Man to Machine: Adam's Journey from Milton to McEwan

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Abstract

Comparative Study in literature is usually based on the topics of common foundation. But this research study comprised two works of contrary genres and veteran writers of a different era. John Milton's milestone work *Paradise Lost* and Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* are being explored in this paper based on their theme of common protagonists. The famous mythological character Adam is being compared on several attributes with McEwan's first humanoid robot Adam in contemporary times. The concept of interpretive research is used to explore a close comparison where the observational technique of research helped to unveil the deep-seated desires and fears of human beings. This paper is also making an attempt to observe the dominance of the machinery world. And the two characters of the same name, the first human and the first fictional humanoid robot Adam are appeared adversely poles apart, but surprisingly the latter ones in favour of saving humanity.

Keywords: Paradise Lost, Adam, Artificial Intelligence, Eve, Science fiction

1. **Introduction**

The novel that is being produced in the present time with its issues, themes, and concerns deals mainly with is nothing but a mirror to the fractured self of the human psyche; struggling with the notions of morality, relationships, and above all, identity. The recently published novel, *Machines Like Me* (2019) by Ian McEwan is a science fiction that puts up a question before the readers 'whether a machine can understand the human heart' or 'a human heart is lacking with some understanding'. In the current technological era, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at its boom in both the ways; boon as well as a bane. The dependence of human beings on machines is being increased drastically but the relation between them is not as smooth as we expected during the time of their inventions. The period of artificial intelligence plays a vital role in making a human being insecure with his relations and to his self-esteem. This paper will analyse the first machinery character 'Adam' with a minute comparison of it with first human, 'Adam'; a character in the work *Paradise Lost* (1667 and revised version in 1674) by John Milton. Both the characters will be studied based on their characteristics and deeds, which will give us a broad

picture of the gap from the time of caricaturing first human to our first humanoid robot.

As per the mythical beliefs, this world began with the fall of Adam and Eve and we, the people, are successors of them. But there is a huge clash depicted in the novel *Machines Like Me* when a human being deals with a man created humanoid robot 'Adam' and expects him to be obedient to humans, as every machine should do. The perplexing structure of logic, commands, artificial intelligence, expectations, and desire of love in relationships, all will be seen through the lens of humanity and the impact of Artificial Intelligence on human beings. This study will also deal with the parameter that whether the character of Adam in Milton's work was entangled with instructions and norms or Adam of McEwan is more bonded with its android algorithms. This paper would also give a slight glance at the impact of Artificial Intelligence on human beings, thematic representations and settings that somewhere lead to cease humanity or try to control it on daily basis.

2. McEwan and his First Humanoid Robot: Adam

"I propose to consider the question, Can machines think?"'– Alan Turning

Ian McEwan is a British novelist with the Man Booker Prize in 1998, and six other nominations for the same. Being featured by *The Times* on its 2008 list of "The 50 greatest British writers since 1945," it would be safe to assume that Ian McEwan is one of the most significant British writers since the era of 1970s, and his all the works are undoubtedly worthy of academic study and analysis. Over the course of a highly productive forty-four years, Ian McEwan won many distinctions and prestigious literary awards. He was the recipient of the 1998 Man Booker Prize and has been nominated six times for the prize till date. McEwan was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1984, and was awarded an honorary Litt.D. by the University of Sussex in 1989. In 1999, he was awarded the Shakespeare Prize by the Alfred Toepfer Foundation, Hamburg. He was awarded a CBE in 2000. In 2006, the Board of Trustees of the Kenyon Review honoured him with the Kenyon Review Award for Literary Achievement. In 2008, the University College London awarded him with the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature. Ian McEwan dedicated his latest work *Machines Like Me* to Graeme Mitchison (1944-2018), a scientist and biologist who always had a longing to go back in 60's and work as a rare individual. As per the views of a website, He also contributed in writing some fragments in one of the novels by McEwan.

After his novel *Nutshell* (2016) based on *Hamlet*, a new eye treat from McEwan is a science fiction titled *Machines Like Me.* It is a story of almost 30 years old anthropologist Charlie and a ten year younger girl Miranda, living upstairs in Charlie's house. This novel is divided into ten chapters where each chapter creates deep expressions of thoughts. Charlie is an unemployed person with a keen interest in artificial intelligence who gets busy in earning fortune from the stock markets. The story is set up in counterfactual year 1982, the time of Falkland War, appointment of new Prime Minister in Britain, role of Margaret Thatcher and defeat of Britain in war with Argentina. The novel is a sci-fic setup in the past years but shown the people

used to with the inventions of Artificial Intelligence like humanoid robots, driverless cars, etc.

