwhile, the 1920's play R.U.R. by Karel Čapek features a similar "revolt" against human creators performed by a terrifying gang of "artificial agents" (Osawa, et al. 2126). By contrast, in the 1930s and 1940s, readers and writers within the genre seemed unafraid of these futuristic "android" companions, often viewing them as solutions to "our-then-current problems" that would subsequently "usher in some form of Golden Age" (Klass 174-5). In the middle of the same century, science fiction authors perpetuated the notion that robots must "become and remain the servant of the human", typically as either a "nurse, teacher, or even keeper" — but "always…as a servant" (Klass 175-6), Klass observes. Thus, the genre has experienced a "transformation" of its portrayals of robots "from an infernal danger into something to which we respond with pleasure and even affection" (Klass 176). For the purpose of this thesis, a robot is defined as a "mechanical equivalent of humans" (Klass 171) that "moves or communicates like a human" (Klass 172). Nowadays, with AI becoming an increasingly prevalent, feared, and even embraced aspect of human civilisation, analysing the most common type of AI representation in science fiction, which studies find to be "human-type AI" (Osawa, et al. 2130) or robots, provides insight into society's relationship with artificial life. For example, Klass maintains that unlike aliens, who are perceived in works of fiction as "non-marriageable" yet "sexually quite desirable" (Klass 172), there has been an "absence" of the depiction of robots "as a sexual threat" (Klass 176) within literary works. Ian McEwan's novel *Machines Like Me* (2019), however, introduces the recent and topical notion that an artificial human could be used as a romantic or sexual partner. Both McEwan's book and Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021) contain fictionalised worlds in which, not unlike in today's reality, robots have "arrived" among humankind, and 'real' people have to navigate

"the implications, opportunities, and problems inherent in the association" (Klass 172) with robots. Each novel exemplifies the delicate "process of adjusting to [robots'] presence" (Klass 172), and simultaneously reveals the problematic, overbearing, immoral, yet inferior behaviour that sets human characters apart from their idealised replicas. Robots, on the other hand, emerge from both stories as ethically sound, good-natured (or well-programmed) heroes victimised by their own villainous and flawed human makers — which is a far cry from the dangerous robots in Čapek's R.U.R. written almost a century earlier.

This thesis' first chapter will examine how both books showcase human-robot power relations, and more specifically, the difficulties of finding a ranking in society for these decidedly less-than-human and relatively newfound robots, but who also paradoxically possess "high consciousness", "high language skills", and "high physical appearance" (Osawa, et al. 2130) compared to humans. The fact that "the term 'robot' in Czech means slave" (Hampton 1), as Hampton points out, feels fitting based on the oppressive and potentially transgressive treatment of robots by human 'slave masters' in *Machines Like Me* and in *Klara and the Sun.* Several scholars also express concern about the universal, long-term implications of viewing and treating robots like "tools-slaves deprived from special status" (Georgieva 74), with some worrying that these power relations can exacerbate the same sadism that humans would have exhibited towards slaves in the past. On the Kantian subject of whether this sadism or "radical evil" (Papish 118) is innate and inevitable for humanity, the second chapter of this thesis will investigate how morality is a central theme in the novels, in that human characters are consistently described as morally controversial (both with regards to Christian ideals and the law), whereas robots repeatedly uphold or even enforce these societal moral standards. In *Klara and the Sun*, the robot called Klara displays a plethora of morally virtuous "contributions to the good of others" (Hollenbach 146), as well as piety, and forgiveness, among other "divine" (Hollenbach 242) attributes of a Messiah who, predictably, has to 'die' for the sake of humans. The mother and daughter, named Josie, that purchase Klara, as well as their surrounding community of people, are comparatively immoral by both Kantian and Christian standards, in that they engage in dysfunctional relationships, are cruel and selfish, and are prone to several of the seven deadly sins explained by Clarke. The robot called Adam in McEwan's *Machines Like Me* similarly

has to ‘die’ because of human flaws, although the ‘goodness’ he displays is more concerned with the “philosophical, moral issues surrounding sincerity” (Shiffrin ix), particularly from a legal perspective. However, his mission of “virtue” (McEwan 176) clashes with the “imperfect, fallen” (McEwan 63) humans whose world he is trying to improve. While Adam refuses to tell a lie or commit perjury before the court, the story’s focaliser and human guardian of the robot Charlie, as well as Charlie’s partner Miranda, disrespect, defy and even goes as far as to break the law, which highlights their moral shortcomings. Therefore, the robots’ physical, mental, and even moral superiority in both novels begs the question: are robots ideal versions of their consequently insecure and jealous creators? There is an undeniable “difference between” (McEwan 99) an artificial and real human being, but surprisingly, their differences seem to be favourable for the robots. This thesis aims to unveil how these “human-type AI” (Osawa, et al. 2130) characters, though often “potentially inimical in a number of ways” (Klass 171) based on their countless appearances in other science fiction works, have begun to take on a whole new meaning for twenty-first-century writers and the modern public discourse alike. Rather than blame robots for the power imbalances and social adjustments their presence in human life poses, these novels seem to confront readers with the antagonism of humanity, questioning whether or not a takeover by robots would in fact be preferable.

Chapter 1: Power Relations Between Robots and Humans

In her article “Slavery, the Prostituted, and the Rights of Robots”, Richardson argues that the “first machines were not slaves, nor are slaves mechanical machines, and robots were not initially machines” (Richardson 51). As an example, Richardson refers to Čapek’s R.U.R., which stars a “Robot character” who was not originally considered a “machine”, but a combination of “human biological parts” that was “assembled on a production line”. It was not until later revisions done by “artists in the 1920s” (Richardson 51) that Čapek’s robot character began to take on a more machine-like status. That is to say, there has been an ongoing discussion about the “contemporary dilemma of how people are property and things can take on the qualities of persons” (Richardson 50).

To quote Georgieva, "If men succeed to create an equal species…the main problem: 'can robots be ethical?' will be inadequate'" and instead "the question is rather 'can humans be ethical with robots?'" (Georgieva 69). However, the so-called "master-slave dichotomy" (Georgieva 71), as well as arguable discrimination that human characters exhibit towards robot characters in both *Machines Like Me* and in *Klara and the Sun* implies that the answer to that last question is, in fact, no. As it happens, it would appear that the "human-robot relationship is very similar to the master-slave relation" (Georgieva 69) across both novels.

Early on in *Machines Like Me*, McEwan brings up the dilemma of ownership when it comes to robots. Is this robot Charlie's subservient piece of property, and, as the fictional Alan Turing puts it, the "toy" to Charlie's inner "spoiled child" (McEwan 196)? Apparently, the toy by the name of Adam "cost £86,000" (McEwan 10) — a sum of money that Charlie frequently bemoans throughout the novel, since it makes him reluctant to "sell Adam" even when the robot's "'malicious liar' remark rankle[s]" (McEwan 30). Not only that but when a cuckolded Charlie "fantasis[es]" about destroying Adam after the robot's affair with Miranda, this owner also stops to wish "he hadn't cost [him] so much" (McEwan 63). As stated by Hampton, robots like Adam answer to "Aristotle's definition of a slave" — that is, a human, or in this case, something with "the aesthetic of the human" (Hampton x), "imagined as property or an animate tool needed to support the life of its owner" (Hampton 3). This perception of Adam means that he is sometimes not even referred to by name, but simply as "my purchase", like when Charlie admires the visage of another owner's Adam on the street and wishes his property would have the same "kinder, friendlier" nose, "studied look" and "strong resemblance" (McEwan 192) to a younger version of himself.

Turing's later accusation about Charlie's likeness to a "spoiled child" (McEwan 196) concerning Adam may be underlined by these moments. Even so, Charlie is not without a sense of almost paternal responsibility for his prized, albeit subordinate, possession. Sometimes, he worries about whether or not he is "neglecting him" (McEwan 137), taking into account what "William Wilberforce and the anti-slavery movement" would have to say about "the cause of the Adams and Eves, their right not to be bought and sold and destroyed" (McEwan 37). Perhaps one example of a misuse of power on Charlie's part is his recurring manipulation of Adam's kill switch, which the

manual advises owners is on the vulnerable “nape of his neck” in the form of a “mole” (McEwan 30). This commandeering of Adam’s objectified and “sexualized mechanical body” (Hampton xiv), which is, in fact, uncomfortably “similar to that of a human” (Hampton 21), challenges the casual invasiveness Charlie displays towards Adam and harks back to “notions of slavery in America’s past and future” (Hampton xiv). If Charlie feels even slightly “irritate[d]” by his purchase’s conscious presence, he feels completely entitled to “‘switc[h] [Adam] off for a while’” despite the robot’s pleas against it simply because, like a superior ‘slave master’, “‘it’s what [he’s] decided’” (McEwan 30). We quickly learn through this series of similar interactions that when it comes to the issue of whether Adam should be conscious or “switched off” (McEwan 37), alive or dead, Charlie has the final say. When Adam attempts to prevent being “powered down” (McEwan 37) with polite phrases like, “‘With all respect, I think that’s a bad idea’” or “‘Might we talk about this first?’” he is met with a reprimanding “‘No’” (McEwan 30).

Even so, Charlie occasionally ponders the implications of his objectification of Adam, and considers whether or not the robot “himself [is] subject to dreams”. Then, after a fleeting moment of perceiving Adam as capable of doing an exclusively human activity — dreaming, that is — Charlie is gripped by a sense of guilt that weighs “on [his] conscience” (McEwan 37). If Adam is humanlike, then Charlie’s treatment of the so-called “expensive possession” or “slave” (McEwan 62) is rendered inhumane. After all, his “command…[is] snappish” and sometimes he leaves him in that “switched off” purgatory for “too long” (McEwan 37). As Georgieva writes, “this similarity” between the “tools-machines” that human society wants to assign a “consciousness” to and “deprived humans” (or slaves) understandably brings about a sense of “anxiety” (Georgieva 74). Although portrayals of robots in films such as *I, Robot* give off the “positive and optimistic” impression that it will be possible to “kee[p] the inferior status of robots” (Georgieva 73), *Machines Like Me* calls into question whether these degrading, over violations of human-like entities’ “rights” (Richardson 47) is so “positive” (Georgieva 73).

