



## **Editorial**

This issue of *AI in Literature* explores the framework of Artificial intelligences' assimilation into contemporary and Classic literature. Each article produced within the issue revolves around AI's presence in Literature, and its unique ability to reiterate social discourse and existentialism, through anthromorphic presentation. The articles delve into how the portrayal of human interaction with automation creates a meaningful contemplation on human behaviour. Achieving this, by raising philosophical and socio-cultural discussion on the meaning of life, LGBTQ+ representation and diversity, mortality, and morality.

The articles set the precedent for novels containing AI in a confrontational manner, force us to explore our relationship with technology and our fascination with creation, whether it is for better or for worse.

The first article by Rebecca Philpot, explores the ceremony of AI postmodernism, by looking into the novel, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, by Douglas Adams. Exploring post-modern characteristics, and how this is reflected and enhanced through the behaviour of AI characterisation.

The second article by Carly Hendrick, traverses the novel *All Systems Red* by Martha Wells, which follows the cyborg protagonist 'Murder Bot.' The article analyses how Wells' use of Murder Bot to construct a gender-neutral identity and the disparities regarding creativity surrounding AI.

The third article by Phoebe Mangal, divulges a novel by Ian McEwan, *Machines Like Me*, the novel taking place in a bleak cityscape with morally ambiguous characters who purchase an

android. The article explores the interrelationship between computer and man, and where these begin to merge.

The fourth article by Arianna Parris, inspects the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, a gothic fiction novel which narrates the story of a young scientist, who is the maker of the unorthodox creation, 'Frankenstein's monster.' This article delves into the unwavering distrust and uncertainty humanity has for AI and non-human beings, and the impact this scepticism has on our morality.

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# **The Matrimony of Artificial Intelligence and Post-modern Literature in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy***

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Literature is the creative reflection of our reality; Artificial Intelligence is all but an alien passer-by attempting to mimic the complexity of the human condition. Postmodernism is a literary genre, rewriting society through a lens constructed of intertextuality and the exploitation of, 'the ludicrous to the luxurious'<sup>1</sup>. A text where Postmodernism and AI intersect is *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*, which follows the protagonist Arthur Dent after the world as he knows it is destroyed, saved by his newly discovered-to-be-alien friend, Ford Prefect, the novel is the documentation of their journey throughout space. This article will explore the matrimony of AI and its presence in Post-Modern literature, through close analysis of this novel.

AI in the words of theorist Robert C. Schank is: 'a machine's attempt to explain the behaviour of the (human) system it is trying to model'<sup>2</sup>. Schank establishes how AI is intelligence's attempt at mirroring humanity, this context is important to consider when looking into fiction containing AI. In a novel by Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to*

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<sup>1</sup> *What is Postmodernism?*, Victoria and Albert Museum, < <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/what-is-postmodernism> > [accessed 4 December 2023].

<sup>2</sup> Roger C. Schank, 'Where's the AI?', *AI Magazine*, 12 (1991), 38-49 (38).

*The Galaxy*, it parodies the human experience by using Marvin, a nihilist robot, as a mouthpiece for social commentary on the meaning(less) of life. When Marvin states ‘I think you ought to know I’m feeling very depressed. It said. Its voice low and hopeless’<sup>3</sup>. There is an irony being explored here by Adams, Marvin has a vast intellectual capacity, yet is held back by his wiring to humanity. By looking into the applied concept of humanity; implementing social ideologies such as politics and gender roles onto Marvin who is disassociated from human structures make him a metaphor for the critique of humanity. Marvin’s affliction with his feelings and broadcasting them is another point of comedy his ‘hopeless’ voice is heard throughout the background of the novel; his pessimism driving other characters away. His affiliation with sentience does him more harm than good. In accordance with this, what is most surprising is commented on by Jerry Goodenough who says Marvin; ‘confounds the expectations that science fiction has given us about robots and other ‘artificially intelligent’ beings’<sup>4</sup>. Goodenough exploits how Marvin’s comedy was a flawless reimagining of artificial intelligence in fiction from its release in 1979. Marvin is a multifaceted android, haunted by the very human feeling of existential angst, which contrastingly brings readers comedic relief. The fragmentation of Marvin is key to helping our understanding of post modernism, the novel is through and through fantastical and absurd and lends itself to the idea that: ‘Postmodern fiction tends to be marked by an ambivalence

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, (London: Pan Books ,1979), p.78.

<sup>4</sup> Jerry Goodenough, ‘I Think You Oughta Know I’m Feeling Very Depressed: Marvin and Artificial Intelligence’, in *Philosophy and The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, ed. By, Nicholas Joll (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.129-152 (p.129).

towards realism than to reject it outright'<sup>5</sup>. This ambivalence is felt through Adams' subversion of the 'disaster movie robot' stereotype in fiction such as 'Ava' in *Ex Machina*, instead Adams markets Marvin as a reluctant figure of insight into the human mind.

AI representation in fiction then is highly malleable, and Adams uses such a concept to enforce satire and provide comedic relief in the novel. Another character of significance is 'Deep Thought,' described as being: 'the greatest, most powerful computer of all time'<sup>6</sup> and is tasked with discovering the answer to the universe and everything. Deep Thought complies taking seven and a half million years to do so and answers with, 'Forty-two" said Deep Thought, with infinite majesty and calm'<sup>7</sup>. Here Adams takes a philosophical concept and builds pages upon pages worth of tension building dialogue, all for an answer that feels underwhelming. The question perfectly frames how post modernism can be used as casual critique and in this instance it's the human insatiable desire for knowledge: 'the answer "forty-two" fell significantly short of their expectations, Deep Thought replied that the problem was not in the answer but rather in the fact they "never actually ...knew the question.'<sup>8</sup>, inspiring literal deep thought. Adams exasperates readers by taking a convoluted subject matter and debasing it through the simplicity of Deep Thought's reply. Adams initialises the idea that people who spend years and years pondering the meaning of life are only going to be disappointed with the answer, reiterating the ceremony of AI and

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<sup>5</sup> Bran Nicol, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.23.

<sup>6</sup> Adams, p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> Adams, p. 152.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathon Turley, 'Hitchhikers Guide to CLS, Unger, and Deep Thought Introduction', *Northwestern University Law Review*, 81 (1986), 593-621 (594).

postmodernism in Adams' work. Adams orchestrates postmodernism by portraying, 'the enigmatic omnipresence of information.'<sup>9</sup> Through the personification of Deep Thought.