The story written is written in the first form and revolves around an impulsive narrator Charlie, who wished to buy a humanoid robot preferably Eve. But due to the excessive demands of the humanoid robot, Charlie had reluctantly bought Adam in place of Eve, as all Eves were sold out by that time. Later, Adam, a first handsome humanoid robot, falls in love with Charlie's future girlfriend Miranda and leads them to entangle with several personal and legal issues. Adam as a robot or as a machinery object equipped with algorithms does not come up to the expectation of the owner Charlie and makes his peaceful days quite restless and worrisome. Miranda, Charlie and Adam find themselves in a love triangle after an intimate night of humanoid robot Adam with the human Miranda. In addition, Adam keeps on accepting and claiming his love for Miranda in spite of the disclaimer of Miranda's horrible and secretive past. The inventor of humanoid robots Alan Turing, master of Artificial Intelligence, is shown alive in the year 1982 though sad ending of his life is not mentioned. Artificial Intelligence is one of the key features of this work which makes the reader think about the plausibility of machines in our lives. As already claimed before the publication by the writer, this novel intended to make the readers think, 'whether a robot can understand only truths' or 'are machines designed to tell a lie or understand the logics of human world'. Charlie and Miranda's plan to program Adam, as per their interests and choices, consider humanoid Adam as their child in future gets foil when Adam starts warning Charlie about the Miranda's doubtful past and make Charlie to listen his Haikus, that written in love of Miranda by him. After confronting humanoid Adam about his intimate night with Miranda, Adam breaks Charlie's wrist for which he apologises but also warns not to think to press his kill switch in any case. Adam is portrayed as a humnoid robot that not only washes dishes and does the household chores but also writes Haikus and sleeps with the owner's love when needed.

McEwan's *Machines Like Me* showed the glimpses of a Tamil Movie named Enthiran (lit Robot) released in the year 2010. The movie written by S.Shankar is about the protagonist Vaseegaran (scientist by profession) who wants to commission an android robot named, Chitti, to the Indian Army In order to prepare Chitti for his Artificial Intelligence Research and Development (AIRD), Vaseegaran takes him out of the lab and instructs him to involve in various social activities. Among one of those activities, Chitti meets Sana, the love of Vaseegaran's life and falls in love with her. This story also makes a love triangle between a scientist, his lover and a robot which ultimately makes the scientist to dismantle his own hardwork of ten years same as Charlie who wants to press his robot Adam's kill switch. There are many dialogues in the movie that gives an indirect link with the motif of the novel. For Example: Vaseegaran says, "He is not a human, but a humanoid..." and "Only human lie, machines don't." The fresh work by McEwan begins with poetic lines from 'The Secret of the Machines' by Rudyard Kipling. The lines are as follows:

But remember, please, the Law by which we live,
We are not built to comprehend a lie...
(*The Secret of the Machines*, 37-38)

The above written lines as epigraph of the novel, seems as a warning from the machines to their users and owners and also depicting the core area of the clash between human and humanoids robots.This paper is written with a motive to analyse the journey of Adam as a character in the history of British Literature particular to Adam as a first human in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Adam as a first humanoid robot in McEwan's *Machines Like Me* (2019). The idea behind the selection of this topic is probably the chain of events that occurred in the life of the character, Charlie, which somewhere gets entangled between his expectations and reality.

3. Milton and his First Human: Adam

John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a verse epic published in two versions, first in the year 1667 and again in year 1674, with a little modifications. In the first version, the epic was divided into ten books whereas the revised second version published with two more added books. *Paradise Lost* is based on biblical myth of first man and woman, Adam and Eve and their fall which is considered as the beginning of mankind. The work is an enlarged and detailed version of Genesis Book 1 -Hebrew book of Bible. The work begins with the middle story while the backgrounds, fall of Adam and Eve's origin are described in the later part of the work. The large volume of verse encircles the very important mythical characters like God, Satan, Adam, Eve and Michael. Adam, the first creation of God requests God for another of his creation to accompany him. On the request of Adam, God created Eve from the flesh of Adam. After his revolt to God, Satan who was an angel earlier named Lucifer thrown out of heaven and Adam with Eve permitted to rule over other creatures. The freedom to Adam and Eve was given with a strict instruction of not to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. The poetic work begins with the lines:

> Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe... (I.1-3)

Being in emotion of infatuation and attraction towards Eve, Adam gets ready to eat the fruit of knowledge after her and to lose his place in the Garden of Eden. The fruit of knowledge that Eve tasted was actually the result of temptation created by Satan in disguise of a serpent who aims to bring the fall of mankind as his ultimate revenge to God. In most of critical reviews of *Paradise Lost*, Satan was considered as the main hero of the story because Adam, in spite of God's instructions, being attracted towards Eve, knowingly follows her disobedience. This fall of grace and revolt of the God's instruction lead the couple to mutual accusation and make them feel guilt with repentance for their act of having fruit of knowledge and lustful sex.