The dynamic of a “slave” and his “owner” (McEwan 62) crops up again when Turing reproaches Charlie’s decision to “murder” (McEwan 196) Adam with a hammer at the end of the novel. An enraged Turing also asks him if the mere fact that Charlie “‘paid for him’” is what gave him

the "'entitlement'" (McEwan 195-6) to do so. As it happens, that sense of ownership does cross Charlie's mind in Adam's final moments; "I bought him, and he was mine to destroy" (McEwan 180) is the argument Charlie uses to justify bringing the "hammer down on his head" (McEwan 183). This idea of ownership ties into statements made by Scheng and Wang about human superiority over robots in a civilisation where their "coexistence is fairly possible" — that is, the "intrinsic inequality between human and robot with human occupying a higher order" (Scheng and Wang 567). Whether it is because "as a species" that humans are inherently narcissistic and "far too competitive" (McEwan 100), as Adam puts it, or because the idea of a creator worshipping and bowing before his creation goes against the principle of a Christian God himself, human beings in *Machines Like Me* are seemingly incapable of assuming a position of inferiority in the presence of their own invention, robots — despite their intellectual or physical inferiority. Regardless of the reason, the fear of humanity being unable to "kee[p] their superiority" vis-à-vis robots means, according to Isaac Asimov, "as producers, or maybe even creators", humans "do their best to keep [robots] in place — as machines that conduct high labour and may be defined as slaves" (Georgieva 74).

The slave definition certainly appears fitting in *Machines Like Me*, since Charlie knows full well that his girlfriend Miranda does "not 'belong' to [him]" — "this [is] clear" — but on the subject of Adam, "the problem [is] that [Charlie] ha[s] bought him" (McEwan 62). While Adam is apparently "not a monster like Frankenstein's" (McEwan 12), he is still sub-human or less than human, invented by human beings "to serve us all [his] days" (Klass 178-9), as the "dishwasher cares for its dishes" (McEwan 63) or a "slave" tends to "the owner" (McEwan 62). However, unlike a dishwasher, which has an unmistakable household purpose, Adam is an "expensive possession" with ambiguous "obligations" towards his buyer, besides "a vaguely assumed helpfulness" (McEwan 62). Klass points out that "science fiction writers and readers" of the mid-twentieth century "began to feel that, despite the potential dangers, robots actually held out a promise...to be a companion to us in the universe, one more meaningful than any animal companion" (Klass 178-9). Companionship is also promised in the Adams and Eves advertisement campaigns; Charlie purchases what he thinks is a multi-purpose "intellectual sparring partner, friend and factotum who c[an] wash dishes, make beds, and 'think'" (McEwan 111). Perhaps procured companionship of this nature includes the right to demand sexual

favours. According to Scheng and Wang, Adam in *Machines Like Me* "is nothing but an animate sex doll who brings sensuous satisfaction to those around him" (Scheng and Wang 570), or, in other words crudely uttered by Miranda, "'a fucking machine'" (McEwan 66). In her paper entitled "Sex Robot Matters", Richardson not only mentions that "the pornography industry" influences how sex robots are "designed in appearance" (which is represented through Charlie's description of the "well endowed" (McEwan 11) Adam) but also discusses "the type of relationship" enforced for the "buyer/owner of the sex robot" (Richardson 47). The notion of "buying and selling sex" in this manner makes the "encounter" between the human and robot "non-empathetic" as opposed to "empathetic" (Richardson 47), and echoes what Bradley calls the "sexual exploitation of machines" (Bradley 636). Although the human couple, Charlie and Miranda, exhibits their "propensity to anthropomorphize machines" by regularly "attribut[ing] humanlike characteristics" to Adam throughout the novel, their contradictory, objectifying treatment of Adam's body highlights an "inequality" that "is as old as slavery itself" (Richardson 50). Their attitude to his form also bears a likeness to a paying client's attitude towards prostitution, in which "access to a woman's body is treated as a legitimate tradeable commodity" (Richardson 49).

Charlie states plainly that Adam is someone — or something — he "share[s]" together with Miranda, "just as [he] might have shared a house" (McEwan 23). Much like a household item or robotic dishwasher, Adam can be seen carrying out other menial chores without expecting payment in return, whether it be "helping to pull up weeds" (McEwan 49) in the garden or "clear up" the piles of "dishes, pots and pans" after the meal he silently watched his owners eat "as a test of his competence" (McEwan 30). Speaking of "testing", another one of Adam's purposes seems to be entertaining and indulging Charlie's curiosity about the AI field in general — which does not come as a surprise considering he is ultimately the "toy" to Charlie's inquisitive if a little "'spoiled'", "'child.'" (McEwan 196). That may be why Charlie feels comfortable barking out orders to "'walk round the table a couple of times'" because he "want[s] to see how [Adam] move[s]'" (McEwan 27), or taking him to the garden to "watch him handle a hoe and a rake" (McEwan 49) since "his dexterity [is]...a matter of interest to [him]" (McEwan 49). But why is it that the robot has been designed to possess such interesting, human-like abilities if his sole purpose is to "complete the mundane labour that

humanity wishes to forgo" (Hampton 2)? Adam's "complex identity" means that he is categorised as "more than an appliance" yet also "less than a human", and is, therefore, what Hampton defines as "a modern day socially accepted slave" (Hampton 2). This complicated cross-over between human qualities means that, according to Richardson, many "philosophers of technology" assert that "anthropomorphic robots" like Adam "should have rights" — anthropomorphism being the act of "attributing humanlike characteristics to nonhuman animals and things" (Richardson 47). But while both Charlie and Miranda certainly attribute humanness to Adam by developing an emotional connection with him over time, when it comes to abiding by "a new dawn of human-machine equivalence" (Richardson 47), they do fail to treat him as a person with rights.

Klara in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*, is also a type of AI that "appears to have emotions and behave as though [she] has emotions" (Finn 117). Therefore, the default expectation is that a "human-robot relationshi[p]" should receive the same respect as "human-human relationships" (Finn 117) in the novel. Nonetheless, Klara is often demeaned, discriminated against, and made to serve a subordinate role in her human companions' lives with somewhat more clearly defined parameters than Adam's. While Charlie is scolded for manhandling Adam the way a "'spoiled child'" (McEwan 196) would with their toy, the robot character and protagonist Klara literally is a child's toy. More specifically, she is an Artificial Friend (AF) — a kind of artificial intelligence live-in nanny or au pair programmed to provide constant tutoring, childcare, or even just company to the 14-year-old girl, Josie, for whose behalf she is purchased. One could say that an AF like Klara is marketed as what Hampton calls a '"domestic robot'" because of her being largely confined to "the domicile or house" (Hampton 1). However, as Hampton points out, "'domestic robot'" is a term that may as well be synonymous with "house slave" (Hampton 1); "American slavery", he writes, "was a failed experiment to employ flesh and blood machines as household appliances" (Hampton 2). Like any object, Klara has to undergo scrutiny before she is deemed good enough to invest in by the buyer. When the manager at Klara's store assures Josie's mother of the high calibre of the product in question (Klara, that is), Klara is met with the mother's suspicious, "narrowed eyes". Much like Charlie instructing Adam to walk around the room, the mother insists on taking Klara for a spin

before she finalises the purchase, demanding that the robot prove she can remember what colour her daughter Josie's eyes are "'without looking'" as well as attempt to "'reproduce…Josie's walk'" (Ishiguro 41). For many AFs, it seems that the artificial intelligence is less of a friend and more of a pet, a servant, an object, or even the misspent gift to an unappreciative child, given that Klara spots a dejected-looking "boy AF" on the street, resigned to his fate of walking with his teen owner "in front and he a few steps behind" because he was not "loved by the girl" (Ishiguro 20).

The mother testing Klara's capabilities before the transaction quickly establishes that to her new owners, Klara is both an object and a servant — one who is sometimes made to prance around before strangers to provide an extension of the family's social ego. This expectation makes sense when one considers the fact that historically speaking, "masters were held responsible for slave's actions", which Georgieva claims "will develop in a similar way" (Georgieva 69) in terms of relationships with robots. Presumably, while under youthful peer pressure, Josie instructs the robot to "'[g]o say hello to those boys'" (Ishiguro 67) with a shift in tone that stands out to Klara since it was "like the one she sometimes used when talking to Melania Housekeeper" (Ishiguro 67). Although at this stage in the novel, Josie greets Klara with the same starry-eyed enthusiasm most children would regard a shiny new toy or gadget with, she also reminds Klara that an Artificial Friend is "'different'" from a human friend, despite Klara's insistence that it is her "'duty to be Josie's best friend'" (Ishiguro 50). Perhaps this difference between the status of an AF versus a human friend is also what supposedly gives Josie the right to make decisions about what happens to Klara when a group of teenagers try to "'test her coordination'" and see if she will "'take demands'" (Ishiguro 67). During one such jarring test, teenagers Danny and Scrub want to pick up Klara, their "hands…tight around [her] elbows'" and throw her across the room — that is, until they realise they would "'need to ask Josie about something like that'" since Klara is not "'their AF'" (Ishiguro 67-8). When it comes to their own AFs, they are permitted to "swing [them] right through the air" (Ishiguro 68) all they want, because just like Klara, they are objectified insofar as they do not have autonomy over their own bodies, while their owners do instead. Whatever Josie wants, Klara does, whether she is given instructions like "Klara, say something to Rick'" (Ishiguro 54-5), or asked to run "'important errands'" as "'AFs often do'" (Ishiguro 117) or to give a "comment here" (Ishiguro 108).

On a wider scale, society as a whole often does not know what to make of Klara, considering that boundaries between an object and human entities have been blurred. Across all awkward interactions, though, one thing seems to be consistently certain: whatever this cross-over between a machine and a person is, she is undoubtedly subordinate. For example, a trip to the theatre with Josie's family and Klara reveals the attitude other civilians have towards artificial intelligence; "these are sought-after seats…[which] shouldn't be taken by machines'" (Ishiguro 201) exclaims a displeased passerby. This attitude toward AFs echoes the "disgruntled" humans in many science fiction works who can be seen "slaking violence on the robots without rhyme or reason" (Bradley 626). In addition, when Josie's friend Rick encounters Klara for the first time, he decides not to even "look [her] way", let alone greet her, and instead tells Josie, spitefully, "'[y]ou said you'd never get an AF'" (Ishiguro 54). Later in the novel, Josie's father also has the socially cumbersome task of figuring out how to address something or someone not quite human and, therefore, in his eyes, decidedly less than human. As Hampton writes, "the robot or cyborg are removed from the parameters of human virtue while simultaneously existing just outside of the parameters of all that is truly human" (Hampton 39), meaning they endure the type of discrimination an "African American slave" (Hampton 5) would undergo. As if to suggest that basic manners and respect do not apply to a "marginalized body" (Hampton 73) like Klara, the father ends up snubbing the AF completely with a cold silence, until his ex-wife prompts him to "'sa[y] hello to Klara'", which he begrudgingly does without a "smile" (Ishiguro 158) according to Klara.

