Both hope and fear find ample representations in texts of culture which not only introduce technology and AI but by presenting their persuasive images, shape popular opinions and feed imagination. Artificial intelligence seems a perfect subject for contemporary stories. Stankomir Nicieja notices the recent cultural turn towards dystopian rather than utopian fantasy which should not be seen as surprising. He argues that "after the humanitarian catastrophes of the 20th century, including two global military conflicts, the Holocaust, ethnic cleansing and terrorism, the creation of positive utopias became deeply problematic. ... Not only did the business of creating utopian fantasies look excessively naïve but also dubious." Apocalyptic imagination seems to supersede more optimistic futuristic fantasies, with technology becoming one of the sources of worries. As Nicieja observes, at the turn of the centuries it was

genetic engineering that "replaced nuclear energy as the epitome of 'monstrous science'"[14] and inspired a number of important works. At the moment artificial intelligence provides another such subject that provokes strong emotions and discussions, especially given the fact that it no longer seems futuristic as intelligent programmes already become a part of our lives. It comes as no surprise, then, that both elitist and popular culture takes it up as a vital theme.

A cursory overview of popular works that have recently represented artificial intelligence may lead to the observation that these are indeed dystopian / technophobic rather than utopian / technophilic visions that dominate contemporary imagination. It seems that, for instance, many of the internationally successful films, which for better or worse shape the popular public opinion on AI, seem to warn against its malevolence and the possible takeover of the control over the world, ending in superseding, replacing and annihilating the human race. Starting with *2001: Space Odyssey*, to *Terminator*, *Blade Runner* or *Matrix*, to *Ex-Machina* or *Black Mirror*, the shows warn against the excessive hope invested in various types of machines and technologies pointing to their unpredicted and yet possibly malevolent outcomes. Against these dystopian blockbusters, the films that present a positive side of AI seem admittedly less frequent: one may think perhaps of the classical *Bicentennial Man*, the comedic *Jetsons* or the more recent and neutral *Her*. To a large extent, then, popular film productions seem to exacerbate the distrust towards artificial intelligence, populating common imagination with worst-case scenarios of technology that turns against people.

In contrast, artistic literary works may seem more nuanced and perhaps less terrifying than their popular cinematographic cousins. Leaving aside such classical texts as Huxley's *Brave New World*, which serves as a prototype for many pessimistic visions, numerous recent novels that introduce technological futures or robotic characters tend to reflect on rather than simply frighten with future scenarios, exhibiting less dramatic though not less problematic projections. They include Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* (2019) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021), both of which, situating their plots either in an alternative past or the near future, introduce as their main characters advanced robots which imitate and even surpass humans in their various performances. The two novels are chosen for further analysis as, on one hand, they may illustrate a less sensational and frightening take on artificial intelligence than that met in popular culture, with both of them focusing on ethical ramifications of introducing advanced AI into human societies. On the other hand, each of the works emphasises a different ethical standpoint represented by the future AI, although ultimately both of them seem to ponder on the ontological and

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[14] Ibidem, 112.

legal status of—still at the moment imaginary—robots. In what follows, then, the article will argue, first, that the two novels, both written by eminent contemporary novelists and hence particularly worth analysing as to their representation of AI, try to negotiate the ground between technophobia and technophilia, representing AI as both beneficial and potentially problematic. They construct their artificial humans as rational, sentient, moral, and creative creatures but paradoxically poorly equipped to function well in an environment that does not match their high moral standards. Secondly, the analysis will argue that the two novelistic robots represent two different ethical attitudes: the quasi-Kantian deontology professed by McEwan's Adam may be compared to and contrasted with the almost Christian altruism exhibited by Klara to show how both of these ethical positions ultimately clash with the hedonistic attitudes of human characters. Finally, as both novels pose the question about the essence of humanity and the limits of artificial intelligence and problematise rather than solve possible difficulties connected with its status and functions, the discussion will try to link them to the standpoints represented by philosophical posthumanism. Seen from this perspective, both novels may be interpreted as not just attempts to familiarise readers with the idea and ramifications of artificial intelligence; they may also play an important role in building empathy and sensitising them towards creatures other than humans.