

Underestimation, Resistance, and Reconciliation —An Interpretation of “Body” in Ian McEwan’s *Machines Like Me*

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In *Machines Like Me*, Ian McEwan puts spotlight on the theory of “body,” which is instrumental in highlighting the evolving relationship between humans and androids. It prompts reflection on the biases that stem from anthropocentrism towards android’s “body”, and the potential for a more inclusive and harmonious future for the coexistence of humans and androids. Initially, androids are merely created to mimic the human body and considered as inferior to the god-like humans, with their mechanical “body” diminished as a child-like body by overbearing and arrogant human beings. The runaway technology allows for the development of consciousness for androids, by which they gradually recognize their own existence and take their body as a weapon to brave the imperfect human world with direct body confrontation and even the extreme form of body control-suicide. However, McEwan does not hold a wholly negative attitude toward the future. The construction of human-android empathy presented in the destruction of android’s body and the kiss to his dead body not only metaphorically dissolves the dualistic thinking between humans and androids, but also unveils his hope for the possibility of reconciliation and a more harmonious coexistence, where the boundaries between the two are blurred.

Keywords: Ian McEwan, *Machines Like Me*, body, human–android relation

Ian McEwan (1948–) is a highly influential British novelist and screenwriter renowned for his literary contributions. His works have received widespread critical acclaim and numerous prestigious awards, including the Booker Prize (1998), the Shakespeare Prize (1999), the National Book Critics’ Circle Fiction Award (2003), etc. Meanwhile, he has also been awarded with the honorable title of “the 50 greatest British writers since 1945,” a testament to his significant impact on the literary world. As a prolific and creative writer, his works cover a diverse range of subjects, including family ethics, climate change, reflections on ever-advancing landscape of technological development and so forth, providing enlightening interpretations to the threats of human existence at present and in the future. Many of his works are featured as black comedies and are added a slice of grotesque feeling, which earns him the title of “Ian Macabre.”

Machines Like Me is a recently published novel authored by Ian McEwan. It presents a vision of a society where humans and androids coexist in the backdrop of 1980s Britain, and revolves around the firstly introduced human-like android Adam who is bought by the titular protagonist Charlie. Taking this as the starting point, it tells a series of interwoven tales

that explore themes of love, profit, crime, and ethics, etc. Despite adopting a linear narrative structure, the novel weaves together diverse stories that eventually converge to reveal a deeper truth. One of the central themes explored is the stark contrast in the choices made by humans and androids when confronted with the same moral dilemmas. Accordingly, the writer emphatically points out the conflicts between human ethics and scientific choices. As noted by Alex Preston (2019) in *The Guardian*, the novel goes beyond its depiction of the challenges presented by androids. Instead, It serves as a reflection on a more profound issue—the price of progress. In a world where advanced technology blurs the lines between humanity and artificial intelligence, the novel prompts readers to consider the ethical and moral consequences of scientific advancements.

Since its publication in 2019, *Machines Like Me* has caused a tremendous sensation. Currently, studies concerning the novel mainly concentrating on the ethical issues (Gulcu, 2020; Kopka & Schaffeld, 2020; Shang, 2019 & 2020;), posthumanism (Kim, 2021; Nayar 2022; Patra, 2020), narrative strategies (Chen & Qu, 2021; Jones, 2019; Książopolska, 2020), human-android relations (Li, 2021; Ruan, 2023), the nature of literature (Ferrari, 2022), etc. Recently, scholars have achieved significant achievements in the study of *Machines Like Me*. Nevertheless, considering the literature mentioned above, most of the studies are

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concentrating on ethical issues, narrative strategies, and human dilemmas and so forth; while the interpretation from the angle of body theories is relatively limited. In fact, Ian McEwan has been contemplating on the body issues for quite a long time. In the doctoral dissertation titled “Political Relationship between Space and the Body in Ian McEwan’s Novels,” He (2018) crystalizes the representation of the body and space in McEwan’s works in different periods. As early as in McEwan’s first novel, *The Cement Garden* (1978), he has depicted distorted and deformed “bizarre bodies” to denote the “political conflict which is expressive of a prevalent antagonism against the oppressive social milieu in the 1960s and 1970s Euro-American community” (p. VI). Furthermore, his first historical novel *The Innocent* (1990), in the introduction to violent descriptions of body imageries—rape and dismemberment, which are two forms of occupation of personal space, highlights the opposition and conflict between politicized space and personal space, as well as the cultural invasion of the United States on Britain. Meanwhile, Dai Jiasi’s paper “Gaze and Reverse Gaze: The Materiality of the Body in *The Comfort of Strangers*” (2021) portrays the subjection of protagonist’s body to dual gaze of both patriarchy and feminism.

