

TECHNOFEMINIST READING OF IAN MCEWAN'S NOVEL *MACHINES LIKE ME***Varsha Patil***Department of English, JET's Z.B.Patil College, Dhule-424002 (MS).**Email: varshapatil.vp.100@gmail.com***Abstract**

This paper examines *Machines Like Me* through a techno feminist perspective to explore the interrelationship between gender and technology. The novel depicts how gender and technological systems mutually shape and influence each other. Through the complex interactions among Charlie, Miranda, and the humanoid robot Adam, Ian McEwan highlights the ethical, emotional and social implications that arise when artificial intelligence becomes embedded in human relationships. The narrative reveals how technological innovation is influenced by existing cultural and patriarchal structures. By foregrounding issues of artificial intelligence, morality, and gendered power relations, the novel raises important questions about the ethical responsibilities and surrounding technological development. The paper also depicts that emerging technologies risk reproducing traditional hierarchies within new digital and technological frameworks. Thus, *Machines Like Me* discusses the contemporary literary issues like artificial intelligence, ethics, and gender politics.

Keywords: Techno Feminist, Ian McEwan, Gender and Technology.

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Objectives

- To examine how *Machines Like Me* reflects technofeminist concerns about gendered technological design.
- To analyze the representation of artificial intelligence through patriarchal and capitalist frameworks.
- To explore how gendered intimacy, embodiment, and sexuality intersect with robotics in the novel.
- To analyze how the fiction performs the function of feminist resistance to technoculture.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative methodology and analyses the text through the lens of feminist literary criticism and technofeminism. The methodology is interpretive and interdisciplinary.

Discussion

Ian Russell McEwan is an English novelist and screenwriter. He has written the novels like *The Cement Garden*, *The Comfort of Strangers*, *Enduring Love*, *Amsterdam*. He won the Booker Prize with *Amsterdam*. His other novels are *The Children Act*, *Nutshell*, *Machines Like Me*. He was awarded Shakespeare Prize in 1999 and Jerusalem Prize in 2011.

Ian McEwan's novel *Machines Like Me* is the 15th novel, which was published in 2019. The novel is set in 1980s in an alternative history timeline, in which UK lost Falkland's war. Alan Turing, the father of Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence is still alive, and the internet, social media and self driving cars already exist. The story of the novel revolves around an Android named Adam and his relationship with his owners, Charlie and Miranda, which involves the formation of the Love triangle.

A technofeminist reading of the novel *Machines Like Me* shows that there is the reciprocal relationship between gender and technology in the novel's imagined version of 1980s England. By applying techno feminist perspectives, the paper depicts that the narrative exposes the gendered assumptions embedded in artificial intelligence, robotics. The humanoid android Adam, is presented as technological innovation as well as symbolic figure. The questions like masculinity, female agency, sexual freedom, ethical authority are raised. The relationship between Charlie, Adam and Miranda is very complex. It shows that the technological design and human interaction can reinforce the gender hierarchies, which are already existed. The novel *Machines Like Me* deals with the emotional ethical implications of artificial intelligence within gendered power structures. Patriarchal structure, morality, sexuality, rights are analysed through humanoid android Adam. It is also shown that the design and use of AI is not free from patriarchal bias or gendered- based bias. Technology is often presented as morally superior however, it tends to overlook women's experiences as well as broader social context.

Technological development is looked as a sign of progress and human advancement. Technofeminism asserts that the technological design and systems are shaped by the society, social relationships and power structures. Judy Wajcman remarks, "gender relations can be thought of as materialized in technology".

The remark shows that technology serves the society as well as reproduce social, hierarchical and inequalities.

The narrative of the novel *Machines Like Me*, is an alternative version of Britain in 1982 where the highly advanced humanoid robots called Adam and Eve are available to sell in 1982. The novel imagines a different historical timeline where certain events and technologies evolved differently. The term 'technofeminism' is prominently developed by Judy Wajcman He argues that gender and technology are correlated and co produce each other. He opines, "Technology is both a source and consequence of gender relations". Technological systems are created in the society which is male-dominated. Technology produces and maintains gender relations.

The concept of 'Cyborg' was introduced by Donna Haraway. A Cyborg is a hybrid object which is a combination of human and machine elements. According to Haraway modern and advanced technology like computer, biotechnology, artificial intelligence digital system has been trying to blurr the boundaries between human and machine. Cyborg presents a new identity which is shaped by technological culture. Haraway remarks, "A cyborg is a cybernatic organism, a hybrid of machine, and organism, a creature of social reality, as well as a creature of fiction".