God comes to know about the fall and sends his son to give punishment to the doers. In order not to go far from Eve, Adam follows the mistake of eating from tree of knowledge which makes the couple feel resentful and surrender to God for forgiveness. On the basis of predefined instruction by God, Adam and Eve both deserved to be punished where Eve has to bear the pain of child birth and submission to her husband while Adam had to hunt for his food and cook it to

gratify their hunger. The son of God also told to change the temperature of earth from moderate to extreme hot and cold. Before leaving the Garden of Eden, the character, Michael makes Adam to see the future result of his deed which made Adam sad and think over the process of redemption.

4. Desire and Deception

Here in the year 2016, McEwan's Adam in *Machines Like Me* is built by Alan Turing, who known as father of artificial intelligence. Alan Turning is famous for his experiments especially the one in which he set the standard codes for a computer machine to be called intelligent. Milton's Adam is built by the God and that becomes the reason to consider his creation Adam as an intelligent and 'Supreme Being'. On the request of Adam, Eve is created which viewed as less skillful than Adam in throughout the work. Milton's Adam released in the Garden of Eden with strict instructions regarding fruit from Tree of Knowledge whereas McEwan's Adam is only bounded with algorithms and logistics. In the case of both the characters, the fall begins due to the existence of emotions and intelligence. In Milton's work , Adam gets attracted towards Eve and does not use his intelligence which becomes the reason of the fall whereas In McEwan's work Adam too fall in love with owner's inamorata but uses his intelligence and logics when it comes to justice. The contradiction lies between the personalities of both the Adams, where McEwan's Adam does not fall in love blindly and feel repent later like Milton's Adam – the first man of humanity.

In John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Adam gets attracted towards Eve since beginning of her creation and start following her everywhere within the boundaries of Garden of Eden. Adam believes and says , "that what she wills to do or say, / Seems wisest, virtuosest, discreetest, best; / All higher knowledge in her presence falls / Degraded" (VIII, 549-552).The theme of the work 'revenge' takes place through Satan who disguises himself as a serpent and seduces Eve to taste the fruit from Tree of Knowledge, Adam in spite of the strict norms, also eats the fruit not out of curiosity but hidden fear of losing Eve made him to follow her action. The eating of the fruit from Tree of Knowledge made Adam to see Eve in another way, purely sexual that made the couple to get involved in the sexual activity. Here, the control and power of emotions are shown over the intelligence and logic in Adam's character. The attraction towards opposite sex made Adam to think illogically and takes decision suppressing his intelligence and reasoning, even when he knows he is viewed as almost a replica of God being first human created by the God.

Adam, built by Turing in *Machines Like Me*, is a humanoid robot who is bought by his owner Charlie and not to omit, unwillingly. The planning of Charlie is completely based on his hypothesis of considering a robot as a machine and just as a slave that programmed to work according to his owner's wish only. The lack of intelligence, emotions and reasoning are crucial aspects that were not expected by Charlie while buying Adam. But when Charlie comes to know about the sexual involvement of humanoid Adam and Miranda, the situation hits him like a jolt and he realises the existence of emotions and physical need in the humanoid Adam's robotic body. In later part of the work, Charlie also comes to know about Adam's interest in literature

and his ability of learning the past of a person just by observing a person's personality. Adam's skill of writing 'Haikus' is an example of his creative ability, though he writes most of the time in love of Miranda as an expression of his emotions for an opposite sex , just like Milton's first human Adam. Being in love with Miranda, Adam reads:

> In her loving look,
> a whole universe contained.
> Love the universe! (141)