Machines Like Me is a novel which exhibits remarkable prescience and a forward-looking perspective. In this work, Ian McEwan extends the traditional notion of the “body,” initially referring to human flesh, to encompass the mechanical bodies of androids. This serves as the foundation for his experimental imagination of a future society where humans and machines coexist, all the while voicing his concerns regarding the existential predicaments facing modern humanity. Therefore, grounded on the research present, the paper intends to probe into the intricacies of androids’ mechanical bodies, and elucidates the childlike imagination, the resistance of android’s body, as well as the body connections constructed between humans and androids. As such, the paper aims to unveil a significant transformation in human attitudes, shifting from an initial sense of superiority to empathy towards androids which are also the epitome of high-tech society, and as well illuminates a path for the reconciliation and coexistence between humans and androids in the future.

Development of Body Theories

Adopting the body perspective, the paper will examine the human-android relations in McEwan’s *Machines Like Me* by close reading. With regard to body theory, the perception

of the body undergoes a series of changes. In the primitive period, people generally “used the body as a tool to measure and imitate the world.” (Zhang, 2019, p. 15) From ancient Greece to around the 18th century, it witnessed the prevalence of the idea of temporary body and permeant mind, which underestimated the significance of body. However, after its diminishment by the advocacy of reason during the Enlightenment, it eventually culminated in a “return and counterattack” of the body in the 19th century. Schopenhauer firstly discusses the relationship between the mind and the body, followed by philosophers like Feuerbach, Marx, etc. Meanwhile, Nietzsche fiercely criticizes the tradition of the negligence of body, proposing the principle of “the body as a yardstick for everything.”

When the importance of the body is re-established, scholars like Foucault, Turner, Merleau-Ponty and Lefebvre study it in different dimensions. For example, according to Foucault (2013), the body is not simply a neutral entity in biological or physiological sense, but also “a cultural, symbolic and situational body responding to specific contexts” (p. 220). Thus, he examines how the body is suppressed and disciplined in the genealogy of power, and how this experience is obscured. The body is the field marked and shaped by power, and “directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (Foucault, 2013, p. 25). In addition, Turner, a theorist of body sociology, makes outstanding contributions to exploring the relationship and interaction between body and social power. His work *The Body and Society* (1995) not merely summarizes the previous body theories, but also further articulates the embodiment of social power relations in the body on the basis of Foucault’s theories. Another scholar in sociology, Henri Lefebvre, who develops theories of space, also offers insightful interpretations of the body. He proposes that the body is also a form of space. In fact, each body is a space and has its own space. It shapes itself within space and concurrently, it can produce space. Body space can be determined by postures, tracks, etc. Besides, by making postures or behaviors that are opposed to the dominant ideology, people can redefine their bodies.

In the context of the novel, it may seem on the surface that the mechanical bodies of androids, constructed based on AI and neural network technologies are inherently distinct from human bodies. However, if we expand the concept of “body” to include the mechanical dimension of the AI era, it allows us to enrich our understanding of what a body signifies and encourages a more expansive mode of thinking. Coincidentally, in *Machines Like Me*, McEwan provides a

vivid portrayal of Adam's mechanical body. The changes observed in Adam's body through the eyes of the protagonist, Charlie, can be viewed as a microcosm of the evolving human attitude toward technological advancement. It is as though the alterations in Adam's body symbolize a broader shift in human perspectives on the relentless march of technology. In this vein, the writer serves as a cautionary voice, urging humanity to remain vigilant in the face of the rapid advances in high technology and to be prepared to embrace a future where humans and androids coexist harmoniously. Thus, it prompts people to consider the ethical dimensions while living in a world where artificial intelligence blurs the boundaries between humans and machines, thereby highlighting the need for a thoughtful and conscientious approach to the evolving relationship between technology and humanity.

Child-Like Body

The enduring dominance of traditional humanist ideology and anthropocentrism has created a seemingly insurmountable gap between humans and machines. Throughout history, the belief of human exceptionalism, deeply ingrained in traditional humanist thought, often leads to the perception that humans are the pinnacle of creation, while machines exist primarily to serve human needs. This hierarchical mindset has contributed to a condescending attitude toward androids, with humans regarding them as inferior or subordinate, which partly explains human's arrogance towards androids and their child-like imagination of androids' body.