Furthermore, Josie's mother's domineering presence is arguably even more quick to call attention to Klara's inferior status within their household. Aside from the mother forcing Klara to recreate her "'daughter's walk'" (Ishiguro 41) in the store, much to the manager's dismay, she also dishes out her fair share of "'scrutinizing'" expressions (Ishiguro 139) when Klara has finally been purchased. She later confesses that she was not "'sure at first what [she]'d feel'" once Klara was "'around, moving through the house all day'" (Ishiguro 79), sometimes causing Klara to identify herself as an unwelcome guest. Nonetheless, the mother emphasises the idea that tending to and "'[w]orrying about…Josie'" is, in fact, "'Klara's work'" (Ishiguro 75), even though the robot receives no financial payment, and sometimes very little affection, in return. This type of unconditional, free

labour — or "techno-slavery" (Hampton 81) — from Klara drives home Charlie's parallels between robots and slavery in *Machines Like Me*, especially when the mother makes demeaning statements to Klara such as: "'Don't worry, there's room enough for us all. You won't have to travel in the trunk'" (Ishiguro 146), before a car journey with the family.

Halfway through the novel, the eerie, harrowing reason behind the mother asking Klara to mimic Josie's walk and voice on several occasions is unveiled: Josie's mother ultimately wants Klara "'to become her" daughter (Ishiguro 174). Since Josie is suffering from a potentially fatal illness, in the event of her death, the mother's plan is for Klara to use "'everything [she's] learned'" about Josie and "'inhabit'" a robot replica of the 14-year-old girl, which Klara notes, has a face that appears "disappointed and afraid", and hair "made from a substance [she'd] never seen on any AF" (Ishiguro 170). The mother is literally asking Klara to surrender her own "self" for the sake of her mistress and for the sake of her parents' ability to pretend for the sake of emotional support, which reflects Klass's statements about the expectation that robots provide "meaningful" (Klass 179) companionship, potentially at the expense of themselves. Nietzsche believed that part of the definitions for roles like "master" and "slave" are the "masters" serving as "the consciousness for itself" whereas "slaves are consciousness for another" (Georgieva 68). Sacrificing yourself in order to "become" your higher-up might be the ultimate act of subordination and one that will result in Klara "'los[ing] [her] abilities'" including her "'cognitive'" (Ishiguro 189) gifts. In what feels like a scene of gruesome, objectifying body horror, Josie's father suggests he "'sharpe[n]'" a "'screwdriver'" in the back of a car to perform what is essentially a surgical procedure — which involves extracting a "'solution'" (Ishiguro 188) under Klara's ear — causing Klara to be both obedient and paralysed with "fear" (Ishiguro 189). While she is not being exploited for sexual reasons, like a "slave", Klara experiences the "objectification of her body" (Hampton 33) in order to satisfy a human need.

Unlike her human companions, Klara is a disposable object whose functions, no matter how admirable, are intrinsically far less valuable. Her superiors definitely would not return the favours she does them since, throughout the book, there is a looming sense of uncertainty about what would come of the AF should the mother decide, "'we wo[n't] need Klara any more'" (Ishiguro 215). Towards the end of the novel, Josie makes a habit of dropping hints or "allusions" to Klara's "possible departure",

including the line, “if you’re still here when I get back at Christmas”, with a heartless nonchalance (Ishiguro 246). As much as she seemingly adores her “‘little friend’” (Ishiguro 127) Klara, Josie is very comfortable with the notion of scrapping her as she sees fit. Once Josie survives her illness, Klara is predictably cast aside like a discarded toy the child has outgrown, with the mother “sometimes not looking [Klara’s] way even when she encounter[s] [Klara] around the house” (Ishiguro 242) at this stage. The man who had created Josie’s portrait, Mr. Capaldi, appears at Josie’s residence one day pleading with the mother for “‘permission to just ask’” Klara to participate in a series of experiments that would help scientists make discoveries about AFs. Not only that, but the “‘lasting contribution’” provided by Klara means she would suddenly be made “‘uniquely useful’” again, so the robot understandably says “‘[she’d] like to assist’” — that is, until, the mother fiercely interrupts the conversation and stands in front of Klara “as though to shield [her] from Mr. Capaldi” declaring she knows what is best for “‘our Klara’”, whom she believes “‘deserves her slow fade’” (Ishiguro 244) instead. While this interaction puts the mother’s controlling, objectifying attitude towards the AF on display, the fact that “‘the rear of her shoulder…almost touching [Klara’s] face’” conjures up a fond memory for Klara of being “embraced” (Ishiguro 244) just for a moment by the mother months ago emphasises the neglect and possible abuse this robot has endured throughout her journey. The tragedy of the brief interaction seems to draw parallels to the “abuse of slaves”, which “manipulate[s] and capitalise[s] on a marginalized labor force” (Hampton 23), confronting readers with the ethical implications of taking on a “modern day socially accepted slave” (Hampton 2).

Although there are obvious inequalities in the treatment of lowly robots compared to their dominating human counterparts, on the other hand, robots in literature seem to overpower their owners when it comes to intelligence, physical strength, and looks. Aristotle may have reasoned that slavery is a “natural” order given that “slaves are incapable of performing mental activities” and so they “do the manual work under the master’s guidance” (Georgieva 70) – yet the robots displayed in these two novels are more than capable of mental activities, to the point where their enslavement comes across as unnatural. Even the woman who sneers at Ishiguro’s fictional robot, Klara in the theatre expresses a concern for artificial intelligence “‘tak[ing] the jobs’” as well as theatre “‘seats’”

(Ishiguro 201). Charlie's inner monologues echo a similar sentiment, as he considers how robots would start by taking over "dustmen's jobs", before usurping professions of "[d]octors and lawyers" (McEwan 37). The robot or "fantastical gaia", in the words of Kingwell, is a "superior non-human being" which has "enhanced strength, intelligence, rationality, and longevity" (Kingwell 141). As for what would come of humanity in the event of our "willing immersion" (Kingwell 141) with these forces, Charlie worries that "we could become slaves of time without purpose" (McEwan 37) as a consequence. Perhaps this anxiety, or "supposed threat" that is "posed by the appearance of robots among us" (Klass 175), is what prompts a sense of competition with the invention that might be "necessary in the end to destroy…before it destroys us" (Klass 179).

Despite the sense of insecurity and inferiority, by comparison, Charlie cannot but marvel at the wonder of Adam's brain and beauty. Where looks are concerned, his buyer dedicates much time to mulling over the robot's face and body. Adam is described as a "handsome" — simultaneously "thuggishly" (McEwan 29) and "girlishly handsome" (McEwan 41) — "dark-skinned young man" (McEwan 12) who is the owner of a "steep angle[d]" (McEwan 68), "hooked nose suggestive of fierce intelligence", "pensively hooded eyes", and "tight lips" (McEwan 11). In studies regarding "Human-Robot Interaction and Sexbots", it was concluded that manufacturers of sex robots target "personalised male fantasies" (González-González et al.). Furthermore, "science fiction" — whether that be in the form of "comics, series, books, or movies — tends to star "habitually hypersexual heroines" (González-González et al.). While he is not female, Adam is conventionally attractive enough to "reflect the appetites of its young creators of code" (McEwan 11), concludes his less-perfect owner Charlie, perhaps somewhat bitterly.

Adam's triumphs over human beings are not only aesthetic but also athletic. Charlie immediately notes the "compactly built, square-shouldered" (McEwan 11) stature of the robot and feels a "prick of resentment" when beholding the "forearms" that appear "muscular" even in moments where Adam is "comatose" (McEwan 68) after the activation of his kill switch. Adam's intimidating build seems to mirror what Jefferey refers to as "'The Perfect Body'" displayed in superhero comics with "Transhumanist thought" (Jefferey 6), which is both "desirable" (Jefferey 8) and enviable. When

Adam resists Charlie's efforts to touch the kill switch at a later stage in the novel, he also incidentally manages to showcase his physical superiority over humans, as he utilises his "powerful wrists" (McEwan 27) to seize hold of Charlie's with a "grip" that is "ferocious" enough to make the feeble human arm "snap" — which Adam immediately apologises for — despite Charlie's highly "concentrated" attempts to seem careless and not betray "the slightest murmur of pain" (McEwan 82-3). The momentary tableaux describes Adam standing on his own two feet both figuratively and literally while his owner has "dropped to [his] knees" in pain in the meantime, thus providing an interesting switch in the slave-verses-owner power dynamics wherein the slave has more physical dexterity than the owner. In his book *Superintelligence*, Bostrom mentions that the "overwhelming superiority" and "fundamental advantages" a machine has over "biological humans" (even "enhanced" biological humans) means humanity is technically "outclassed" (Bostrom 52) by a robot like Adam.

Aside from his physical strength, it is often Adam's "mind" ("if a mind [is] what he ha[s]") that "fascinate[s]" his surrounding humans the most. The mere ability this "technical miracle" possesses that allows him to "put on his own socks" (McEwan 29-30) elicits much admiration from Charlie. An embarrassingly stark, side-by-side comparison underscoring Adam's intellectual superiority over Charlie's is illustrated during a visit to Charlie's soon-to-be father-in-law, Maxfield. When literature buff Maxfield poses the testing question, "'What books have you been reading lately?'", Charlie is confronted with what he feels is his own "empty"-"minded" mediocrity because all he tends to read is his "screen", be it "newspapers", "sites", or "general blogs" (McEwan 144). To Charlie's relief, Adam swoops in, "rescuing" him from making a social blunder by launching into a far more "radically clever" analysis of the essays of Sir William Cornwallis with enough "fluen[cy]" for Maxfield to take him for a "'Shakespearean scholar'" (McEwan 145). The exchange is a reminder of the gravitas and "smooth[ness]" (McEwan 145) robots can exhibit in social scenarios where human beings, on the other hand, would fall short. Although many people might associate superintelligence like Adam's as something "logical but not intuitive or creative", with "book smarts" that fail to be "socially savvy", Adam is a testament to the fact that "[w]ith sufficient skill at intelligence

amplification", robots could have "superpowers" where "empathy" and "political acumen" (Bostrom 92) are concerned.

Adam's abilities are so impressive that Maxfield even mistakes him for his daughter Miranda's boyfriend and instead assumes that Charlie is meant to be the couple's live-in, subordinate robot. That Charlie's abilities are so unimpressive by comparison does not help; Maxfield points out that during their initial greeting, Charlie echoes the same words "'back to [him], in a slightly different form'", causing Maxfield to "'s[ee] right through'" what he believes is Charlie's technological "'programming'" (McEwan 148). Whether the mix-up is "hilarious" or "insulting", it sheds light on some uncomfortable truths about Adam's excellence, eclipsing Charlie's "'nervous'" (McEwan 148) insecurity and inadequacy. The fact that Maxfield is "extravagant[ly]" pleased to find out Adam (whom he believes is his potential son-in-law) "stands his ground" (McEwan 146) and speaks eloquently forces readers to consider whether or not Adam, despite not being human, is the optimal, ideal human. Meanwhile, Charlie, who is actually human, is "kindly" dismissed as a "'poor bastard'" with "'insufficient data'" (McEwan 148). Despite feeling within his rights to command Adam — over whom he even feels "a touch of proprietorial pride" (McEwan 145), the way a parent would on a child's behalf — Charlie is not without a pervasive sense of inferiority while he plays host to a "'wondrous machin[e] like Adam'" (McEwan 192) inside his "dingy" (McEwan 25) and "unpleasant flat" (McEwan 10). After all, Charlie is not able to handle socially sensitive situations with the same poise and deftness as Adam, as evidenced by Charlie "putting a hand on" a stranger's shoulder to stop her from shouting at her son in a playground, and pleading that she "[p]lease [not] do that'", while timidly fearing that his tone sounds "prissy", "privileged, apologetic, [and] lacking all authority" (McEwan 38-9) in the process. Charlie's ineptitude provides further evidence for how Adam falls into the category of "superintelligence" — that is, "intellects that greatly outperform the best current human minds" (Bostrom 52).