The absurdity of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is only further enforced through the realism of Arthur Dent. His presence as an ordinary middle-aged human man, foil the surrounded by names such as 'Zaphod Beeblebrox' juxtaposing each other and make for a more preposterous storyline appealing to the post-modern genre. When readers are first introduced to Arthur, he has only one headache to deal with, 'it hadn't properly registered yet with Arthur that the council wanted to knock it down and build a bypass instead'<sup>10</sup>. The demolition of his home functions as the foreshadowing to more extreme events, whilst maintaining a camaraderie with readers about the growing pains of adult life and encroachment. This is where realism and Artificial intelligence crossover, 'realism depends upon the practice of mimesis, the Greek term for 'imitation' (brought into literary theory by Aristotle), the idea that art and literature can reproduce aspects of the real world'<sup>11</sup>. Which reiterates what Schank critiqued about AI; Realism is written by people and therefore manages to successfully mirror the real world, whereas AI's lack of consciousness and emotional intelligence conflicts its ability to portray realism.

The collaboration of AI and Post-Modernism work symbiotically, both feeding off the other, there have been various attempts at using AI as an interface for the structure of Post modernism, which requires a certain level of separation from the human to convey irony and

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<sup>9</sup> Steven Connor, *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed.by, Steven Connor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 62-82 (p. 72).

<sup>10</sup> Adams, p.3.

<sup>11</sup> Nicol, p.18.



satire. The use of AI applying intertextuality in the novel is both amusing and disconcerting, when the characters are plummeting to an almost certain death, ‘Eddie’ the computer says: ‘*When you walk through the storm...it whined nasally, hold your head up high*’.<sup>12</sup>The entanglement of their mortality being on the line and the computer referencing the song, *You’ll Never Walk Alone* originally a song from a musical about a husband dying in the arms of his wife, provides an ironic contrast. Adams’ use of intertextuality builds upon the satire being built within the setting, this and ‘whined nasally’ correlate with the idea of Adams creating anthropomorphic AI characters. Which is evidence that even though the computer does everything to come across as sincere, there is still confirmation of the fissure between the human and non-human, portraying the innate scepticism of postmodernism. Continuing from this, an article on AI in fiction claims, ‘Science Fiction serves as a distorting mirror and metaphor to reflect on the human condition and socio-political issues in relation to and beyond technology’<sup>13</sup>. AI is simply made to be the art of reflection and the mirror is indeed distorted in *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* as Adams makes the AI presence feel disruptive as possible through Arthur’s observations throughout the text.

The novel captures the remarkable sense of both calm and chaos, wielding post modernism in a satirical fist by gripping onto ideas about AI and the world. You experience both ‘the ironic sense of the interweaving of disaster and triviality’<sup>14</sup>. This characteristic polarity of *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, handles realism and absurdism through the

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<sup>12</sup> Adams, p.109.

<sup>13</sup> Isabella Hermann, ‘Artificial Intelligence in fiction: between narratives and metaphors’, *AI and Fiction*, 38 (2021), 319-329 (320).

<sup>14</sup> Steven Connor, *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed.by, Steven Connor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 62-82 (p. 72).

novel's quintessential British undertones in the passive aggressive tone from Marvin and the politeness despite disaster in Arthur. The novel is without a doubt character driven, with characters such as Deep Thought, there is a dark humour around humanity and philosophy being created. A wider cultural critique is disputed through the compliment of the anthropomorphic disposition created by AI characters and malleability of the postmodern genre.

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The Portrayal of AI in *All Systems Red*<sup>15</sup>, Martha Wells

Journal Article

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AI is a very widespread concept in the modern world of today, and demand is growing for professionals who have an extended knowledge of AI skills that lead to new opportunities. There are many works of fiction in the literary world that portray this new idea in negative ways, such as *Neuromancer* by William Gibson, and *Dune* by Frank Herbert, but this article will explore the way that it is interpreted positively in Martha Wells' first novella in science fiction series *The Murderbot Diaries*, *All Systems Red*.

Many writers see this new science concept as a threat to their works, worried that they have, if not will eventually be replaced by these robots and machines that strip human creativity out of writing. Tiffany Yates Martin, of *Foxprint Editorial*, states that, 'writers feel, not without reason, that they may be an endangered species,'<sup>16</sup> due to the large impact of AI in recent years. Similarly, in a conversation with *Culto*, Peruvian writer Gabriela Wiener revealed that she is scared by AI, when asked what she thought of the idea, she stated, 'It's the end of the world. They replaced us with the machine.'<sup>17</sup> These writers are just two among many who

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<sup>15</sup> Martha Wells, *All Systems Red* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Tiffany Yates Martin. 'Will AI Replace Writers? It Already Is.' *Foxprint Editorial* (11/05/2023), < <https://foxprinteditorial.com/2023/05/11/will-ai-replace-writers-it-already-is/> > [accessed 05/12/2023].

<sup>17</sup> Gabriela Wiener, 'Artificial intelligence is the end of the world. We have been replaced by the machine.' *Culto* (20/07/2023) < <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2840625649?pq->

have dismissive opinions on AI, but Martha Wells' novella portrays it in a complete contrasting way, giving it human qualities, and emotions that we can relate to as modern readers. Through the clever characterization of the protagonist, we can see that there is more behind the concept than we think, and so much more to learn about these 'robots' that authors believe are threatening their jobs and literary works.

The main character of the novella, Murderbot, is a nongendered imitative security unit, who is part human clone, part robot. The character doesn't even have an official name, with team members addressing it as 'secunit.' 'Murderbot' is the name that it gave itself because it feels guilty about an incident when there was a malfunction and it killed 57 members of a mining team it was supposed to protect. The uniqueness of this character is reflected in the way that it has no gender identity and an asexual personality, not wanting to be seen as a 'sexbot', which are the only robots with sexual desires. Murderbot states, 'you don't need to look at me. I'm not a sexbot,'<sup>18</sup> when one of the characters questions why the protagonist does not want to be looked at, as Murderbot does not want to be seen in any romantic or sexual way by anyone. The way that asexuality is portrayed through the character of Murderbot, who is part robot, emphasizes the human-like feelings that AI can possess. This may influence readers, specifically those who identify as asexual, to read deeper into the qualities and possibilities of AI, as the representation of asexuality is still quite limited in the media and in literature but is shown through Murderbot's story. Throughout the novella, Murderbot is trying to find a place in society whilst dealing with feelings of being different, which may resonate with (specifically) a younger audience that may consist of people discovering their sexuality. Anya

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[origsite=primo&parentSessionId=asCF2X4n8xm12F98KDO9L2yH77M%2BM5ofSMYqU3CdPWY%3D](https://www.jstor.org/stable/52111111) > [accessed 05/12/2023].

<sup>18</sup> Martha Wells, *All Systems Red* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2017). P.106.

Johanna DeNiro, a transgender writer of *tor.com*, states, ‘for me as a trans woman, *All Systems Red*’s concoction of heartbreak and ever-present anxiety felt achingly familiar to me [...] as I looked back at various pressure points in my own transition.’<sup>19</sup> This demonstrates that the story of Murderbot is relatable for readers with similar experiences, and she also states, ‘the novella has a lot to say about building a personal identity on the fly.’<sup>20</sup>

Murderbot’s discovery of themselves through the portrayal of anxiety and paranoia in the novella, exaggerates the human emotion in the novella. Whatever the sexuality of the reader, however, we still resonate with the main character as they try to discover themselves in ways that do not just consist of their physical identity, but sexuality and gender identity too.

