UNIVERSITI
TEKNOLOGI
MARA

OKTOBER 2025

EDISI 15

BULETIN APB

LIFELONG LEARNING

AKADEMI PENGAJIAN BAHASA
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA
CAWANGAN NEGERI SEMBILAN
KAMPUS SEREMBAN

Lifelong Learning through Literature: AI Ethics, Moral Agency, and Machine Consciousness in English Narratives

AMALIA QISTINA CASTANEDA ABDULLAH
UiTM CAWANGAN NEGERI SEMBILAN KAMPUS KUALA PILAH

"What does it mean to create—and what does it mean to care?"

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer confined to the realm of science and technology; it has become a cultural force that reshapes humanity's understanding of knowledge, ethics, and the future of learning. English literature, long a site of moral and philosophical reflection, provides a unique lens for examining the ethical dilemmas posed by intelligent machines. From Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to contemporary works such as Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*, literary narratives engage with enduring questions of machine consciousness, moral agency, and human responsibility. These explorations are not only relevant to ethical debates but also contribute to cultivating the reflective, adaptive, and critical capacities essential for **lifelong learning** in an AI-driven world. By situating AI ethics within literary study, this paper argues that literature functions as both an ethical laboratory and a **lifelong learning** resource, enabling individuals to confront technological change with moral imagination and resilience.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Ethics, English Literature and Technology, Lifelong Learning

Implications for Pedagogy and Interdisciplinary Ethics

The study of AI and ethics in literature holds significant potential for interdisciplinary education. Literary texts can complement STEM-focused curricula by fostering critical reflection on the societal and moral impacts of AI. Teaching works such as *Frankenstein*, *Klara and the Sun*, or *Never Let Me Go* within ethics or AI courses encourages students to engage with technology not only as a tool but as a cultural and ethical force (Burri, 2015), thereby underscoring the importance of **lifelong learning**. By engaging with narrative-driven ethical challenges, students and readers develop habits of ongoing reflection and adaptation, preparing them not only for immediate dilemmas but for a lifetime of moral engagement with technological change.

Literature as Ethical Laboratory

English literature offers more than allegory or speculation—it functions as an ethical laboratory, simulating situations that compel readers to grapple with questions of justice, responsibility, and relationality. Through narrative, literature elicits empathy, frames philosophical debates in accessible forms, and challenges the reader to inhabit the perspectives of both human and non-human subjects.

Importantly, literary fiction transcends the limitations of formal logic and mathematical models. It engages affect, ambiguity, and irony—tools essential for confronting the moral uncertainties of emerging technologies (Nussbaum, 1990). By revisiting texts across various stages of life and in diverse contexts, readers cultivate a sustained habit of critical reflection and moral resilience, embodying the very essence of lifelong learning.

From *Frankenstein* to *Klara*

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/2003) remains the classic starting point. Victor Frankenstein's refusal to take responsibility for his creation highlights a timeless concern: do creators owe moral obligations to their creations (Gunkel, 2018)? Fast forward two centuries, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021) presents a different vision. Klara, an "Artificial Friend," demonstrates empathy, sacrifice, and moral attentiveness—challenging the notion that only humans possess ethical worth (Ferrando, 2019). Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* (1950) popularised the "Three Laws of Robotics." Nevertheless, his stories revealed how rigid rules break down in practice, anticipating today's AI challenges, in which algorithms often stumble over moral nuance (Coeckelbergh, 2020). These literary explorations remain strikingly relevant in debates about AI ethics and machine responsibility (Boddington, 2017).

Conclusion

English literature provides a vital cultural framework for exploring the ethical implications of artificial intelligence. From the moral failures of *Frankenstein* to the empathy of *Klara*, literary texts interrogate what it means to create, control, and coexist with intelligent machines. As AI continues to evolve, the ethical insights offered by literature remain indispensable—not merely as reflections of cultural anxiety but as active contributions to moral reasoning and public discourse.

Crucially, this process also aligns with the principles of **lifelong learning**. By engaging with fiction as a form of ethical inquiry, individuals develop an ongoing capacity for critical self-examination, ethical awareness, and intellectual adaptability. Literature thus serves not only as a mirror of society's technological anxieties but also as a lifelong resource for cultivating the moral imagination and ethical resilience necessary to respond wisely to the challenges and opportunities posed by artificial intelligence.

References

Asimov, I. (1950). *I, Robot*. Gnome Press.

Boddington, P. (2017). *Towards a code of ethics for artificial intelligence*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-60648-4

Burri, R. V. (2015). Imaginations of science in literature: The role of fiction in the ethical deliberation of emerging technologies. *Nano Ethics, 9*(2), 161–170. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11569-015-0220-y

Coeckelbergh, M. (2020). *AI ethics*. MIT Press.

Ferrando, F. (2019). *Philosophical posthumanism*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Gunkel, D. J. (2018). *Robot rights*. MIT Press.

Ishiguro, K. (2021). *Klara and the Sun*. Faber & Faber.

Nussbaum, M. C. (1990). *Love's knowledge: Essays on philosophy and literature*. Oxford University Press.

Shelley, M. (1818/2003). *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*. Penguin Classics.