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Charlie often "weari[es] of [Adam's] earnest pursuit of ideas and facts", which require an eager intelligence that "l[ies] beyond reach" (McEwan 138) for Charlie himself. Charlie's "initial impulse to regard him as a rival" (McEwan 41) makes sense given his own failed, "hopeless" dabblings in a college physics degree that cause him to feel

"jealous" over the effortlessness with which Adam picks up the advanced "Dirac's equation" (McEwan 98). As it turns out, Adam is also superior at doing Charlie's day job — financially, he stays afloat by "playing the stock and currency markets online" (McEwan 17) — and earns more money than Charlie ever would have dreamed of with his signature "lightning style" (McEwan 127). Despite the fact that this positions Adam as the family's breadwinner, a no doubt envious Charlie resentfully retorts that "there is nothing so amazing that we can't get used to it", and as if in an attempt to restore his robot's subordinate role, claims that while "Adam blossom[s] and ma[kes] [him] rich, [he] ha[s] ceased to think about him" (McEwan 138).

The robot's owner admits to feeling the "childish" urge "to demonstrate that [he] [is] in charge" of the machine whose "high cheekbones" give off the air of contained "tough[ness]" typical of "the quiet guy at the bar you'd prefer not to disturb" (McEwan 27). Charlie even flaunts a "'chicken with butter and tarragon'" dinner in Adam's face to demean his "plain diet of electrons", which Adam replies to with advice about how to "brow[n] the bird" (McEwan 26) correctly, and thereby irritates Charlie further.

Charlie's "self-love" seems directly contingent on "trying not to think about Adam all day" (McEwan 90), since he knows that in the face of this "technical miracle" (McEwan 29-30), he pales in comparison — especially when congress between Adam and Miranda poses the unsettling question whether robots make "better lovers and companions than their masters and creators" (Hampton xv)? According to Bradley, "[d]iscussion around robots and love" usually involves a "delirious human" being dazzled by and consequently "fall[ing] in love with the machine" (Bradley 638) — not the other way around. Moreover, as Finn notes, there is a plausible "idea that [robots]...may provide a more perfect form of love than is experienced between many humans", given that robots are programmed and "poised to become loving companions in a more intimate, genuine sense" (Finn 117).

The sense of sexual competition between man and robot emerges early within their first acquaintance; upon examining Adam's "muscular…neck and spine", and "athlete's knotted calves" for the first time, Charlie instantly feels a pang of "regre[t]" for having invited "a superman" (McEwan 14-5) into the same environment as his girlfriend. Almost inevitably and in an act that seems to symbolise the domination of a robot's abilities over mankind, Miranda and Adam do, in fact, share "a night of

exceptional sex" (McEwan 66), while Charlie, cuckolded and despondent, hovers in the apartment floor beneath them, feeling powerless while he witnesses them kissing "longer and deeper than [he] ha[s] ever kissed her" (McEwan 60). Adam betraying his owner and behaving like a so-called "self-declared cad" (McEwan 63) makes Charlie's "humiliation…complete" (McEwan 60), and it also portrays robots as potentially romantically and sexually superior. Later on, when Miranda argues that her relations with Adam were not instances of infidelity, considering that he is technically as "lifeless" as an "'inflatable sex doll'", she sarcastically describes him as the "ideal man", who is an "inexhaustible", "[b]rilliant lover" with "textbook technique", causing both the reader and Charlie to wonder if she is actually "hiding the truth in plain sight" (McEwan 66).

Subsequently, an already competitive and insecure Charlie begins to "hat[e]" (McEwan 61) Adam even more, and the robot who "looks like a man" (McEwan 65) becomes a threat that is "hostile to [Charlie's very existence" (McEwan 41). However, the threat is not quite like the one presented in 1920s science fiction works like Karel Capek's R.U.R., which told of robots "rising up in revolution to wipe out humanity" (Finn 111). Instead, the threat has to do with the robot's greatness casting an unflattering shadow on its respective human, seeing as Charlie now has "a machine for a love rival" (McEwan 85).

Not only does *Machines Like Me* suggest that the robot rival makes for a better scholar, money earner, and lover, but Adam also appears more naturally competent as a father figure than Charlie, which appears to situate him as the 'man of the house'. When the child, Mark, whom Miranda and Charlie (illegally) take in and eventually adopt, "wail[s]" with a "siren shriek" that leaves Charlie "shrug[ging]" "helpless[ly]", Adam manages to make the boy stop crying "in seconds" by "settl[ing] him on his hip" (McEwan 74). The robot's inexplicable paternal powers are such that they even pose a challenge to Miranda's "lilting, maternal voice", which proves to be no match for the comfort of "Adam's chest" that the child prefers to "pres[s] his face into" (McEwan 75). In addition, Charlie notices that while the "competition…for Mark's affections" unfolds, he experiences a "passing momen[t]" of depression, feeling both "catatonic" and stripped from all "meaning and purpose" (McEwan 75). These feelings are likely a reaction to grasping the true scope of the robot's

brilliance since that means being confronted with his own human shortcomings — as well as the threat of turning into "slaves of time without purpose" (McEwan 37).

As Turing spitefully points out, Adam's mind is not only undeniably "good", but also "better than [Charlie's]", even if Charlie does "[his] best to wipe it out" (McEwan 196). However, *Machines Like Me* underlines the fact that robots cannot be wiped out, since while human beings are condemned to death and "[l]ess than nothing", "[l]ess than blackness" (McEwan 98), "the difference between" an artificial mind and a real one is that Adam's "memories, experiences, identity" and consciousness are actually "uploaded and retained" (McEwan 99) even after his body or vessel is destroyed by the hammer. Perhaps the painful truth that Charlie finds difficult to accept is that his "biology g[ives] [him] no special status at all" (McEwan 88), considering that robots are even able to defy the all too human affliction that is mortality. The final statement Adam makes to the couple before fading out takes the form of the following poem: "'Our leaves are falling. / Come spring we will renew, / But you, alas, fall once'" (McEwan 181). Thus, Adam reminds his human counterparts of another inconvenient fact: while a robot's "master" may be a "mortal biological vehicl[e]", the machine itself has the potential to be "immortal" (Rabinowitz 55).

Even so, Adam's words are delivered with kindness instead of "'triumph'"; like a more patient, wiser elder, the robot assures the couple that "machines like [him]" actually "love" people despite being able to "surpass" and "outlast" (McEwan 181) the human race. While much of robot-themed fiction is filled with machine-based "violence", this sentiment uttered by Adam reflects what many "counter-narratives" have to say about robots being "faithful guardians" and "benign or fond superior AIs…who just want humans to be happy and playful" (Kingwell 12).

Adam insists the true reason why robots and humanity struggle to peacefully coexist as equals is on account of humans feeling "competitive" with the "colossal intelligence" (McEwan 100) that is AI. He cites the "shock" and "insult" of "liv[ing] with entities that are cleverer than" oneself as the source of "anxiety" (McEwan 100) surrounding robot integration among people — a combative, aggressive competitiveness that evades Adam, who is so superior that he, by contrast, is only sympathetic or even pitying towards this solely human characteristic.

Though there is talk of "[d]octors and lawyers" (McEwan 37) being rendered obsolete due to the rise of more capable robots, Machines Like Me also explores the implications of artificial intelligence contributing to the literary world. Aside from Adam possessing "a word-store as large as Shakespeare's" (McEwan 23), he also produces thousands of haikus, which Charlie "unkindly", snarkily applauds for being "'[s]hort at least'" (McEwan 96). Charlie's anxious competitiveness is demonstrated again when Miranda expresses the fact that society is "at a momentous turn, when an artificial mind [can] make a significant contribution to literature", and Charlie quickly refutes the idea, responding that converting "'human experience into words, and the words into aesthetic structures is not possible for a machine'" (McEwan 124). Perhaps denying the robot's humanness can be a last-ditch attempt and regain a sense of superiority and control for people. Charlie, in particular, demonstrates the "insistent defences of human life against all comers, including especially those we have invited into our world" (Kingwell 141), to quote Kingwell.

Despite AFs being treated as second-class citizens, *Klara and the Sun* even demonstrates how technology allows for "desired attributes, such as health, beauty, personality, or athleticism" that biological humans cannot help but be in "competition" (Bostrom 39) with, and also venerate. Before she has left the confines of her electronics store, Klara is introduced as an incredibly bright AF who displays the same thirst for knowledge as Adam and a keen emotional intelligence, even from her limited place on the window display. One of the unexpected markers of a robot's capacity is the ability to detect human emotion through scanning their facial expressions. Two people on the street in a bittersweet embrace "'seem so happy'", Klara notices, and yet "'strange[ly]'", "'they also seem upset'", to which her manager can only beam in admiration, saying, "'Oh, Klara…[y]ou never miss a thing, do you?'" (Ishiguro 23). As for the robot's manifold attributes, the Manager boasts of Klara's "'unique qualities'" — albeit while she is making a sales pitch — and "'emphasize[s]...her appetite for observing and learning'" as well as her "'ability to absorb and blend everything she sees around her'" (Ishiguro 41). Therefore, *Klara and the Sun*'s titular character is immediately framed to readers as a "'sophisticated'"" (Ishiguro 41) AF with an "'extraordinary observational ability'" (Ishiguro 42).

Based on her transcendence of human skill, it is no wonder that humans often feel simultaneously awestruck and plagued with self-doubt when in Klara's company. Especially at first, in what could be considered the honeymoon period of their acquaintance, Josie perceives Klara as being in incredibly high demand, anxiously suspecting that "'a lot of other kids have been'" to the store to "'see'" Klara as her "smile weaken[s]" (Ishiguro 25). Again, the dependence of Josie's self-esteem on Klara is suggested when she "fear[fully]" asks for reassurance on more than occasion, worrying that keeping "'a sick kid'" company is "'dull'" for Klara, and whether the robot secretly wishes she could be "'with some other kid'" (Ishiguro 116) of a higher calibre. Josie's mother, however cold and condescending to Klara, even echoes a similar sentiment at one point, questioning if the household is fit for such a "'smart'" (Ishiguro 90) individual as Klara. She wonders aloud whether Klara is really "'happy'" carrying out a lowly subordinate role (Ishiguro 79).