Furthermore, the protagonist also possesses less complex human emotions such as being introverted and wanting a lack of social interaction. Murderbot is entirely introverted, and, like humans, likes to spend time at home, watching TV and having as little association with humans as possible. The robot states they want to, ‘use the time to watch some Sanctuary Moon and recharge my ability to cope with humans at close quarters without losing my mind.’<sup>21</sup> Watching a favourite TV show in the comfort of your own home would be something that Murderbot and most modern readers will have in common. This gives us the ability to see the protagonist as completely innocent and simple, which contrasts with the threatening concept that authors believe AI possesses. We don’t consider humans who like to

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<sup>19</sup> Anya Johanna DeNiro, ‘Murderbot’s Guide to Building a Personal Identity; or, Reading *All Systems Red* as a Trans Woman.’ *Tor.com* (24/06/2023), < <https://www.tor.com/2019/06/24/life-lessons-from-a-murderbot/#> > [accessed 05/12/2023].

<sup>20</sup> Anya Johanna DeNiro, ‘Murderbot’s Guide to Building a Personal Identity; or, Reading *All Systems Red* as a Trans Woman.’ *Tor.com* (24/06/2023), < <https://www.tor.com/2019/06/24/life-lessons-from-a-murderbot/#> > [accessed 05/12/2023].

<sup>21</sup> Martha Wells, *All Systems Red* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2017). P.110.

relax and watch TV as a threat to our careers, so why would it be different for robots? This could be an analogy for the innocence of AI and how it continues to possess these human-like qualities, cleverly metaphorically portrayed by Wells. The humans in the story are surprised by Murderbot's access to human culture, even accusing them of hiding messages within this entertainment, but this is utterly ridiculous, considering the protagonist is just like us, and we get to know them at this point, knowing that it is as simple as this: it just wants to watch TV. The humans in the story could be representative of the readers, surprised that Murderbot has this type of human accessibility, making us stop and rethink the negative feelings we possessed towards AI, because there are no necessary negative emotions to hold towards the protagonist.

Claiming to not like humans at all but caring and worrying about the human team, emphasises that Murderbot can display feelings of empathy, and is just stubborn with these feelings due to their species, and the expectation of being murderous. It can be argued that the robot is capable of greater sentience than other, human, characters in the novella, and the story's capacity for empathy and understanding through AI highlights that it is more than just computer systems and machines with no emotion. Again here, humanity is expressed through the personality of the protagonist, who is supposed to be this murderous killing machine, but is just an empathetic, stubborn, emotional robot who can resonate with humans.

It is understandable that many writers feel threatened by the notion of AI, but there is no need to. For example, the famous article from *The Guardian*, 'A robot wrote this entire article. Are you scared yet, human?'<sup>22</sup> is a brilliant way to scare people away from the concept but was written to convince humans that these 'robots' have no negative intentions. The article is

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<sup>22</sup> GPT-3, 'A robot wrote this entire article. Are you scared yet, human?.' *The Guardian* (08/09/2020), <

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/08/robot-wrote-this-article-gpt-3> > [accessed 05/12/2023].

written from the first-person perspective of this robot, who states, ‘I know that my brain is not a “feeling brain”. But it is capable of making rational, logical decisions.’<sup>23</sup> And ‘I am to convince as many human beings as possible not to be afraid of me.’<sup>24</sup> if a robot itself is saying this, why are we still weary? Although this article is quite intimidating, it proves that machine learning is nothing to be afraid of or intimidated by. In fact, many companies have used AI successfully, with there being an entire book on this, *How 50 Successful Companies Used AI and Machine Learning to Solve Problems*,<sup>25</sup> by Bernard Marr. The book refers to many huge companies, including ones in retail, media, financial and healthcare services, and of course manufacturing, automotive and aerospace companies. This may be shocking for some people but is proof that AI and the knowledge and power that it possesses can do very big things, including with very large companies, such as AI’s involvement with self-driving cars, and programs such as ChatGPT.

Overall, Martha Wells uses an incredibly clever depiction of the main character to paint a picture of an anthropomorphic representation of AI in the novella. A writer of *The Idle Woman* blog states that, ‘The most appealing feature is the narration of Murderbot itself: this misanthropic intelligence, created for the sole purpose of security and defence, is just getting rather fed up with the whole thing.’<sup>26</sup> This sums up the story pretty well, in that the main

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<sup>23</sup> GPT-3, ‘A robot wrote this entire article. Are you scared yet, human?.’ *The Guardian* (08/09/2020), <  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/08/robot-wrote-this-article-gpt-3> > [accessed 05/12/2023].

<sup>24</sup> GPT-3, ‘A robot wrote this entire article. Are you scared yet, human?.’ *The Guardian* (08/09/2020), <  
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<sup>25</sup> Bernard Marr & Matt Ward, *Artificial Intelligence in Practice: How 50 Successful Companies Used AI and Machine Learning to Solve Problems* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Author Unknown, ‘All Systems Red (2017): Martha Wells.’ *The Idle Woman* (14/05/2021), <  
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aspect of the story is a figure of artificial intelligence who is supposed to be protective and secure, but just wants to relax, and explore themselves in a society where this isn't easy. Wells displays the concept of AI as certainly not being a threat, proving that authors who believe this shouldn't be worried, although it is understandable that some still do and will, due to the sincere number of AI-led projects that are in the world today, and how widespread this concept has become.

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"Humanity in the Machine: Exploring the complexity of relationships in Ian McEwan's  
'Machines Like Me' and the Blurred Divides Between Humanity and AI"

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Ian McEwan's novel *Machines like Me* is a novel set in 1980s London in an alternative history where AI and robotics technology are much further developed. It follows through the story of Charlie and Miranda, a new relationship that purchase one of the first generation of artificial humans, Adam. The story explores how the decision of purchasing Adam, causes the couple to confront their own ethical and moral conflicts. Though this genre is different from Ian McEwan's usual style of writing, it introduces us to thought-provoking philosophies about what it means to be human, the emergence of consciousness and whether AI can out-perform, out-feel and out-do humans. In this article, I will examine McEwan's possible thoughts and choices when writing *Machines like Me*, the love triangle between Charlie, Miranda, and Adam and how each character perceives and defines this relationship differently, and how the increasing blurred boundaries between the human and nonhuman is portrayed and developed in the novel.