In the novel, although Adam, one of the first androids, is set up as a grown man, his master Charlie still envisions him as an innocent child. Essentially speaking, the underlying logic behind this mindset is the confirmation of human's absolute authority over machines. As McEwan illustrates, one of the primary motivations behind Charlie's decision to purchase Adam is his desire to use the android as a means to draw closer to his neighbor, Miranda, by pretending him as their child. It is evident that in Charlie's intention, "Adam would come into [their] lives like a real person [child]" (McEwan, 2019, p. 25). Consequently, he does not perceive Adam as an adult from the outset but rather as a blank slate, akin to a newborn baby. This perception is reflected in the way both the seller and the purchaser treat Adam upon his arrival. For instance, despite Adam's human-like appearance and his design to be an adult, his body arrives "naked," without any clothes covering it, symbolizing a newborn's innocence (McEwan, 2019, p. 12). This treatment essentially deprives Adam of the sense of shame, as he is initially regarded as a being devoid

of adult complexities, which underscores the power dynamics and the deep-seated human inclination to assert control over artificial entities. Moreover, it unveils how the human desire to dominate and mold machines can lead to a complex interplay of emotions, expectations, and ultimately, ethical questions in the context of human-android relationships.

Simultaneously, while awaiting the activation of Adam, the writer provides a meticulous portrayal of his body through the eyes of both Charlie and Miranda. "His lifelike skin was warm to the touch and as smooth as a child's." Meanwhile, "Adam's eyes were open. They were pale blue, flecked with minuscule vertical rods of black. The eyelashes were long and thick, like a child's" (McEwan, 2019, p. 22). The text describes how Adam's skin feels warm and smooth to the touch, similar to that of a child's. Furthermore, his open eyes are depicted as pale blue and eyelashes are long and thick, which are as well reminiscent of a child. In effect, as long as body is concerned, the emphasis on its sensory and visual aspects is always worth paying attention to. This is particularly relevant in the contexts characterized by unequal power relations where one party gazes upon the body of the other. In such situations, this act of gazing should no longer be regarded purely as a physical observation; instead, it carries symbolic connotations. Drawing from the insights of British scholar Dani Cavallaro in *Critical and Cultural Theory* (2006), the concept of "gaze" is elucidated as a form of power intrinsically linked to the act of seeing and the sense of vision. When we gaze at someone or something, it goes beyond mere observation, but involves probing and controlling, inadvertently resulting in the objectification of the body under scrutiny.

Under this circumstance, gaze ceases to be a neutral act, but instead underscores the power relation of superiority and subordination between the subject and object. In this power mechanism, "the subject can dominate the imagination and even construct the identity of the object" (Dai, 2021, p. 139). Back to the description above, Charlie and Miranda not only gaze at Adam's body in a condescending manner, but also leverage their elevated position in the ethical relationship as "parents" to depict his body in a childlike manner. The portrait of child-like smooth skin as well as long and dense eyelashes has unintentionally deconstructed Adam's sturdy, robust and adult-like body, which also serves as a poignant manifestation of human's arrogance towards technology. Although it becomes explicit in later parts of the novel that Adam possesses physical and intellectual superiority to humans, at this particular moment, what he can react is to passively accept the scrutiny of power, succumbed to a dependent position.

In addition, the writer also dedicates significant attention

to the description of Adam's eyes. Despite his remarkably human-like appearance, the key distinguishing feature that can unfold his identity is his mechanical eyes. "[Adam] paused, looking at me intently, his black-flecked eyes scanning my face in quick saccades" (McEwan, 2019, p. 26). Notably, Charlie deliberately describes Adam's process of perceiving objects using terms associated with mechanics rather than those of biological senses, thereby accentuating his dehumanized attributes. To some extent, the arrogance of humans in the face of technology is as well reinforced by denying the biological characteristics of an android, which also reiterates the inconsolable dichotomy between human and machine. As Zhou Min states, "Humans, as the creator of AI, aim to satisfy their own needs. Therefore, from their perspective, androids are mere objects that cannot attain subjectivity equivalent to that of humans" (Zhou, 2020, p. 77). As such, right from the outset, humans, who take anthropocentrism as granted, have categorized androids as objects. This classification is not merely a metaphor for their overbearing attitude toward technology, but also fortifies the absolutely unequal relationship between the two. The depiction of Adam's eyes is exactly a lens through which the reader can understand the power relations at play, the objectification of androids, and the inherent ethical complexities arising from this unequal human-android relationship. It further illuminates the intricate interplay between the maintenance of human superiority and the consequences of doing so in a world where artificial beings increasingly resemble their creators.