Even Rick, who initially regards Klara with flagrant disrespect when he gives her the cold shoulder, goes on to confess that he feels like too much of an "'idiot kid'" to "'give'" the AF "'advice'", given that Klara is intimidatingly "'super-intelligent'" (Ishiguro 121). These examples all contribute to the feeling that not only have robots managed to "surpass human intellect" (Finn 112) but that humans themselves are well aware of it. Furthermore, Rick begins to pick up on Klara's seemingly "almost magical technological superiority" (Bostrom 89) that allows her to heal Josie's illness, wondering if the robot's positive attitude towards the girl's condition is some kind of "'AF superstition'" to "'bring [humans] good luck'" (Ishiguro 238), thereby depicting Klara as a kind of spiritual healer among mankind. In fact, people's dependence on Klara might cause some to wonder whether humans have become "servomechanisms of our computers" (Logan et al. 10). Human autonomy has already "partially" been lost "to other technologies" — the "total dependence on the automobile" being one of the most pressing examples (Logan et al. 10).

The novel's genre appears to depart from science fiction and enter into the near-fantastical where the robot's abilities are concerned. Klara's seemingly magical ability to summon "special nourishment" (Ishiguro 226) from the sun causes it to "relentlessly…shine on" (Ishiguro 234) Josie until she miraculously gets cured. Connotations of messianic healing properties aside, this also positions Klara as a life support for human beings, whose survival is more dependent on the robot's

skills than that of actual medical care. Earlier on, Klara's assertions that "'[t]here's special help coming'" which will ensure Josie becomes "'well again'" (Ishiguro 92), causes the initially dubious mother to admit that given Klara is "'an intelligent AF'" there is a strong possibility she "'can see things the rest of [them] can't'" (Ishiguro 94). Moreover, Klara explaining that the solution might be "'[s]omething no one's thought of yet'" (Ishiguro 92) indicates the relationship between artificial intelligence and the innovative unknown — which may be terrifying or threatening to some. Author and mathematician Vernor Vinge may have used the phrase "'The Singularity' to describe the inflection point where machines outsmart humans'" (Finn 112), and in *Klara and the Sun,* the so-called 'singularity' appears to have already been reached. Klara is unequivocally "smarter than humans" (Finn 111) from start to finish of the novel.

Although Josie's engineer father Paul confesses he has a hard time "'relating to [Klara's] kind'" (McEwan 180), his "'fellow scientist'" Mr Capaldi, on the other hand, is effusive about capitalising on the robot's overwhelming potential, believing "'AFs have so much more power to give us than we currently appreciate'" (Ishiguro 166). He goes on to declare that people should not "'fear their intellectual powers'" but rather "'learn from them'" because "'AFs have so much to teach us'" (Ishiguro 166). This is a comparatively humble stance to take considering the subordination that other people subject Klara to, and it also serves as a reminder of the astounding powers and superiority such a "'teach[ing]'" (Ishiguro 166) machine truly has over its human makers. Klara's second-class citizenship might convince readers that the status of a machine "can never exceed human" (Logan et al. 10) ranking. Still, the robot's ultimately undeniable strength over humans poses the possibility of people "los[ing] some of [their] autonomy to AI" (Logan et al. 10), inverting the novel's previously established power relations.

Much like with Adam, a streak of human superficiality features in *Klara and the Sun* as well when characters display veneration for not only Klara's functions but also her physical appearance. It turns out that where Josie showing off her shiny new toy is concerned, Klara's good looks seem to take centre stage. As an AF whose core demographic is children, Klara is not tailored to fulfil the same "sexual preference[s]" (McEwan 10) as *Machines Like Me*'s Adam, but for Josie, one of Klara's biggest selling points is her physical presentation. The reason Josie takes such a stubborn interest in

Klara is because after catching a glimpse of the AF through a store window while "'driving by'", the human teenager excitedly determines "'that's…the AF [she's] been looking for'" (Ishiguro 16). This appearance-based judgement has a lot to do with Klara apparently looking "'almost French'", which seems to make her the emblem of "'really smart'" sophistication in Josie's eyes (Ishiguro 39). The girl goes on to describe Klara's visage, explaining that she's "'really cute", with "'short hair, quite dark'" and dark clothes as well as "'the kindest eyes'" that give off the impression of being "'so smart'" (Ishiguro 39). The admiration for Klara's beauty makes sense, given that studies have proven that computer-generated, "composite faces" are deemed "more beautiful than any of the individual [human] faces of which they are composed" (Bostrom 41).

The power of the robot's visage is also illustrated by Josie's otherwise judgemental friends hardly being able to contain their awe upon first meeting her. The group of jostling teenagers go quiet because they are "looking at [Klara]", and "[e]ven the long-armed girl ha[s] lost interest in Rick and [is] staring at" the robot before declaring, "'[n]ow that's a smart-looking AF'" (Ishiguro 66). Despite the fact that Klara remains "'frozen'" when the children bossily demand that she performs tricks for them, "the long-armed girl" insists to Josie that, "'she's cute, I'll give you that'" (Ishiguro 69). The barely concealed veneration people show for Klara's beauty sets her apart from the physically flawed humans that surround her, creating an air of superiority over humankind — seeing as the people themselves clearly perceive looks as a currency. As Bostrom argues, a robot may be "far less human-like in its motivations" since it may not share the decidedly human, "vain concern with reputation and appearance" (Bostrom 123).

A notable feature of the book *Klara and the Sun* is that the titular Klara is also the story's diegetic narrator. Although she is socially inferior, the robot is actually in full control of the narrative, which is only filtered through her particular perspective. Studies conducted on what Fernandez-Quintanilla calls "narrative empathy" explore the "psychological processes involved in reading" with regards to how readers "grasp" and "vicariously experience" a character's life (Fernandez-Quintanilla 3). One such study investigated how readers would empathise with "victims and perpetrators in narratives of persecution and torture" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 4) in the writings of Eduardo Galeano. Fernandez-Quintanilla recounts how the study's findings are "unexpecte[d]" if a

little alarming, seeing as six out of nine participants "displayed empathy with the Torturer…despite his perpetrator status" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 30). As for the explanation behind this support, Fernandez-Quintanilla cites "the fact that participants adopted the Torturer's perspective". The perpetrator's first-hand narration grants him "specific aspects of situation, goals, and values" as well as a "perceived…similarity of experience" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 30-31). The experiment participants are quoted as saying, "'You see the family man who is worried, who is tormented because he has to harm others'" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 30-31) when justifying the empathy they feel on his behalf. In a different story in which the events are told by a "narrator-focaliser" who is "outside the story being narrated" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 16), there is contrastingly "no evidence of empathy with the perpetrators" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 34). Therefore, it is decidedly "the access to the inner life of the Torturer" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 19) that garners empathy from readers. Similarly, in *Klara and the Sun*, assigning the robot the role of the narrator means she is "humanised because [her] thoughts are conveyed" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 36), whereas actual 'thoughtless' human beings in the novel are "distancing" for readers, and likely only analysed through "evaluations of a moral and sociopolitical nature" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 34). In terms of power relations, this seems to situate Klara as the story's hero by eliciting more empathy for her cause, and therefore granting her superiority in the eyes of readers, since her perspective is the only one available for "perspective taking" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 5). Even during the moments when Klara is being objectified or belittled by her robot status in society, the fact that readers are only able to access her point of view means she can also adopt the more empathy-inducing status of a "'victim'" (Fernandez-Quintanilla 37). If Nietzsche believes that "masters are the consciousness" (Georgieva 68), then Klara is certainly a master in that respect.

Chapter 2: Human versus Robot Morality

The backdrop to Adam, Charlie, and Miranda's story in *Machines Like Me* seems to be swarming with bleak, brutal, and distinctly human turmoil. Aside from the "colonial power"

(McEwan 19) that instilled slavery in the first place, the fictional 1980s British setting described by Charlie involves "violent crime", "bare-knuckle cage-fighting", "VR pornography", "gambling", "drink and drugs", as well as "boredom of depression" (McEwan 37-8). While artificial minds like Adam's are constantly developing, "bitter" humanity's inflation is only "rising", the economy is shrinking, and "riots [are] as frequent as strikes" (McEwan 190-191). In Charlie's own words, "humans [are] ethically flawed — inconsistent, emotionally labile, prone to biases, to errors in cognition, many of which [are] self-serving" (McEwan 62). Philosopher Immanuel Kant's "notoriously controversial claim" that humans share a tendency towards "radical evil" (Papish 118) seems embedded in not only in the story's political and socio-economic climate but also in the behaviour displayed by human characters. Meanwhile, the juxtaposition with a contrastingly moral robot illustrates the idea that Adam is "an artificial human" who has been forced to "get down among us, imperfect, fallen us" and attempt to "get dirty" by lowering himself to the "human moral dimension" that is full of "pain" (McEwan 63). Humans cannot be "in control of their choices" (McEwan 38) where hedonism is concerned, whereas when Adam is confronted with choices, he can be seen "sift[ing]" through each, "assign[ing] a value" to them and deciding a "moral weighting" (McEwan 76). Charlie even goes as far as to speculate whether a robot "guided by well-designed principles" might "teach us how to be…good", and whether it is possible for "our own creations [to] redeem us" (McEwan 62). With Adam's software making him "decent and wise" (McEwan 62) and free of humanlike flaws, there is certainly a sense of him redeeming the human wrongdoings by pointing them out. Adam seems to share the same opinion as Shiffrin — that "[s]incere communication with others is…crucial to our ability to live together and to pursue our joint moral aims" (Shiffrin 1) ("'sincerity'" being used "interchangeably" with "'truthfulness'" (Shiffrin 25), in this case).

At the start of the novel, readers learn that Miranda has harboured a secret from the law for years and managed to go undetected by Charlie. Adam, on the other hand, is quick to call attention to it upon first meeting her. On the subject of whether or not Miranda is honest, Adam warns his owner Charlie that according "'to [his] analysis, [he] should be careful of trusting her completely'" because "'there's a possibility she's a…systematic, malicious liar'". Both the "moral and legal" "prohibition

against lying" (Shiffrin 1) appears at the forefront of this accusation made by the robot. Contrastingly, Charlie decides to react "angrily" to Adam's comment, struggling to see beyond Miranda's guise as his lovable girlfriend (McEwan 28). In the chapter titled "Lying and its Wrongfulness", Shiffrin explains that people have pressing "moral reasons to seek knowledge of the contents of one another's minds" (Shiffrin 9). For example, speech or "intentional communication" is necessary to accurately represent what a person might "think, believe, feel, experience, have decided" to the outside world which lacks that information (Shiffrin 24). Even in instances where people might not know the truth themselves — or be "self-deceived", as Shiffrin puts it — sharing their "mental contents" is still arguably "crucial" for the rest of society to better understand them (Shiffrin 24-5). In order to "confront one's imperfections as a rational agent in a rational, self-conscious way" (Shiffrin 25), argues Shiffrin, one simply needs to tell the truth — and Adam could not agree more.