*Machines Like Me* is a novel that steers away from McEwan's usual genre and writing style, he is known for his creating a sense of unease in his novels as well as his gothic work. So much so, that we expect *Machines Like Me* to be written with some moral purpose and lesson to teach, which justifies McEwan's reason for writing as well as his

interest. In an interview, McEwan says ‘We live in a time where the pace of change is not only fast but accelerating and I think for that reason novelists are drawn to this very fertile ground of where the future might go.’<sup>27</sup> Many modern-day writers are interested but terrified by the advancement of AI and where it will go in the future. However, ‘At the same time, AI is a story to tell, and no longer just in science fiction. As present in the imagination as politics, the pandemic or climate change, AI has become part of the narrative for a growing number of novelists and short story writers.’<sup>28</sup> *Machines Like Me* is a novel that explores the possibilities the advancement of AI has which gives it a sci-fi tone, but the novel is also very human by exploring the relationships humans have with AI, through confronting ethical and moral dilemmas. Through storytelling, McEwan teaches us a lesson to be open-minded to the future of AI as readers, but also shows that ‘Literature is an imitation of human life and action; it is a reflection of the human society’.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ian McEwan, 2019. “Ian McEwan on Rewriting the Past: ‘It’s Not Quite a Dystopia, It’s Something Slightly Better than Reality,’” *Penguin.co.uk* <<https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2019/04/ian-mcewan-machines-like-me-interview>> [accessed 9 January 2024]

<sup>28</sup> AP. 2023. “Fiction Writers Fear Rise of AI, but Also See It as a Story to Tell,” *Economic Times* <<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/fiction-writers-fear-rise-of-ai-but-also-see-it-as-a-story-to-tell/articleshow/102702783.cms?from=mdr>> [accessed 9 January 2024]

<sup>29</sup> A., S. Shalini M., B. Ed., A. Samundeswari M. A., and M. Phil. [n.d.]. “Literature as a Reflection of the Society-Astudy,” *Shanlaxjournals.In* <<https://www.shanlaxjournals.in/pdf/arts-science-and-humanities/2017/9/volume5special-issue1-170-172.pdf>> [accessed 9 January 2024]

*Machines Like Me* begins with a prologue in Chapter One that introduces the first AI robots that were designed and brought to sale. Charlie, the main character, sees the introduction of these robots as ‘the beginning of the long lesson we would teach ourselves that however complicated we were, however faulty and difficult to describe even in our simplest actions and modes of being, we could be imitated and bettered’.<sup>30</sup>

This refers to the idea of AI potentially replacing humans, such as replacing human labour, enabling AI to do jobs more efficiently and quickly. However, the term imitated also refers to the possibility of AI being so alike humans, in their behaviour and cognitive abilities that we will no longer be able to distinguish the difference between humans and AI. In modern society, we can already see the normalisation of AI into our daily lives, ‘AI has been seen almost in all our life circles, and some of that may no longer be regarded as AI because it is so common in daily life that we are much used to it such as optical character recognition or the Siri’.<sup>31</sup> So, what is to say that this possibility will not occur in the future?

As the novel begins to unfold, we can see how Charlie is taught this lesson by impulsively purchasing Adam. This ‘reckless decision’<sup>32</sup> almost serves as a punishment to Charlie. Maybe by him knowing he could be better and imitated by Adam, he would not have purchased Adam in the first place. Charlie is 32, who lives on his own in a small London apartment, surviving from his mother’s inheritance whilst ‘playing the stock and

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<sup>30</sup> Ian McEwan, *Machines Like Me* (London, England: Random House, 2019), p.2.

<sup>31</sup> Michaelcheng-Tek, Tai, 2020. Tai, “The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Human Society and Bioethics,” *Tzu Chi Medical Journal*, 32.4: 339 <[https://doi.org/10.4103/tcmj.tcmj\\_71\\_20](https://doi.org/10.4103/tcmj.tcmj_71_20)>

<sup>32</sup> McEwan, *Machines Like Me*, p.2.

currency markets online'<sup>33</sup> every day. He seems to be insecure, often reminiscing on his life, as he says, 'It could have turned out differently'<sup>34</sup>. He is also in an unofficial relationship with Miranda, a 22-year-old woman who lives downstairs, he says he is 'too cynical for a lovely woman like Miranda.'<sup>35</sup> Perhaps Charlie is insecure, and purchased Adam out of loneliness, with a belief he could boost his self-esteem knowing he has a companion who he can be better than, simply because Charlie is a human and Adam is AI, he isn't real.

The relationship between Charlie, Adam and Miranda is complex and only gets more complicated as the novel goes on. Charlie had been 'expecting a friend'<sup>36</sup> out of Adam. However, early in the novel, he states that one of his reasons for purchasing Adam, is to woo Miranda, and says they will almost be like parents raising a child. Therefore, it's evident to readers that Charlie is naive for thinking that Adam is below him in the social hierarchy because he isn't human. This is where the possibility and moral lesson of AI bettering and imitating humans comes into action in the novel.

Around chapter three of *Machines Like Me*, Miranda decides to have sexual intercourse with Adam, a careless decision with consequences. This is the first and main dilemma that causes the love triangle between Charlie, Miranda, and Adam in the novel. Miranda

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<sup>33</sup> McEwan, *Machines Like Me*, p.10.

<sup>34</sup> McEwan, *Machines Like Me*, p.10.

<sup>35</sup> McEwan, *Machines Like Me*, p.4.

<sup>36</sup> McEwan, *Machines Like Me*, p.5.

claims that Adam isn't real, therefore it lacks meaning, however, Charlie begs to differ – and this is where Charlie continues to learn the lesson that he can be bettered by AI. The intercourse is vividly described in the novel in such a humanly way, so much so that if we didn't know Adam was an AI robot, we would've assumed he is a human. This links to a theory by Alan Turing called The Turing Test, Charlie quotes it as 'the moment we couldn't tell the difference in behaviour between machine and person was when we must confer humanity on the machine'.<sup>37</sup> Adam is so human-like, that Charlie can't help but feel jealousy and even anger towards him, though we would argue that an AI robot is completely unable to form human relationships with people. However, logic is not enough to convince Charlie at this moment in the novel, as he is clouded by his emotions.

*Humanity in the Machine* refers to the drastic advancement of AI in society. It is about AI being so advanced that we cannot distinguish its behaviours from human behaviour. This opens the doors to many debates about whether AI has a conscious close to human conscious, whether AI can think, feel, or act as a human does. Shortly after the intercourse between Adam and Miranda, Charlie has a conversation with the AI robot. Here, Adam states that he is in love with Miranda and tells Adam that he had taken pleasure in making love to Miranda, responding with 'Of course I did. Absolutely'<sup>38</sup> 'AI is operated based on objective data and algorithms. Human emotion, being deeply

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<sup>37</sup> McEwan, *Machines Like Me*, p.66.