McEwan's Adam is expressing his love for Miranda and also having a one night stand with owner's lover but his love for her neither shown curbed his intelligence and logics nor it restricted Adam's mind to warn Charlie about Miranda's doubtful past. The humanoid robot, Adam warns Charlie that Miranda is not truthful in the case of Gorringe, an acquaintance of Miranda in the past. On Adam's prediction of Miranda's doubtful past, the story that told by Miranda to Charlie is that Peter Gorringe wanted to kill her as she imprisoned him by planning to take revenge of her friend. Mariam was a good friend of Marinda who was raped and provoked by Gorringe to commit suicide. The pace of conclusion reveals Charlie's expressions of love for Miranda, both plan to get marry and adopt Mark as their child after sending Gorringe to jail for long term. But the story takes a tragic turn when the humanoid robot , and significantly a artificial machine Adam does not support their planning and reveals Miranda's lie in the Gorringe's rape case. Adam's ability to work on logics and not lie in case of Miranda, in spite of his love for her, not only sends Miranda to prison but also creates hindrances in the legal procedures of adopting the child, Mark. Adam expressed his apology for his action beforehand in form of a Haiku written by him:

> Surely it's no crime,
> when justice is symmetry
> to love a criminal? (189)

The incomprehensibility of supporting a false and not to telling a lie to the court in case of Miranda's past makes Charlie upset and persuades him to dismantle Adam. Charlie and Miranda's expectations from Adam to understand human's complexity and not , make the couple suffer in their future part, on the contrary, Milton's Adam make his creator and the owner (the God) upset and angry for not using his intelligence and reasoning over his love emotions for Eve.

Being a humanoid robot built up in era of 1982, McEwan's Adam is quite strong, intelligent and rational. He is full with the capacity of reasoning over his own strong emotions and personal interests, whereas Milton's Adam is weak in his reasoning and gives preference to his emotions and personal joys. Both the characters of Adam are found involved in the sexual activity but their way of dealing the same need of physical intamacy is completely contrary. For human Adam, it is a process of pleasure out of lust whereas for humanoid Adam, it becomes a process of pleasure out of need. Milton's Adam decides to follow Eve in the doom due to ecstasy of his love even when the actual wrong deed done by Eve only but McEwan's Adam let his love

Miranda suffer the consequences of her wrong doings in the past all alone.

Both the Adam of past and present are shown curious for knowledge in their own way, though they both are portrayed completely unaffected by the geopolitics occurring in the background of their works. Neither fall of humanity is shown as the wholesome reason of Satan's revenge to God nor humanoid robot, Adam, is shown as capable of understanding the human politics behind Falkland War, assassination of a politician, role of Margaret Thatcher and appointment of the new prime minister in Britain.

It is usually believed as per the Genesis Book – I, fall of humanity and origin of human pain begin with Adam and Eve's deed of eating fruit of knowledge. But God's order to Michael of showing Adam the result of his wrong deed make Adam quite sad. The forecast of painful future rose feeling of repent in Milton's Adam ,on the other hand McEwan's Adam writes 'Haiku' in apology to his owner for the destruction created by him.

5. Conclusion

In the era of 21st century, Artificial Intelligence is assumed as a signal of progress of countries in the field of technology. But the hidden and bitter reality is, Artificial Intelligence also diminishing the human compassion and interaction with time. The misuse of Artificial Intelligence can be a possible second and final fall of humanity where psychological issues are hovering over the species (the humans) brutally. Famous physicist Stephen Hawkins once commented on existing and advanced risk on artificial intelligence, " The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of human race" while Elon Mask , an engineer , leading designer of SpaceX and CEO of Tesla points out that "With artificial intelligence we are summoning the Demon".

Artificial Intelligence is good but untill the time it is in control of the inventors, discoverers and the owners. We are trying our best to built human robot just as similar as a biological humans, but the concluding views of Alan Turing in the novel *Machines Like Me* that how it is possible for humanoid robot to understand the human mind so deeply when we the creatures, all are unique in our own thought processes, desires and necessities. In the *Paradise Lost*, Milton comments:

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n. *(*I:254-255)

Both the works on the character Adam appropriately depicted their theme through the actions of contrary characters a human and another one, a humanoid robot. Milton's *Paradise Lost* possess the theme "to justify the ways of God to man" whereas McEwan's *Machines Like Me,* make the readers brood over the thought "Are Andriod humans capable to lie or understand human heart". McEwan too is found apprehensive with the excessive expectations and demands of artificial intelligence as he says in one of his interviews with *The Times*:

" ... But then we'll find it's rather uncomfortable to be alongside artificial people who are nicer than us, more consistent morally than us." In concluding words, it could be said that there is still a ray of hope and redemption like in the case of both the Adams and so as in ours as a well nourished humans. Falls and flaws are always justified as per the situation but only by the time it is in control of the creators and users do not depend on it solely.

> Though our smoke may hide the Heavens from your eyes,
> It will vanish and the stars will shine again,
> Because, for all our power and weight and size,
> We are nothing more than children of your brain!
>
> - (*The Secret of the Machines*, 43-46)

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