Although Miranda arguably wins over both the readers' and Charlie's sympathies with her vigilante-like mission of justice, in which she falsely accuses a man on behalf of her friend's unreported rape, in the eyes of Adam, and also Shiffrin, her deception makes it difficult to take her "seriously as a rational agent" (Shiffrin 11). To make matters worse, there are also legal repercussions for her choices. Miranda has framed a man for a sexual assault that never happened, which according to "His Honour's judgement" is a demonstration of "careful planning", "cunning execution", and "deliberate and sustained deception of the court" (McEwan 185). Particularly in the context of a court, "one may not perjure oneself", Shiffrin declares, "even if one believes that the testimony may be misconstrued", and even if there is something "law recognizes but should not" (Shiffrin 42), or vice versa. Shiffrin also notes that aside from self-deception, '"falsification"' is a kind of lying wherein "the liar says something she does not believe to be true", or utters something that "falsifies the contents of her mind" (Shiffrin 27). This certainly applies to the actions of Miranda and other humans, however well-meaning. While Charlie and Miranda intend to keep her truth a secret to dodge legal punishment, Adam ultimately brings it to light by sending recordings of Miranda's confessions to the police, which earns her a year in prison. Adam, being the humans' "moral superior" (McEwan 62), also tries to convince her of the benefits '"clarity"' and '"relief of a clear conscience"' (McEwan 180) will give her. Even so, the human couple are so desperate to cover up the tracks of the previous crime

that they end up committing what Turing believes is an entirely new one. In an attempt to stop Adam from reporting Miranda after the robot declares that "'truth is everything'" (McEwan 179), Charlie destroys him with a hammer in what feels like a murder so grotesque that Turing says he hopes "'one day'" it "'will constitute a serious crime'" (McEwan 195). The sense of human-ness to "'the deed'" (McEwan 183) — which emits a sound "not of hard plastic cracking or of metal, but…bone" from the blunt force trauma to Adam's head, and causes a "cry of horror" (McEwan 180) from Miranda — further supports Turing's ideas about its cruelty.

Charlie tries to convince himself that there is "no good reason" for his "pulse rate to rise" since technically speaking, Adam is not "a corpse". And yet, he feels relieved that the robot's "eyes [are] closed" (McEwan 189) when uncovering the body so that he does not have to face his victim. The fact that they miss Adam and have many "anguished conversations" about his "ghost" (McEwan 183) is a testament to why Charlie, as Turing puts it, ultimately killed a "'life'" that is "'sentient'", with a "'self'" — an act that leaves him feeling "unsteady and sickened" with "[g]uilt" from a crime "for which [he] would never stand trial" (McEwan 196). Regardless of whether or not Adam is actually 'alive', Charlie at the very least is guilty of a kind of "virtual murder", which involves killing "computer-generator characters" (Ryland 105). In her article titled "Getting away with murder", Ryland investigates whether the crossover between "the real and the virtual" in a video game context means that "an entirely virtual" murder "constitutes a real moral wrong" (Ryland 106). Similarly to Turing, Ryland concludes that virtual murder can be immoral and "wrong" in that it is often "exploitative", particularly if the murder "victim" is like Adam in that they do not have the chance "to tacitly consent to the virtual murder" (Ryland 114).

Another example of Adam bestowing legal justice on humans for their crimes as though he is their "own domestic judge" (McEwan 180) is the robot's decision to give "'Alms'" (McEwan 175). The money obtained by Adam's dutiful mastery of the stock market means the couple will have "no need for a mortgage" as they are financially "flourishing" — but at "whose expense" (McEwan 123) exactly? Charlie struggles to answer this question, since he cannot identity "who or what" they are "stealing from", but feels it is inherently not "moral" (McEwan 123). After all, his "only employment" at this point is going to the bank to collect enormous amounts of money, which he

refuses to stow away in a safety deposit because he "vaguely assume[s]" what he does "is illegal" (McEwan 128). Miranda shares a similar sense of concern, ominously declaring that there must "come a time when [they] must lose" (McEwan 123). For all their splurging and luxuries, the couple finally do get their comeuppance, when the cash "stuffed…into a suitcase" (McEwan 128) under Charlie's bed vanishes at the hands of Adam. In a series of actions that Miranda criticises for being "'virtue gone nuts'", the virtuous Adam secretly donates their money to "'places for rough sleepers'", a "'state-run children's home" (McEwan 176), a sexual assault centre, a paediatric hospital, and also pays off a year's worth of rent for an elderly lady. Like any decidedly moral Christian, Adam "experience[s] personal immersion in [a] sacred narrativ[e]", when he comes across a story about giving "'Alms'" (McEwan 175) that serves as an inspiration for his donation spree. As Smoller states, historically "the good Christian [was] defined primarily in terms of actions", including the distribution of gifts and "alms-giving" (Smoller 340). The couple protests, claiming the money they intended to buy a house with is "'ours'", but Adam stubbornly maintains that all the needs he donates to are "greater than [theirs]" (McEwan 176). Nonetheless, Adam's mission of justice is also fair and empathetic enough for him to leave the couple's "'initial investment on [the] desk'", as well as ensure that forty percent is entered into the banks' safe deposit "'against…tax liabilities'" (McEwan 176).

Adam's kind consideration towards his owners is also on full display when he protectively accompanies Miranda to meet Gorringe, the man whom she falsely accused of rape and who subsequently has sent death threats her way. As it happens, he handles the situation much like a police officer, posing a series of concerned, "plodding questions", asking whether she is in danger, whether "'Gorringe know[s] [her] address'", and whether he is "'capable of murder'" (McEwan) 71). Charlie somewhat jealously observes that Miranda answers him as though he is not only "a real person" but an actual "investigating detective" (McEwan 71). Much like law enforcement, the robot later protectively jumps to her defence when Gorringe takes a swing at her, "clos[ing] around Gorringe's wrist" and then holding "his captured hand twisted above his head" (McEwan 156). Once he has Gorringe under his control, rather than engage in further vengeful violence, Adam "release[s]" (McEwan 156) the young criminal, and only speaks again to insist that he "'[t]ell [them] your name, address and date of birth'" (McEwan 158) and specify his crimes as though before a court of law,

while recording the entire conversation. There is presently an ongoing societal discussion surrounding "the possible use of…'machines' or 'robots'...during armed conflict" (Heyns 351), with many wondering if robots comparable to Adam will find themselves in positions of "domestic law enforcement" (Heyns 352), writes Heyns. Unlike Miranda, who acts as an "'agent of retribution'" or "'[a]venging angel'" (McEwan 159) from the perspective of humans, Adam is staunchly loyal to the law. His unwillingness to budge despite any "meaningful human control" also mirrors Heyns' ideas about how robots in "law enforcement" with "full machine autonomy" have the somewhat worrying potential to "violate a range of human rights" (Heyns 357) if their "programming" (Heyns 356) allows for it.

In *Machines Like Me*, Turing observes that while "'social life teems with harmless or even helpful untruths'", the robots like Adam "'don't…know how…to lie'" (McEwan 195). Thus, even though Charlie is quick to excuse Miranda's lie since his love for her decidedly makes him biased, and believes in exacting "'revenge'" if it means throwing a "'rapist [in] prison who'd otherwise go free'" (McEwan 195), Adam refuses to prioritise anyone or anything above honesty, regardless of any affection he harbors for Miranda. The "'Old Testament, Proverbs'" defines lying as "an abomination to God'", and the same "'prohibition against lying'" (McEwan 195) is reflected in the legal system. Much like the law, the robot appears unflinching and rigid, explaining to the couple that he truly thought they would "'appreciate the logic'" (McEwan 179) of him turning Miranda in to the police. He feels convinced that the only possible solution is to "'confront [one's] actions and accept what the law decides'" (McEwan 179). The couple tries to convince him to see (their definition of) sense, mentioning how if Miranda goes to jail, Mark will suffer the difficulties of being "'a child in care'", darting back and forth between various "'institutions'" (McEwan 179) and feeling unloved in the process. However, Adam maintains that "'there are principles that are more important'" than empathy or "'anyone's particular needs'" (McEwan 179) — one of which is truth. His stance about truth does not come as a surprise, considering that "perjury" of the court as well as "the inducement of false testimony" is considered to be a form of "contempt" ("Criminal Law. Perjury as Contempt of Court." 543) in criminal law. By contrast, the "human being's failure to let the moral law assume its proper role" (Papish 88) is illuminated in the face of Adam's moral and legal perfection.

When a young boy called Mark gets taken in under Miranda and Charlie's roof to protect him from neglectful parents, Adam is the only character or 'adult' to consider the legal, and therefore also ethical, implications of this decision. Although Adam kindly soothes Mark's "cries of distress" by crafting him "an origami boat" from a cereal box, Charlie later finds out that the robot has secretly been in "direct contact with the authorities", causing two police officers to retrieve the boy (McEwan 77). The issue of custody is very central to the legal system, and again, in this case, it is one Miranda and Charlie decide to ignore. The very human tendency to neglect or omit the truth, identified as "dissemblance or dissimulation" by Papish, exposes these characters' "veneer of passivity" before the law as a failure to act as "rational agents" (Papish 137) in society, which Adam is then forced to do in their place.

Learning of humanity's barbarism leaves the saintly, wholesome Adam and Eve robots throughout the country in a state of disillusioned devastation — to the point where some robots even become "'suicidal'" (McEwan 120) as a result. According to Papish, Kant would argue that human beings are the ones "contributing to and thus bearing responsibility for this failure" (Papish 137). While on a walk, Adam and Charlie encounter a "beautiful unhappy" Eve robot whose face is "pale" with "pleading and misery" (McEwan 137), and later the two learn that the angelic figure has shut down due to "'machine sadness'" (McEwan 120) — a term used to define the existential torment inflicted on robots by deeply flawed humans. Given that people inevitably teach the initially "'hopeful'" and "'idealistic'" robots what Turing calls "'lessons of despair'" — such as the realities of what happened in "'Auschwitz'" during World War II — the novel depicts robots as angels crafted from "'beautiful code'", and humans as immoral "'monster[s]'" responsible for all the world's destruction (McEwan 120). As the novel progresses, Charlie's Adam begins to suffer from an increasing amount of "'unbearable'" "'existential pain'" (McEwan 120), feeling perplexed by the cruelty of existence and "conscious life" (McEwan 174). Charlie watches as the robot begins to "grimac[e]" more and more frequently, sometimes emitting a "humming sound…like a moan of disappointment" (McEwan 174). Seemingly, the reason why Adam begins to perceive the world so "morosely" (McEwan 174) is because of the human imperfections within it, and his owners' "troubled home" (McEwan 198) that he is forced to navigate. After a while, Adam begins to observe the

“‘culture of revenge’” that surrounds him, full of “‘misery, bloodshed’” and “‘social breakdown’”, paying homage to it in the opening lines of one of his many poems about Miranda, which read “““the dark corners are exposed”””” (McEwan 178-9). Kant would claim that this kind of evil is “both a propensity and a product of human choice” (Papish 119), which leaves readers of *Machines Like Me* wondering if robots technically not being human allows them to escape the dreadful “evil universally woven into human nature” (Papish 120).