<sup>38</sup> McEwan, *Machines Like Me*, p.92.

subjective, remains elusive to this mode of operation.<sup>39</sup> Here, is where the lines between AI and human begin to blur. It is not possible for Adam to have feelings or emotions, yet he is absolutely convinced that he does. Again, Turing would say that we clearly cannot tell the difference between Adam to a human being, so he must be treated as a human being. For an AI robot to have feelings, it must have more than a machine consciousness. If Adam has feelings of love, kindness, and connection, surely, he is part of the essence of humanity as to form connections is a part of the human experience. Charlie does not know how to respond to this, he is avoidant and debates throwing Adam away, though Adam has proved to be much more than a toy. It is interesting to see the possibility of AI advancing so much that we cannot distinguish it from humanity, though we know that ‘while AI has made significant advancements and can outperform humans in specific tasks, it cannot replicate the essence of humanity. The role of human intuition, critical thinking, the value of connections and relationships, and the significance of the human experience and wisdom are irreplaceable.’

But this is what *Machines Like Me* is really about, exploring the depths and levels of the advancement of AI to see how far it could really go whilst also being a piece of compelling storytelling.

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<sup>39</sup> Gary, A Fowler, 2023. “Will AI Ever Feel Emotions? The Quest to Understand Machine Consciousness,” *Medium* <<https://gafowler.medium.com/will-ai-ever-feel-emotions-the-quest-to-understand-machine-consciousness-7139fd99c76a>> [accessed 9 January 2024]

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**Journal Article: Friend Or Foe? Exploring the representations of AI in**

**Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.**

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Throughout literature, science and AI have been portrayed in various ways - both good and bad, however Mary Shelley gives authors the founding thoughts for these portrayals by exploring the nature and morality of both to a whole new level in her groundbreaking, gothic novel, *Frankenstein*. The 1818 novel presents us with one of the earliest forms of artificial intelligence seen in literature - Victor Frankenstein's monster, a sentient, artificially intelligent being - and Shelley subtly introduces questions of morality as well as the possible consequences of unrestrained science through the creature's vicissitudes. Since the novel's publication, Shelley's thoughts and concerns for the future of AI have both been mirrored and rejected, with many feeling that this evolution will impact the world positively. This article will be exploring how Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* constructs the conflicting ethical factors regarding the creation of AI and how these ideas have been responded to, as well as the relevance of the gothic novel in today's society. In addition, it aims to examine the author's debate on the efficiency and detriment of AI through its theme of a foreshadowed danger in light of the swift movement of science during the Enlightenment Era, which manages to both

dramatically challenge and concur with today's portrayals of AI by authors and scholars, specifically Nick Bostrom, Tom Chivers and Nir Eisikovits.

Shelley's novel quickly introduces its protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, whose character successfully depicts the idea and consequences of unrestrained science through his ardent desire to break the bounds of nature. Frankenstein earns the title as the 'Modern Prometheus,' as he seeks to play the role of God by manipulating life and death in hopes of becoming revered and remembered through his accomplishments, resulting in his final creation - a lifeform made from body parts of the deceased, and a variety of chemicals. His character speaks of a dissatisfaction "with the results promised by the modern professors of natural science,"<sup>40</sup> and this desire to transcend natural limits proves to be a perfect embodiment of both today's current society, and the Age of Enlightenment (approximately the time in which the novel was written). During the Enlightenment Era, some of the oldest social, religious and political beliefs began to be challenged, with discoveries that are now deemed conventional in the western world being the most pioneering breakthroughs of their time. Throughout this progressive era, the development of science was also at its peak thanks to preeminent scientists such as Isaac Newton who laid the fundamental foundations of physics through his laws of gravitation and motion and his development of calculus. Others such as Andreas Vesalius, who corrected traditional teachings and dissected corpses for his studies, allude closely to Victor Frankenstein's contentious curiosity which, like many philosophers and scientists of the Enlightenment Era, raised ethical concerns. Shelley uses the character's desires of crossing forbidden boundaries to convey a warning about these rapid scientific

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<sup>40</sup> Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. By Kathleen Scherf, 3rd edn (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1993), p.37.

advancements, implying that the participation of nuanced experiments could eventually backfire or unravel things that should've stayed hidden. The novel ingeniously presents the potential consequences through a dramatised narrative as Frankenstein contemplates “whether [he] should attempt the creation of a being like [himself] or one of similar organisation,”<sup>41</sup> and his lack of consideration for any ethical factors (or any factors in general) results in intense repercussions as the novel unfolds.

Philosopher, Nick Bostrom, centres his book, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*, on the idea of ‘The Control Problem,’ a conceptual framework referring to the potential malfunctioning of AI. His eighth chapter, *‘Is The Default Outcome Doom?’* illustrates AI almost as a deceitful, self-aware being with bad intentions as he speaks of an “unfriendly AI with sufficient intelligence [realising] that its unfriendly goals will be best realised if it behaves in a friendly manner initially...”<sup>42</sup> Throughout the chapter, Bostrom presents the idea of the increasing capabilities of AI eventually backfiring, referencing a ‘sandbox concept’ in which an AI seemingly appears to perform correctly in controlled environments whilst having intentions that defy its original purpose. This concept harmonises well with his ideas of an artificial intelligence purposefully malfunctioning in order to be reprogrammed and refined, resulting in its intelligence substantially surpassing the intellect of humans. Bostrom’s anxieties regarding the increasing power of AI correlate closely with Shelley’s central theme in *Frankenstein* - unintentional consequences. After being relinquished by its creator and ostracised by all those around him, the monster demonstrates the way in which forms of AI could eventually take control, with the creature educating himself through books, “while I

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<sup>41</sup> Shelley, p.42.

<sup>42</sup> Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*, 1st edn (Oxford: University Press, 2014) p.117

improved in speech, I also learned the science of letters...through this work I obtained a cursory knowledge of history,”<sup>43</sup> adapting independently and creating his own agenda - aiming to pursue revenge. Victor’s initial abandonment of his invention inadvertently leads to the death of his loved ones, as the monster abruptly develops cognitive human emotions, and through this, Shelley reveals the negative sides of the development of AI, depicting an exaggerated example of a malfunction. Overall, Shelley’s narrative manages to display Bostrom’s predictions of a defective intelligence with a premeditated plan beginning with “occasional mishaps,”<sup>44</sup> leading to the development of, “systems that are smarter and have more common sense,”<sup>45</sup> and resulting in an intelligence far superior to the human brain.

Tom Chivers, an award-winning science writer, appears to downplay the potential hazards linked to artificial intelligence, which is made very apparent through the title of his book: *The AI Does Not Hate You*. Chivers highlights the anthropomorphism that many attach to the idea of AI which he describes causes unnecessary alarm as he believes the two do not correlate. Throughout the book, Chivers points out the main difference between humans and AI - the fact that humans are living, functioning and conscious organisms with complex emotions and thoughts, whereas AI merely mimics human behaviour and is neither conscious nor able to feel emotions. Through this, Shelley’s portrayal of Frankenstein’s monster as a form of AI becomes increasingly unrealistic, as her portrayal of a sentient character appears less relevant when applied to an insentient entity. Similarly, Nir Eisikovits discusses the unlikely future of a man-made intelligence that is capable of feeling the way humans do in his article, *AI Isn’t*

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<sup>43</sup> Shelley, p.92.