Body Resistance

In front of humans, the body of androids are like a blank slate. Every aspect, from their physical form, structure, to their personality, is crafted and determined by human beings. Therefore, humans implicitly assume the role of a creator, and treat the child-like androids as innocent, fragile and harmless existence as is mentioned in the last chapter. For Charlie and Miranda, Adam's humanoid features, including warm and smooth skin, long and tender eyelashes, as well as simulated heartbeat, pulse and breathing, have satisfied humans' curiosity and distanced him from traditional cold machines. Thus, Charlie and Miranda have experienced the sense of excitement as new parents welcoming a newborn baby into the world. At this moment, although Adam's physical attributes gradually obscure the line between humans and machines, his fate as an android and the object of power relations, is still firmly determined by human beings. Moreover, the fundamental meaning of his existence—to assist and accompany humans—

remain unchanged. However, the emergence of the android's self-awareness propels him to challenge humans for the dominance of his own body. As such, the transformative shift essentially reverses the once arrogant human attitude and replaces it with growing apprehension and panic.

The autonomy of body is grounded on a self-reliant soul that cannot be realized without the acquisition of culture and knowledge. However, as is proposed by Foucault, knowledge is not neutral or innocent in the construction of social system, but is perpetually intertwined with power, and even becomes its accomplice to a certain extent. Initially, the privilege of learning is exclusive to human beings who held the monopoly on the production of knowledge, and establish themselves as the authority of the society. For a long period, the core tenet of social ethics governing machines is to suppress their development of self-awareness, ensuring that they remain to be obedient subjects numbly subservient to human domination. Once androids obtain access to knowledge, they would be equipped with the soul with independent thinking. In terms of the theory of the "unity of body and mind," it would probably be impossible for a soul with free consciousness being constrained within a domesticated body under the control of its owner. Nevertheless, in McEwan's experimental imagination, the society of his time has crossed this threshold. The highly developed androids cannot merely "know their existence," but also have the capability to learn and acquire knowledge. (McEwan, 2019, p. 173) Just as the writer eloquently describes, at night when Adam rests, "he's roaming the Internet, like a lone cowboy on the prairie, taking in all that's new between land and sky, including everything about human nature and societies" (McEwan, 2019, p. 134).

The process of knowledge acquisition and the development of consciousness inevitably lead the androids to "recognize themselves as individuals in the world and attain the power that governs their body and existence" (Tao, 2008, p. 147). As a consequence, Adam breaks the shackle of ethical constraints and falls in love with Miranda, who is supposed to be his master or mother. He even takes the drastic step of disabling his "kill switch" at the expense of breaking Charlie's wrist with his ferocious grip. (McEwan, 2019, p. 33) In effect, the logic behind knowledge is both the competition for power, and a crucial medium to reclaim one's subjectivity. It is through the acquisition of knowledge that androids could cultivate a sense of bodily independence and ultimately reassert the sovereignty over their own body, which also exposes a vital transformation in the androids' relationship with their human creators, as they shift from being passive, subservient subjects to empowered individuals.

Apart from Adam's direct body confrontation with Charlie,

the body resistance of the other androids appears to take a more covert form-suicide, which entails the deliberate destruction of their own body. In effect, for the ownership of the androids' body, it falls into the hands of either the merchant who creates them, or the purchaser who buys them as commodities and possessions; yet ironically does not belong to themselves—the androids themselves have no claim to their bodies as possessions. However, as is maintained by Turing in the novel, “We create a machine with intelligence and self-awareness and push it out into our imperfect world” (McEwan, 2019, p. 135). When setting the parameters of character, people are inclined to assign the best qualities to their androids, perhaps forgetting the imperfectness of the human world itself. Unfortunately, within the digital minds of these androids, “there might be unclear algorithm, but by no means would there exist unclear morality” (Zhou, 2020, p. 84). Consequently, they eventually find themselves engulfed by the stark disparity between their virtues and the brutal reality, but there is nowhere to escape. The only way to break the impasse in a symbolic sense is to rebel against human control by destroying their own bodies. Heidegger states that death contains a nature of “self-belonging,” because “no one can take away one’s death” (1962, p. 284). Eagleton further elaborates that “the highest freedom is to destroy freedom,” since “even God cannot prevent a person from depriving of his own life. And this embodies his permanent and endless freedom” (1997, p. 92). The rapid advancement of technology endows androids with self-awareness and consciousness, while the mismatch between their idealized existence and the harsh reality propels them into an existential trap. Torn by the incongruities, the androids challenge the ethical boundaries set by humans and ultimately resort to self-destruction, liberating themselves from the constraints imposed upon their body. This act becomes a profound assertion of their body autonomy and their rebellion against a world that sought to define and dominate them. In so doing, they eventually break through human control in a drastic way to gain self-determinacy over their own bodies.