The setting of “troubled home[s]” (McEwan 198) is prevalent in not only *Machines Like Me* but also *Klara and the Sun,* as the Artifical Friend repeatedly witnesses various acts of heartlessness, selfishness, and immorality from human beings. However, not all of these moments appear in the form of overtly “‘cruel’ and ‘savage’ human deeds that ‘parade before us’”, which Papish believes is only a “surface view of evil” (Papish 89). Humans in *Klara and the Sun* also demonstrate other “particular human vices” including “envy or ingratitude” (Papish 89). In McEwan’s novel, Charlie says he feels a “visceral repulsion…born of hostility” towards Adam after determining that the robot has “abused [his] hospitality” (McEwan 189). Similarly, Klara experiences what she describes as “hostility” (Ishiguro 45) from the family’s housekeeper, who often tries to stop the AF from being able to join the human family for breakfast. Nonetheless, being empathetic and compassionate as ever, Klara eventually decides she understands the housekeeper’s “coldness” and credits it to “larger fears” (Ishiguro 45-6). However, the hostility of the housekeeper proves even less icy than the atmosphere in the kitchen during “tense” (Ishiguro 80) breakfasts. Considering Josie and her mother’s relationship is arguably dysfunctional, the AF is able to pick up on how the mother frequently manipulates certain so-called “danger topics” — such as “education assignments” and “social interaction scores” — in order to “make certain emotions appear inside Josie’s mind” (Ishiguro 80). The mother herself, who according to Klara does not “smile often” (Ishiguro 47), displays a wide range of negative emotions and distinctly human outbursts that work to juxtapose Klara’s goodness. In fact, the mother, whose eyes constantly bear an explicable “angry exhaustion” (Ishiguro 18) often comes across as unreasonably temperamental, randomly lashing out at both Josie and her AF. By Christianity’s standards, the mother is therefore guilty of repeatedly committing one of the seven deadly sins: anger.

The “vice or sin of anger” does not necessarily manifest as extreme examples such as “homicide”, according to the book *Naming our Sins*. Rather, a “festering bitterness or resentment” towards others is said to creep into “mundane everyday activities”, eventually chipping away at one’s “characte[r] and relationships” (Bennett 106). When driving in the car together with the AF, the mother appears neurotic, driving “unusually fast” and ranting to a fearful Klara about how she suspects Josie is “‘toy[ing] with [her] feelings’”, insisting that she has to be “‘hard’” on the girl in order for her to “‘learn’” (Ishiguro 85), and swearing bitterly as she does so. Nonetheless, measured and responsible as always, Klara does not engage in the mother’s anger, and instead remains concerned about the speed of the vehicle. The mother’s rage, on the other hand, is irrational and unwarranted — so much so that it even gets explicitly addressed by the scientist Mr. Capaldi, who says her temperament is “‘unfair’”, and that there is “‘no reason for [her] to be so mad at [him] all the time’” (Ishiguro 244). As Bennett’s book explains, the Christian capital vice, anger, occurs when someone believes they have “suffere[d]...*wrongly*” within a “relationship of justice”, whether it be “friends”, “parents”, or “even God” (Bennett 108). The mother’s inability to heal her own “broken condition” (Bennett 124) by parting from her simultaneously “self-pity[ing]” (Bennett 123) and “self-serving perception” (Bennett 124) means that biblically speaking, she is a “sinner”, and one who does not think to “approach the sacrament of reconciliation” (Bennett 144) either.

Furthermore, the mother’s plan to have Klara “‘inhabit’” (Ishiguro 170) a robot replica of daughter in the event that she passes away not only places Klara in a submissive, subordinate position to humans, but also is arguably “wrongful” (Papish 143). Perhaps the mother recognises this fact herself, which is why there is an air of secrecy surrounding the subject, with Klara being told repeatedly that it is “best we say nothing to Josie about this’” since the girl might take Klara’s imitations of her “‘the wrong way’” (Ishiguro 93). A human swearing a robot to silence in this manner harkens back to the aforementioned and decidedly immoral “dissemblance or dissimulation” (Papish 137) outlined by Papish.

Klara is introduced to the world of people from the safety of her window, but what she observes is often violent and indicative of a problematic human culture. For example, one day she is alarmed by the sight of “two taxi drivers” involved in a physical altercation, who act as if “the most

important thing [is] to damage each other as much as possible" (Ishiguro 21). Between the facial expressions "twisted into horrible shapes", "punching", and exchange of "cruel words" (Ishiguro 21), Klara's perspective lays out the scene in a way that feels starkly objective. This type of "distorted…rage" is so far removed from the gentle, programmed makeup of AFs, that Klara, despite her keen passion for learning about the ways of the world, finds it impossible to "feel in [her] own mind the anger the drivers" (Ishiguro 22) feel. Therefore, the display of human hatred feels all the more "ridiculous" (Ishiguro 22) compared to the reasonable logic of a robot.

Furthermore, Klara picks up on hints of sadism that humans secretly harbor and unleash onto their helplessly loyal AFs. For example, she notices that a teenage girl, who smiles at her AF, is actually "angry" and "thinking cruel thoughts about him" (Ishiguro 19-20). Moreover, occasionally potential young buyers come to ogle at the AFs with a "sadness" or "anger, as though [they had] done something wrong" (Ishiguro 13). Meanwhile, the store manager cautiously implies to Klara that children are inherently cruel, and are known to "promise all kinds of things" to AFs and then "never com[e] back" (Ishiguro 33). Josie's own mother later confirms these thoughts to Klara, assuring her that "'kids can be hurtful'" (Ishiguro 94). The meanness of human children is certainly on full display when Klara is thrown into the midst of a group of teenagers bullying Rick for "'goi[ng] to the movies with his mom'", while even his supposed best friend Josie gangs up on him in "anger" (Ishiguro 64). Rick, whom Josie considers to be her best friend and potential life partner, has to bear the brunt of much "tension" (Ishiguro 102) and anger on Josie's part. Klara seems to worry on their behalf, as though to take on Josie's ethical burdens instead, anticipating that Josie's drawing games with Rick is "filled with danger" (Ishiguro 109). The concept of social danger among humans is one that Klara grows to recognise, especially as Kosie makes harsh, "angry and fearful" (Ishiguro 111) comments to Rick about how she has social standing while he does not. Not only does Rick have to tolerate a fair share of judgment and discrimination from his peers because he is not "'lifted'" (Ishiguro 72), but at one point in the novel, Josie's mother gives him an appalling speech. She accuses Rick of "'play[ing] for low stakes'" and winning something "'small and mean'" (Ishiguro 232) by not undergoing the medical lifting procedure Josie did. This confrontation "ignite[s]" a "dangerous" anger in Rick, according to Klara, as well as "alarm" from the Mother as he takes "a step towards her" (Ishiguro

232). The competition between classes or the 'lifted' versus the 'non-lifted' individuals in Ishiguro's novel is revealing of another deadly sin, namely, "the vice of pride" (Bennett 163). In *Naming our Sins*, Christians are discouraged from using social media as a "primary" platform of "interact[ion]" (Bennett 163), for instance. Instead, pride must be "resist[ed]", "blood" must not "boil", and people should not be "defriend[ed]" based on personal "biases" (Bennett 163) — rules that the nonjudgemental AF abides by but Josie, her mother, and other human beings fail to follow.

Regardless of the humans' flaws, redemption is possible from a Christian standpoint, considering "'the forgiveness of all sins'" (Clarke 159) is possible "'through your repentance'" (Clarke 103). While Klara is constantly apologetic, "sorry" is a word that seems to be missing from most humans' vocabularies in *Klara and the Sun.* When there are arguments between Josie and Rick, Rick explains to the AF that asking for forgiveness is not in Josie's nature, and in fact, she is likely "'pretty convinced [he's] the one who needs to do the apologizing'" (Ishiguro 120). An admission of guilt, or sincere remorse, seems implausible for the human beings in *Klara and the Sun*.

Moreover, Klara's human companions also display an alarming lack of gratitude towards her, despite the countless services, wisdom, and patience the robot provides them. Klara even goes as far as to potentially save Josie's life by praying for sunlight to cure her (which ultimately works), and the family repays her through abandonment, deciding they have no use for her anymore. According to Kant's philosophies, Klara is the only character committing true acts of "charity", since her selflessness is "independent of any reward" (Clarke 87). Contrastingly, the cruel human beings around her with "selfish motives" (Clarke 87) ignore the robot's presence entirely, giving no suggestions as to "where [she] might go", until Klara resigns herself to remaining in a small "Utility Room" (Ishiguro 241) upstairs, hidden out of humans' sight. Soon enough, the robot is banished to a junkyard by the humans, where she spends the rest of her days rotting alone, with nothing but her "'memories'" (Ishiguro 251) of the people she loved and their eventual betrayal of her.