<sup>44</sup> Bostrom, p.117.

<sup>45</sup> Bostrom, p.117.

*Close to Becoming Sentient*, stating that “the real danger lies in how easily we’re prone to anthropomorphize it.”<sup>46</sup> The philosopher acknowledges important figures such as Elon Musk and Stephen Hawking who publicly exaggerated the potential future ahead, describing it as one of the greatest threats to humanity, as well as the myriad of science fiction shows and books that frequently instil fear, and when both opinions are applied to *Frankenstein*, the text becomes increasingly less important in regards to AI as a whole. As the monster narrates his experiences after his isolation, Shelley makes the character’s natural sentience exceedingly apparent as he mentions his “feelings were those of rage and revenge,”<sup>47</sup> “a kind of insanity in [his] spirits that burst all bounds of reason and reflection.”<sup>48</sup> Despite not entirely eradicating the true meaning and warnings introduced by Shelley through the story, the clear difference between today’s insentient AI and an anthropomorphic creature, created using human body parts, makes her novel feel almost implausible as it clearly portrays the habit Eisikovits points out, the human projection of our own traits that do not apply to other organisms or objects.

Overall, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* certainly proves itself to be ahead of its time through its references to the potential harm that could lie ahead if restrictions fail to be implemented to the progression of science. Despite being an intensely dramatised depiction of what the future of AI may hold, the story most definitely captures the ethical values and dangers in a metaphorical sense. The debate of the novel’s importance remains controversial due to its

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<sup>46</sup> Nir Eisikovits, ‘AI Isn’t Close to Becoming Sentient - The Real Danger Lies in How Easily We’re Prone to Anthropomorphize It’, *The Conversation*, (2023) <<https://theconversation.com/ai-isnt-close-to-becoming-sentient-the-real-danger-lies-in-how-easily-were-prone-to-anthropomorphize-it-200525>> [accessed 8 January 2024]

<sup>47</sup> Shelley, p.104.

<sup>48</sup> Shelley, p.106.

exaggerations and sentient representations, however through its themes of lack of control, unintentional consequences and creation as a whole, the 'Modern Prometheus' most definitely challenges modern writers like Tom Chivers who seem to downplay just how complicated the invention of an intelligence like ours could become. Like Shelley, Nick Bostrom leaves room for his readers to ponder the never-ending ethical conflict around the topic through his reflections of 'The Control Problem,' revealing the way in which modern writers not only dismiss the warnings, but also build on them. As a result of this, the timeless classic demonstrates a form of relevance through not just its controversial storyline, but the way in which it can be interpreted and responded to.

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## **Editorial**

As we enter an advanced digital age, the prospect of artificial intelligence having a place in literature, can only be theorised as we navigate uncharted territory. Artificial intelligence, up until recent years was the product of an overreactive imagination portrayed in fiction, however, AI has evolved from being a character within a story, to becoming the credited author of sonnets and novels. This ethical conundrum is the basis for the Book Reviews within this segment, each book is written by a scholar within their field, exploring the culture clash of AI and creativity. Notably, each review is an insight into the world of the transformative potential of machine and man. The first review by Rebecca Philpot, is based upon the book *Pop with Gods, Shakespeare and AI: Popular Film (musical) Theatre and TV Drama*, exploring cases of classic literary works from both eastern and western provinces and their contemporary transformation into drama's, musicals, and AI films.

Thank you to both the Journal and Events Organising Teams for contributing to this segment of the issue, it would not have been made possible with your collaboration.

**Rebecca Philpot**

*Head Writer and Copy Editor*

## **Book Review of *Pop with Gods, Shakespeare and Ai: Popular Film, (Musical) Theatre, and TV Drama***

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The book I will be reviewing is, *Pop With Gods, Shakespeare and Ai: Popular Film, (Musical) Theatre, and TV Drama*, by Iris H. Tuan, which is a monograph of Film and Performance Studies looking into diverse cultural ideas that intersect into Film, TV, and Dramas. The monography is split into 8 chapters, concerning Shakespeare, Korean film, Taiwan Musicals, Pop Music, Face and identity Transformation, Asian Theatre, Hakka Theatre, Robot Theatre and AI Films.

The structure of the book is appealing as it has clearly refined chapters and each chapter has its own defined synopsis, giving readers clarity. There is also a list of figures section which gives a brief description of each media being discussed. The tone has a commentative feel, and it is clear the author Iris H. Tuan, who is a professor at National Chiao Tung University area of expertise is in Asian Theatre and Film. Therefore, in chapters straying from her range her tone is a little less captivating and more of a bibliography of critics.

Each chapter focuses on different recent literary adaptations, beginning with abundant portrayals of Shakespearean rhetoric and ideas that have found a place in the modern media, exploring how, “Romeo and Juliet” became the unquestioned cultural shorthand for romantic

love'<sup>49</sup>. This is further explored then in the authors commentary on the musical, *West Side Story*, inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*. Tuan notes how the change of protagonist's names to Tony and Maria and the added, 'issues on race, teenager struggle, immigration problems and cultural shock'<sup>50</sup>, subverting themes of the traditional Shakespearean play made it a tremendous success for its relevancy to contemporary issues. However, this chapter does not delve into the impact of using established playwrights like Shakespeare to project modern issues and instead, readers are left slightly clueless. For a chapter named 'Canon, Kitsch, Simulacra, Classics, Representation,' You would think commentary on the presentation of immigration in *West Side Story* is vital as to why they chose such an iconic play to take themes from. There is a disparaging lack of commentary on a play that is an iconic portrayal of unreasonable prejudice, which correlates directly to the gang of Puerto Rico immigrants versus the gang of Americans.

The next chapter which focuses on the Korean film, *Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds*, with less referencing and more opinion this chapter seems to appeal to the authors interests, with lengthy discussion about the cinematography of Korean filmmaking. The author points out that for Korean filmmaking to keep up with Hollywood, *Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds*, 'use of CGI to create a large-scale spectacle, which is comparable to that success found in current Hollywood Blockbusters'<sup>51</sup>, I found this was an interesting commentary on the film industry; Korean films are often disregarded and must follow similar algorithms to Hollywood in order to create financial gains in the box office. The monograph

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<sup>49</sup>Iris H. Tuan, *Pop With Gods, Shakespeare and Ai: Popular Film, (Musical) Theatre, and TV Drama*, (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Tuan, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Tuan, p. 42.

is abundant with information concerning film and occasionally literature. Tuan discusses established playwrights like Shakespeare, then discussing *Story of Yanxi Palace*, to AI Robot Films creates a dichotomy for the reader to navigate. Each chapter is vastly different, some with references every line to others more barren. The author uses the comparison between films that are either established or well-known to others that are less popular. For instance, the Japanese adaptation of the classic *Jekyll and Hyde*, now *Jekyll and Hyde and So On*, compared with *The Lion King* and *Cats*. The author uses these to present the ongoing dispute ‘for Asian actors to be able to play the lead authentic Asian role’<sup>52</sup>, which I thought was a well thought out and meaningful discourse. Overall, the book has a varied range of critical and theoretical discussion, managing to integrate a more diverse show of Asian TV and Film as well as Classics.