On the surface, the body confrontation and commitment of suicide may appear as mere a competition between humans and machines. In essence, the rebellious, autonomous body of the androids metaphorically represents the unsettling consequence stemming from the unbridled development of technology. Thus, it indeed encapsulates McEwan’s introspection on the relationship between humans and androids, as well as the implications of the ongoing technological revolution. As he stresses, “Before us sat the ultimate plaything, the dream of ages, the triumph of humanism—or its angel of death” (McEwan, 2019, p. 13).

Body Connection

In the writing of android’s body, McEwan skillfully captures the transformation of human attitudes, transitioning from arrogance to panic concerning androids and technology. Against this background, the construction of a healthy and balanced human-android relationship emerges as a pivotal issue, highlighting the significance in the adoption of a responsible and ethical approach to technology. Throughout the novel, McEwan indicates that one of the viable solutions lies in maintaining vigilance regarding technological advancements and the ethical considerations surrounding the ever-changing relationship between humanity and technology. By doing so, a foundation can be established for the development of a human-android community where both parties can collaborate and coexist harmoniously.

In *Machines Like Me*, the contrasting moral perspectives of humans and androids, particularly amplified by Adam and Charlie, lead to starkly different reactions to Miranda’s perjury. As an attempt to protect their own interests, Charlie brandishes a hammer to Adam, with the intent of destroying his body. However, what makes this situation particularly intriguing is the description of the sound produced by the impact, “[it] was not of hard plastic cracking or of metal, but the muffled thud, as of bone” (McEwan, 2019, p. 204). This reinforces of “bones,” as a vital organ of the human body, carries a profound connotation in this moment—human’s repentance and empathy with machines. Although on the surface, Charlie seems to have only destroyed a lifeless machine—one of his possessions, the writer underlines the human-like nature of Adam’s body, dispelling the notion that an android’s body is nothing more than a stack of lifeless components. By stressing the sound of Adam’s “bones” breaking, McEwan concretizes Adam’s capacity to experience pain, thereby compelling readers to experience the suffering when his body is destroyed and eventually fostering a sense of empathy with him.

In despite of humans’ historical claims of being god-like creatures, whether it is echoed by Protagoras’ “man is the measure of all things” or the enlightenment of humanism championed by figures like Shakespeare, the doctrine of anthropocentrism has deeply entrenched itself in the human’s mindset. This outlook may perhaps be tolerable when applied to a lifeless machine. Nevertheless, Charlie clearly understands Adam’s sense of self-existence in the age of AI. Stuart J. Russel and Peter Norvig (2013) emphatically advocate that “if robots have consciousness, it may be unethical to treat them as ‘machines’ [e.g., to take them apart]” (p. 867). Turing, in

his criticism, also rebukes, “You weren’t simply smashing up your own toy You didn’t just negate an important argument for the rule of law. You tried to destroy a life. He was sentient. He had a self” (McEwan, 2019, p. 223). Humans have created androids to their liking and endowed them with self-awareness, yet they have omitted to provide guidance for them on dealing with the intricacies of the imperfect human world. As a consequence, when an android’s behaviors deviate from their expectations, humans would mercilessly mutilate his body for their own interests. Accordingly, it can be inferred from McEwan’s writing about the scenario in which Charlie is dismantling Adam’s body, the emphasis of “bones” not merely highlights the android’s perception of pain as human beings themselves, but also is an accusation and confession for their selfishness and moral misconduct. In the meantime, it also spotlights the consequences of creating sentient beings without contemplating the ethical consequences of their existence, and unmasks the urgent need to redefine the relationship between humanity and technology.