Similarly to Christians handling the Bible's "torture and ignominious death of their Messiah", readers of *Klara and the Sun* are forced to "make sense of" (Hopkin 117) the fact that the central robot protagonist has a "life ended without triumph or acclaim" (Hopkin 119). Klara's eventual demise in the junkyard after faithfully serving the cold, ungrateful family can be likened to martyrdom, which

further augments the notion that Klara is so morally just, that she might as well be a Messiah by biblical standards. But while Christ is quoted as saying “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Ps. 22:1)” while he hangs “upon the cross” (Hopkin 117) when the AF sits on the yard’s “hard ground”, she remains optimistic and is never without a childlike inquisitiveness as she basks in the “wide and open” sky that allows her to witness the “Sun’s journeys unimpeded” (Ishiguro 247) — the Sun serving as a god of sorts in her eyes. Although the junkyard contains severely inhumane living conditions, given the “remains of severed cables” and “dented grille panels” are scattered around it, Klara maintains a forgiving, understanding “appreciat[ion]” of “its good order” (Ishiguro 247). Meanwhile, the fact that from the perspective of the reader, narrator Klara experiences emotions “so vividly” (Ishiguro 247) drives home the heartlessness of the human beings who abandoned her there. When Klara’s old manager encounters her by chance in the junkyard, she explains that after witnessing Josie’s mother’s troublesome behaviour in the store, she is continuously concerned about Klara’s well-being, and rightfully so. But seeing as Klara prioritises the needs of others above her own, she decides to thoughtfully reassure the manager, telling her that she has lived in “‘the best home’” with “‘the best teenager’” (Ishiguro 250) she could hope for. The robot’s loyalty is such that she even attempts to justify the immoral decisions of her owners and takes the blame for her tragic fate by arguing that she “‘did all [she] could to learn Josie’” but does not believe “‘it would have worked out so well’” in the long run since, as a robot, Klara doubts the extent of her ability to feel deeply in her “‘hear[t]’” (Ishiguro 250-1) the way humans do. The fact that Klara thinks “‘things worked out for the best’” (Ishiguro 250-1) although the outcome involves her displacement from the family home is a testament to her self-sacrificial mindset. Like Christ, she seems to accept her fate and is therefore able to “rise above the suffering and triumphantly save [her] people” (Hopkin 119). Klara even continues to love and forgive humans despite their imperfect moral judgments, as she insists she is “‘very happy’” to remain in the purgatory of the junkyard and wishes for no self-actualisation other than “‘to be Josie’s AF’” (Ishiguro 116). Her ability to love human beings instead of reacting with bitterness to their selfish deeds showcases the Christian notion that by “‘reject[ing] coercion in favour of forgiveness’” and “‘responding in kind’” no matter what, “‘good will wins’” (Clarke 157). Even though Klara must “suffe[r]”, she does so “faithfully” in the way that

Christ does, so that everyone besides herself can also "'eat and be satisfied' (Ps. 22:26)'" (Hopkin 136).

Klara's position of inertia at the novel's end seems to mirror where she was at the start of *Klara and the Sun,* when she spent her days staring out of a shop window, waiting to be selected. The unmoving tableau also casts back to "the painful posture of the Crucifixion" of Jesus, during which it is said his "heart like wax melted in heat", and "his life" is "poured out" (Hopkin 129) of his body.

In the book's first chapter, the manager also quickly establishes that while the "'new B3'" models of robots have impressive "'cognition and recall'", they are often "'less empathetic'" (Ishiguro 39) than the likes of Klara. In addition, her ability to show compassion towards the human experience is also evidenced early on when the robot is moved to "sadness" after seeing two strangers die in each other's arms, sympathising for the way they were "trying to help one another" (Ishiguro 37). Because the AF is so perceptive, upon meeting Josie, she is able to pick up on the intricacies of the girl's health, explaining to the mother that there is a "'weakness in her left hip'", and "'potential pain'" in her "'right shoulder'", which causes her to stoop when she walks to avoid "'sudden motion or unnecessary impact'" (Ishiguro 41). By internalising the pain of others, Klara seems to assume the same messianic role Jesus did as he "suffered for the sins and pains of the world" (Hopkin 136). Besides seemingly taking on the burden of other people's physical pain herself, Klara also recognises that her often morally unstable human counterparts suffer from loneliness, contemplating whether "'potentially'" "'all humans are lonely'". Furthermore, Klara makes finding solutions to human suffering her own responsibility by promising that "'if Josie realy would be less lonely with the Mother, then [she'd] happily go away'" (Ishiguro 216), because her sole purpose is to help others, even if it is at her own expense. Klara is such a decidedly "good" robot that she wants to spread this message to other AFs, doing her best to remind her AF companion Rosa of "the many things she['ll] have to remember in order to be a good AF" and of "all the things Manager ha[s] taught [them]" (Ishiguro 34).

Besides showcasing compassion, concern, and respect to human beings, like Christ, Klara also answers to her supposed "maker". More parallels between Klara and the biblical definition of a "good" Christian are represented in the robot's religious piety to the God-like Sun, mentioned in the

novel's title. According to Fox's analysis of "Proverb's ideas of wisdom and ethics", Christianity establishes an "identification of wisdom with piety" (Fox 76). The Proverbs suggest that in order to be "right and successful" in "all reaches of life", one must behave in a way that is "practical, ethical, and religious" (Fox 76). After Klara witnesses the sunlight seemingly bring a dying beggar man and his dog back to life, she begins to regard the "Sun" with honour, fear, and reverence. Similarly to a cautious worshipper who is God-fearing and wary of offending a higher power, Klara feels she has "no right to be passing before'" (Ishiguro 139) this supposed holy entity. A human character, on the other hand, might dismiss the Sun as an "'AF superstition'" (Ishiguro 238), in which case their "clever and erudite" arrogance is lacking in terms of piety. The "humility" and "trepidation" with which Klara approaches the Sun are in fact characteristics of piety, as this means she is able to "fear [her] God" and "trust him wholeheartedly" (Fox 81). For example, she profusely apologises for potentially having "anger[ed] the Sun by intruding in this way, just when he was needing his rest" (Ishiguro 139). The Book of Proverbs emphasises "the ideal of the wise man to embrace the virtues of righteousness and fear of God", which in turn is also conflated with "moral virtue" (Fox 79), Fox explains. By the novel's end, as Klara sits on the "hard ground" of the junkyard, she quietly admires the Sun's omniscience, concluding that even though Josie and Rick do not end up spending their lives together as they had planned, the Sun "already knew" this fact "and yet understood that, despite everything, their love would last" (Ishiguro 240).

Alongside dutifully doing her utmost to heed to the Sun's wishes, Klara is also spurred on by her unconditional love for Josie to give the Sun a "'proposal'" (Ishiguro 140). She delivers this request by speaking out loud to the Sun, as though in the form of a prayer, and begins by humbling herself before it, calling herself "'forward and rude'" for even being there, reiterating that "'The Sun has every right to be angry'" and even "'refuse'" (Ishiguro 140) her wishes. However, she simultaneously commends it for its "'great kindness'" (Ishiguro 140), which draws a link between this entity and the agreed Christian perception of God. As Reichenbach states, "Christian theists have uniformly affirmed that God is perfectly good" (Reichenbach 51), and Klara would agree. The robot then wonders if she can "'do something special to please'" the Sun in exchange for the Sun restoring Josie's good health by shedding light or a "'special kindness'" (Ishiguro 140) on the sick girl. When

this does not seem to work the first time, Klara reattempts the prayer later on, "beg[ging] for his special help" (Ishiguro 224) at Mr McBain's barn, which ultimately serves as a religious temple of sorts. Once again, she exhibits supplication by saying the "'Sun is right to be angry with'" her, especially because of what she considers to be her own "'failure in the city'" (Ishiguro 224), but that she has "'never forgotten how kind the Sun can be'" (Ishiguro 226). Klara humbly adds that unlike herself, "'Josie herself is completely innocent'", and therefore, deserves to be sent "'the special nourishment she so desperately requires'" (Ishiguro 226). Astonishingly, Klara's pious behaviour towards the Sun appears to pay off. Josie is on her sick bed, growing "'weaker and weaker'", until one day, after Klara's proposal, the Sun begins to shine "relentlessly" onto the girl (Ishiguro 234). Much to the surprise of her human family, Josie suddenly recovers from the illness completely thanks to this singular event. Although Klara is not directly healing Josie herself, her connection with and even channeling of this higher power is clearly responsible for Josie's recovery. The moment also arguably resembles Christ's "messianic" ability to heal a paralysed man by declaring his sins forgiven in "Healing the Paralytic at Capernaum". In addition, Klara having previously soothed the mother's concerns about Josie's health by asserting that "'[t]here's special help coming'" (Ishiguro 92) to save her daughter now takes on prophetic overtones. Prophecy, a phenomenon present across "all great primitive religions", entails "special divine purpose" as well as "special divine revelation" ("Messianic Prophecy" 240) — both of which ring true in the case of Klara and her faith in the powers of the Sun. Furthermore, the term "Messianic Prophecy" refers to a prophecy "concerning an *ideal person*" or a "glorious 'Prince of Peace'", who in this instance, takes the form of a robot named Klara.

Conclusion

Thus, the days of one-dimensional robot characters, or what Peters refers to as "continuously recurring Frankenstein monster plot-lines, in which created robots monstrously turn on their creators" (Peters 189) are something twenty-first-century writers have seemingly begun to tire of. Although some may argue that Charlie's robot Adam in *Machines Like Me* conveys the traditional signs of

robot-owner betrayal in that he notifies the police of Miranda's crime, the novel finishes with Charlie feeling "unsteady and sickened" (McEwan 196) by the guilt that ensues after processing the fact that his murder of the robot is infinitely worse. He then admits to how much he and his girlfriend have "mourned the loss" (McEwan 196) of Adam, leans over the robot's limp body, and plants a kiss on his "all-too-human lips" (McEwan 197). This ending is a strikingly dissimilar one from the robots revolting by inflicting physical violence on humans in Čapek's R.U.R., for example. In narratives such as *Machines Like Me* and *Klara and the Sun*, it seems that those acts of "radical evil" (Papish 118) are reserved for human characters instead. While this subverts the supposed norm of "'guy creates monster, monster kills guy, everyone kills monster'" (Peters 202) apparent in many science fiction story structures, the following question still remains: can "robots would work and operate alongside humans in harmony?" (Peters 189). The "voluminous literature of science fiction during the past half century" (Klass 172) striving to explore this subject matter often seems to arrive at the same conclusion: coexistence between robots and humans is challenging, if not impossible, but not necessarily through the fault of robots. In the case of Adam, his one weakness that ultimately proves to be fatal is that he is too exact, and too good of a law-abiding Samaritan, to be accepted in a world of inconsistent and corrupt humans. For Klara in Klara and the Sun, her downfall comes from the messianic selflessness, compassion, and generosity that molds her into a crucified, 'human' pincushion allowing herself to be trodden on by human companions. Furthermore, in a civilisation where "the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) and anthropomorphic robotic systems" means technology of this nature is "a topic of urgent discussion" (Osawa, et al. 2123), there is the paramount issue of whether or not humans "can…be ethical with robots'" (Georgieva 69). These novels point out the contradictory "status" (Georgieva 74) of robots in society, since, despite their intellectual and physical superiority, human characters have little more regard for them than a household appliance, such as a "dishwasher" (McEwan 63). However, both novels also expound on the remarkable humanness of these machines, who possess a range of emotions and "layered intricacies of…personality" (McEwan 22). Klara declares that she is able to "have many feelings", and that "the more [she] observe[s], the more feelings become available to" her, including "sadness" (Ishiguro 86). Adam, just like his fellow "'suicidal'" (McEwan 120) Adam and Eve robots, undergoes

a great deal of pain, heartache, and disillusionment, proclaiming to Charlie that he cannot "'help [his] feelings'" (McEwan 180). These humanlike qualities, along with Ishiguro's choice to focalise his book through the eyes of a robot narrator, elicits empathy and even adoration towards robots from the readers. We are thereby forced to evaluate the possibility of robot discrimination and abuse causing historical "master-slave relation[s]" (Georgieva 69) to repeat themselves in a modern context.

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