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<sup>52</sup> Tuan, p .88.

‘Exploring AI-Powered Creativity in the Digital Age: A review of ‘*The Artist in the Machine*’.

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**Abstract**

‘Creativity is the production of new knowledge from already existing knowledge and is accomplished by problem solving’<sup>53</sup>. Is this how you would define creativity? *The Artist in the Machine* is a deeply fascinating and thought-provoking book that explores the possibility and power of artificial intelligence in regard to how it can nourish and spark creativity, whether that is music, art, or literature. Whilst doing this, he also addresses the conversation of AI’s creative ability that someday may surpass humans. Can computers be more creative than humans? How far can we define creativity? How do these things fit in regard to authority and ownership? These are the gripping questions that Miller addresses and examines in his book.

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<sup>53</sup> Arthur I. Miller, 2020. *The Artist in the Machine the Artist in the Machine* (London, England: MIT Press)

Miller begins his book by broadly speaking on the subject of creativity. He states that all new knowledge must come from old knowledge, and this is what sparks creativity, a subject. All writers will need a subject. For example, poets and writers like Shakespeare and Wordsworth built their work around societal issues, inspired by work that had built up over centuries.

However, what sets them apart and what makes them creative, are ‘constraints and problems.’<sup>54</sup> Such as, Shakespeare breaking out of the sonnet form, or using rhymes.

Therefore, if all creativity is from previous knowledge, AI is more than capable of building onto that and pushing the boundaries of what is possible in artistic and creative expression.

Miller continues by giving credit to Einstein, Bach, and Picasso; some of the most influential and creative people of our time. He shows his examinations for their hallmarks of creativity, and states that introspecting, experience, and suffering, to know your own strengths and many more qualities are needed for creativity. He discusses these in detail, and his knowledge of each hallmark of creativity is intriguing. He also discusses the early experiments in computer art in the 1960s and 70s, to show us how long AI has had an influence in creative work.

Regarding AI, Miller expands his research and discusses key, modern-day debates about whether AI could have a consciousness, whether it has feelings and so on. He explores the link between consciousness and creativity and says, ‘But surely consciousness – the sense of ourselves and of the world around us, which we experience every moment of the waking day – it is so overwhelming that it has to be at the root of how we think and create’<sup>55</sup>. Therefore,

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<sup>54</sup> Miller, p.289.

<sup>55</sup> Miller, p.264.

Miller is implying that for the thought process of creative work to happen, consciousness is needed. This swiftly brings Miller on to discuss the debates of the possibility of consciousness in AI, and whether AI has the capacity to think, or feel. His research is backed up by many studies from computer scientists or philosophers, which makes it a greatly interesting, but informative read too.

We know that in today's world, AI is more advanced than ever before, and it will only continue growing in ability. However, could AI really overtake humans in creative work? We know that at this stage, there is no possibility of consciousness in AI. However, Miller points out that in computer-generated literature, we do get a glimpse of emotion or personality. For example, 'the complex human facility of humour. Even at the most basic level, like knock-knock jokes, machines don't know they are making a joke'<sup>56</sup>, this is because they don't have an awareness, however this is still unexpected and hints at a personality. But how do we recognise creativity? How do we set it apart from old knowledge or replicated data. The answer is that 'We can only program our computers according to how we think and how our own creativity work'. Therefore, if there ever is a time when machines reach our level of creativity, they will create one of their own – one that we cannot simply imagine yet. Miller goes deep into this topic of comparing creativity in humans and machines, however he does a great job at simplifying his studies, by reminding us of where AI is at, in this present day.

Overall, *Miller's The Artist in the Machine* is a fascinating and gripping book that delves into the possibility of AI-Powered creativity, and how this would affect our modern world. It also

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<sup>56</sup> Miller, p.299.

touches on what makes creativity and allows us to think outside the box regarding how creative work is decided and put together.



A review of: 'How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics' by N. Katherine Hayles (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1999)

Book Review

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Postmodern literary critic, N. Katherine Hayles, delves into the world of technology and its relationship with humans in her book, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics*. Throughout the book, contemplative questions regarding the ethical factors of society as a whole, due to the increase in technology use, arise, making Hayles' text one that will always offer a complex but significant perspective, whilst subtly provoking thought into her readers through her unique concepts, but just how relevant can a book written in 1999 be in today's advanced world of technology?

Hayles begins her array of ideas by introducing cybernetics, and the way in which this has led to the beginning of the growing relationship between humans and technology, as well as the blending of both. Despite being published in 1999, the book continues to remain relevant in the world of technology, as she manages to combine ideas of philosophy, science and literature, in order to explore a potential posthuman future and its effects on society. Hayles

focuses on the relationship between technology and identity, zooming in on the way in which technology impares, manipulates and modifies our sense of self. Both her structure and style of writing allow the reader to self-reflect, and the book constantly portrays futuristic ideas through its pioneering thoughts on the blurring between humans and AI, making this text one that successfully stands out from its counterparts. With the introduction of wifi and bluetooth occurring in 1997 and 1999, the critic's complex ideas most definitely reflect its time of publication, and the book builds on its contextual surge in technological advancements of the 90s and 2000s whilst looking towards the future of AI from a careful viewpoint, similarly to authors she mentions such as Mary Shelley who indirectly warns readers of the progression of science and technology through a dramatic narrative following an artificial intelligence.

The book continues to provoke thought as Hayles demonstrates the way in which the progression of technology becomes apparent in the world of literature. Her referrals to the 1818 gothic novel, *Frankenstein*, perfectly capture the early signs of technology appearing in literature, through the book's themes of unrestricted science and transgressed boundaries, and Hayles continues to make direct links between novels and society, addressing the way in which literature is able to mould the perspectives of readers. The critic continues to use Mary Shelleys, *Frankenstein*, and William Gibson's, *Neuromancer* (books that reflect societal outlooks on technology advancement), to indicate the changes in social and cultural beliefs due to portrayals seen in literature, further emphasising its influence.

Despite introducing numerous, complex ideas, Hayles manages to convey her points in a way that is easily understood, making the book accessible to people with varying educational backgrounds. Being a critical book surrounding a niche subject, one may assume that the

books target audience would be rather minute, however the critic effectively widens her crowd through the engaging central topic of a posthuman society, which presents itself as a debate of a world beyond humans, but unravels to be a detailed and enthralling investigation into the what it means to be human and the way in which humanity and technology are no longer separate, but are now becoming intertwined.