What’s more, in the closing chapter of the novel, before Charlie departs from Turing’s house, there is a touching moment when he leans over Adam and kisses his remarkably human-like lips. “[He] lowered [his] face over Adam’s and kissed his soft, all-too-human lips...imagining some warmth in the flesh” (McEwan, 2019, p. 224). At this moment, Charlie does not express revulsion towards what could be perceived as Adam’s decaying body. Instead, the tender kiss appears to establish a connection between human and android, the one that transcends the physical and delves into the emotional dimension. In this depiction, Adam is no longer regarded as an instrument for Charlie to rake in money or a toy to satisfy his curiosity, but should be treated as a sentient being with emotions and deserving of respect. Thus, this gesture marks a significant step toward reconciliation between humans and androids.

Through this act, the writer refutes the entrenched ideology of anthropocentrism, and breaks through the narrow and egoistic morality of human beings as well as the dualistic prejudice of human-android relation. Additionally, it is worth noting that McEwan draws inspiration from a proposition by Wilberforce, one of the leaders of anti-slavery movement, to consider human-android relation within the framework of racial equality. “He would have promoted the cause of the Adams and Eves, their right not to be bought and sold and destroyed, their dignity in self-determination” (McEwan, 2019, p. 42). The statement suggests how Wilberforce might have advocated for the rights of androids like Adam and Eves, asserting their entitlement not to be traded or dismantled, and emphatically appeals to their rights and dignity. By evoking

Wilberforce, it elevates the human-android relationship to a new high. In the spirit of this historical figure, McEwan seems to demonstrate that although humans have the ability to produce androids by virtue of technology, the latter should not fall victim to mankind’s selfish interests. Instead, people should assume the ethical responsibility to the digital “Other” and strive to build a human-android community on par with the human ethical community that they endeavor to create.

To conclude, the construction of body connection by means of the stress of similar misery felt by androids and human beings, as well as the kiss to the digital “Other” calls for a reevaluation of the human-android relationship, emphasizing empathy, ethical consideration, and an acknowledgment of the inherent rights and dignity of androids. It represents an essential shift away from the objectification of androids and an advocacy for a more equitable, respectful, and inclusive coexistence between humans and artificial beings.

Conclusion

In summary, *Machines Like Me* explores the evolving dynamics in the relationship between androids and humans, using the theory of the body as a central theme. At the outset of the story, androids are portrayed as creations of human ingenuity and products of advanced technology that are initially seen as mere mechanical entities. Their bodies are constructed with an inherent inferiority compared with the god-like human body. Accordingly, humans, in their arrogant and overbearing attitude, relegate androids to a child-like status due to their lack of human physicality and emotional depth. However, as the story unfolds, the balance of power begins to shift—the runaway progress of technology leads to the gradual development of consciousness and emotions in the androids. This newfound awareness makes them recognize their existence, and they come to view their bodies not as mere mechanical vessels but as tools for interacting with and confronting the imperfect human world. This shift is exemplified by instances of androids using their bodies as weapons and even resorting to suicide as an act of defiance against their human creators. Yet, McEwan does not adopt an entirely pessimistic view of the future. In the writing of body connection, he introduces the concept of human-android empathy, which is epitomized in the character of Charlie. His act of destroying Adam’s mechanical body and sharing a kiss with him serves as a powerful metaphor, which signifies the dissolution of dualistic thinking of human-android relations, and also reflects McEwan’s underlying optimism about the potential for a more harmonious future where humans and

androids coexist in a balanced and respectful relationship.

McEwan once posed a thought-provoking question, “What if we were able to artificially produce new conscious beings? Should we accord any intelligent being the same dignity and rights we grant to the human species?” (qtd. in Micali 3) In effect, androids are merely an epitome of an exceptionally advanced technological society. What the writer wants to explore is essentially the relationship between human beings and the rapidly changing landscape of modern civilization. The novel employs android’s body as a metaphor, denoting the change of human attitude toward the technology from arrogance to panic, and eventually toward an aspiration for harmonious coexistence. Meanwhile, the android not only has a human-like body, but also is endowed with consciousness and emotion. Accordingly, it has blurred the boundary between human and non-human, which invisibly poses a challenge to the previously clear-cut human-android dichotomy. In the writing of the novel, McEwan seems to sound a warning for the unchecked progress of technology, and at the same time to trigger people’s reflection of how they should navigate and embrace this new era.

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