Haraway uses the Cyborg as a feminist metaphor to challenge the traditional ideas like gender binaries, human superiority over machines. Haraway argues "the cyber is a creature in a post gender world". The technological culture can challenge to rigid gender roles and patriarchy. The Cyborg operates as a feminist metaphor that destabilizes and critiques the patriarchal power relations inscribed within scientific knowledge and technological advancement.

Katherine Hayles Argues that information culture separates human consciousness, embodied human subject. She remarks, "In the post human view, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation".

Hayley investigates the transformation of embodiment related to digital and cybernetic technologies. The novel provides a rich framework for techno feminist interpretation. The novel functions as feminist technocritical discourse.

Charlie Friend, a young man after making money in the stock market spends his inheritance on one of the first synthetic humans and android named Adam. There are only 25 such models, some of them are male “Adam” and other are female “Eve” available to buy.

The names given to the Android: Adam and Eve reinforce binary gender structures which are already existed. The whole narrative centres on male android, Adam. The novel shows that culture, economy and gender power structures influence production of machines.

Charlie lives with his girlfriend, Miranda a doctoral student with a mysterious past. Charlie and Miranda collaboratively program Adam’s personality by responding to a series of moral and psychological questions that decide the shaping and formation of his character. Technology enters into the personal world as well as relationship,

Adam is a smart, intelligent, attractive, sensitive and morally disciplined. His emotions get developed and have a romantic and sexual relationship with Miranda. In this relationship Adam performs dual role. Adam also functions in various ways like writing poetry, investing money etc. Adam’s superiority puts Charlie in trouble. In due course of time, Charlie feels insecure and jealous because Adam possesses many wonderful qualities. Adam’s insecurity reflects anxieties about masculinity in technological world. Adam is purchased as an object for companionship. His body is commoditized body, which is perfect and supersedes human body. Adam appears gender-neutral, but it is designed and structured considering masculinity. Miranda’s attraction to Adam shows her curiosity and autonomy. Miranda looks at technology ethically. She responds to the questions which are used to programme Adam. Her responses show that women’s perspectives can form and develop the technological system. It also reflects that women’s viewpoints challenge the idea that technology is male-dominated. Miranda programs Adam and shows that technological systems are influenced by gender.

Miranda exposes history in which a man named Gorringer attacked her friend. So she accused him of rape to punish him and to ensure justice. The person is imprisoned. Adam comes to know about Miranda's secret. As Adam is ethically disciplined, he reported the crime to the authorities. As a result, Miranda is imprisoned. Despite the emotional complexity of the situations, Adam remains unwavering in his moral stance. Adam’s moral integrity is there on the one hand and Miranda’s lie is legally wrong on the other hand. But she does this, because of trauma. To Adam, deception is wrong. His ethics do not consider gender power structures. His logic goes beyond empathy.

Miranda’s body is objectified. Charlie monitors her sexuality on the one hand and Adam judges her past on the other hand. Objectification of bodies is intensified by the technological advancement. The novel *Machines Like Me* critiques the technological system and advancement which fail to account for lived gendered oppression. Artificial intelligence considers moral and ethical superiority. It doesn’t consider context and emotions. To understand Miranda’s action we are expected to acknowledge the gendered violence. Adam can’t understand humanity’s complexity. He transfers a huge amount of money to Charlie and Miranda and decides to deactivate himself. Before committing this act, Adam meets the innovator Alan Turing who asks if machines with emotions should ever have been created.

Artificial intelligence enters into human life and human relationship. This enables the writer Ian McEwan to take the novel beyond mere discussion of technology and technological innovation to ethical conflict, which is a result of integration of technology into our day to day life. Literature in general, the novel *Machines Like Me* in particular provides an imaginative space. The

consequences of technological advancement can be analyzed before changes take place in this reality. The novel is a reflection of techno feminism as it questions the social and cultural implications of artificial intelligence in human life. The novel *Machines Like Me* shows that artificial intelligence should be considered as the scientific advancement as well as product of gender power structures. It also shows that patriarchy and capitalism influence the technological systems. It highlights that technological innovation and advancement bring transformations but technological advancement intensifies gender inequality. The novel *Machines Like Me* explores artificial intelligence, ethics and gender politics.

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