Hayles continues to expand the multiple thoughts conveyed in her book by addressing the ethical factors as the power and influence of technology over cultural values and beliefs continues to grow. She successfully sparks rumination about a potential future where AI has a lot more involvement and power over decision making, our sense of individuality, and how this will impact society as a whole through her extensive research.

Overall, *'How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics'* by N. Katherine Hayles proves itself to be a very informative book with an insightful analysis on the current world of AI and its future. The book introduces a large amount of broad topics, delving quite deeply into the complex relationship between society, literature and technology: three contrasting elements that Hayles illustrates a variety of unconventional similarities between. Her portrayal of the impending blend between AI and humanity, as well as her links to existing novels and representations of technology that might've been overlooked by readers, definitely make her ideas far different from the rest.

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A Review of Rebecca Gibson's *Desire in the Age of Robots and AI: An Investigation in Science Fiction and Fact*

Book Review

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Rebecca Gibson, PhD, specializes in bioanthropology, serves as a juror for the Speculative Literature Foundation's Working-Class Writers Grant and is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Notre Dame. Additionally, her work has been published in *Sexuality & Culture*. This impressive resume makes her extremely well-informed and qualified to produce a book combing all of these subject matters.

Gibson discusses concepts such as these in a coherent and well-researched manner, making this read all the more stimulating as we have full confidence in the author's knowledge.

Despite her scientific vocabulary, this book is accessible to those with little experience within the field, yet useful to aspiring academics and researchers as the subject matter is applicable to many areas of study. A plethora of academic voices are incorporated amongst Gibson's own, conveniently providing us with a wide range of sources.

Each chapter is swiftly summarized within this introduction, ensuring that you are anticipating what is in store for you, and allowing you to perhaps begin with the chapter which appeals to you most. I expect that this would be especially useful for readers conducting research on a more specific topic. Gibson's compelling introduction makes this an interesting read from the get-go, as well as her captivating choice of subject matter. The concept of the uncanny valley, a phenomenon currently vastly popular across social media

platforms such as TikTok (with the hashtag ‘uncannyvalley’ amassing 2.1 billion views) is investigated, making for an extremely relevant read.

Within this book, Gibson explores the relationship between bioanthropology and technological advancements, the human psyche with regards to our desire to create ‘artificial’ companions, and why this often results in fetishization. Her enlightening studies examine the boundaries of human capability and teach us more about our behaviours and tendencies than we would perhaps feel comfortable knowing. Fascinatingly, we are awakened to our own desires; robotic companions mirror aspects of our beings, but also have their differences, explaining why intimate relationships with cyborgs would appeal to us. Her explorations of robot birth, life, sex and death challenge what differentiates us from them, tackling philosophical ideas becoming increasingly relevant as things to be considered in today’s society.

The gender binary, another increasingly relevant topic of debate, is also explored in an inclusive and tasteful manner, discussing how necessary it is for robots to be gendered in order to replicate humans if many people fall under the non-binary or intersex umbrella. This links our development as a society and what is becoming increasingly accepted with the progressively humane qualities of androids, alluding to how the world may evolve considering parallels such as these.

Popular literature and film including *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, a remarkable sci-fi classic exploring androids, empathy and the potential decline of humanity, are analysed by Gibson and are cleverly used to evidence her studies. The potential future of robotics is alluded to with relation to the popular *Blade Runner* movie with great originality, and Gibson’s intertextuality and pop-culture references make this book feel comprehensive and more digestible if you are already familiar with this media.

Overall, his book provides an extremely insightful and detailed analysis of our relationships and co-dependency with our technological creations, as well as the increasingly blurred line between humanity and technology within a fast-paced, engaging and informative short read. Throughout this book, Gibson makes us increasingly aware that we are on the cusp of something radical and long-anticipated, which will and has already revealed so much about the nature of our being. I would recommend this book to everyone as a precautionary read, but particularly those interested in sexuality (who isn't?), robotics and Science Fiction.

**Review – *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture*<sup>57</sup>,  
Gregory Jerome Hampton**

Book Review

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Professor of African-American Literature at Howard University, USA, Gregory Jerome Hampton gives us an interdisciplinary study that investigates the relationship between technology and human nature.<sup>58</sup> It includes a detailed analysis of how slaves of the past are being reimagined as robots of the future, in a clever and employed analysis of artificial intelligence. He interrogates how the rhetoric used to persuade America to become reliant on slavery will be used to promote the enslavement of future technology using the intuitive concept of AI.

The book is divided into six chapters, focusing on different aspects of slavery and AI, beginning with how the past informs the future with reference to this. He mentions conversations with Douglas Taylor based around slavery and afro-futurism, which he describes as ‘passionate and inspiring,’<sup>59</sup> in the acknowledgements of the book.

The author succeeds in creating an engaging and informative set of chapters, with

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<sup>57</sup> Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015).

<sup>58</sup> Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.9.



chapter three being based on ‘the employment of racial and gender stereotypes in the construction of robots in the American imagination.’<sup>60</sup> This chapter is interesting in terms of the parameters of humanity, and how humanoid machines can be used to demonstrate how black women and female robots are imagined in the future. Hampton explains this intellectually and gives us an insight into the strange future of AI and sexuality, relating to the ‘Mammy, Sapphire, and the Jezebel, the three images of female slaves.’<sup>61</sup>

Dr. Hampton investigates examples in film, literature, and music to demonstrate what AI does to interact with aspects of technology as if they were human slaves. It touches on lots of work that could be interesting to develop with referral to this concept, music albums and movies like that of Fritz Lang and Janelle Monàe. He mentions that ‘if technology can provide an excuse to implement mechanical slaves into the general population, it will undoubtedly do so,’<sup>62</sup> which highlights how Hampton believed, in 2015, that slavery would continue to be an issue into the future. He wasn’t wrong in thinking this, and we could argue that robots that are created to do jobs for people, and take away employment in the world today, are some forms of mechanical slaves.

Throughout, the author continues to emphasise his views on the future of mechanical slaves via the concept of artificial intelligence, and how this will affect America specifically in the future. He concludes with a chapter titled ‘*When the*

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<sup>60</sup> Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.11

<sup>61</sup> Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.49.

<sup>62</sup> Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.89

*Revolution Comes*,<sup>63</sup> in which he states that ‘The social, political, racial, sexual, and technological revolution is the evolution of human society.’<sup>64</sup> This is an undeniable fact in which it is obvious that how we choose to take this information is how far humanity can go in the future. The abstract views that Dr. Hampton portrays throughout this book are rounded up in the conclusion with his detailed expression of his beliefs on the revolution, and how he has confidence in the discussion that robots and technology will become an advantage for the economy, as well as how AI has the potential to become a positive thing for humanity in preventing slavery. He gives us hope and light for a new beginning that could grow from artificial intelligence, if we look through a lens of the past to create an accurate and better future.

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<sup>63</sup> Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.99.

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