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THE METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATION
OF THE POSTHUMAN IN IAN MCEWAN'S "MACHINES LIKE ME"

As technological progress continues to develop rapidly, humanity's perception of its place in the world and reality itself is undergoing a continuous evolution. A natural reaction to the accelerating pace of technological growth is the

emergence of new worldview concepts prevailing in the social and cultural environment. One of the most controversial concepts, which has been widely discussed in literature, culture, social studies, and philosophy since the end of the 20th century, is the concept of the *posthuman*.

The term *posthuman* has its roots in the 17th century. It was an English lexicographer Thomas Blount (1618–1679) who introduced the word *posthumian* in his "Glossographia" (1656). He defined it as "following or to come, that shall be" [1, p. 119]. At present, there is no consensus on the definition of posthuman. The reason for that is that the concept is viewed differently within different academic disciplines and movements, resulting in a wide array of perspectives among scholars.

The study of the posthuman predominantly occurs within the frameworks of posthumanism and transhumanism which "arose in the late 1980s/early 1990s" [2, p. 27]. These are the two interrelated philosophical and theoretical paradigms that examine the evolving relationship between humans and technology. Within these movements, the *posthuman* is perceived in different ways, but there is also something that unites them.

Both posthumanism and transhumanism question "their relationship to humanism and reconsider what it means to be human" and "are streaming *beyond humanity*," [3, p. 7]. In brief, posthumanism tends to emphasise the idea of surpassing traditional human limitations and boundaries, often questioning the centrality of the human in the grand scheme of existence. Transhumanism focuses on the enhancement of human capabilities and the transformation of the human condition through technologies.

As for understanding the posthuman, if in the framework of posthumanism the posthuman is the central concept, then in transhumanism it is the transhuman, that is, the transitional stage from human to posthuman, "the link between human and posthuman" [3, p. 12]. According to one of the famous representatives of posthumanism, Francesca Ferrando, an important question that needs to be asked when distinguishing between posthumanism and other schools is the question of whether we, that is, people of our time, already are posthumans. In transhumanism, some people "can be currently defined as transhuman" [2, p. 28], merging with technologies. In addition, some people "may become posthuman in the close future" [2, p. 28]. On the contrary, within the framework of posthumanism, it is assumed that "we" have already become posthuman.

Still, what unites the two paradigms is the understanding that posthuman in both movements does not imply the end of the human race. Posthuman signals "the end of a certain conception of the human" [4, p. 286]. It is about indicating a shared relationship between humans and non-humans, where the interaction blurs the distinctions between the two. Such a vector of worldview quickly became a subject of interest not only among researchers and academic studies, but also in art and culture. In this article, we will consider the concept of the posthuman as a borderline state in one of the modern novels.

Nowadays, the popularity of posthuman fiction is rising. Usually the main characters in this type of literature are either robots or androids or clones, in other

words, artificial humanoids. One of the most striking manifestations of the complexity of human/non-human relationship is the use of metaphors. Let us explore this on the basis of a recent novel, namely Ian McEwan's "Machines Like Me".

"Machines Like Me" was published in 2019. It is set in an alternative version of the world in 1982. Robots and humans already coexist in this world, but their hierarchy has not yet been established, or rather, as it becomes clear in the course of the novel, it is unbalanced. This uncertainty in the relationship between humans and robots can be traced both at the plot, explicit level, and at the metaphorical level.

Analysing Ian McEwan's novel, we rely on the understanding of metaphor within the framework of cognitive linguistics, developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their book "Metaphors We Live By" (1980). Based on their seminal study, what is designated by the term *mapping* was developed. Mapping refers to "systematic metaphorical correspondences between closely related ideas" [5, p. 190]. As they wrote, the essence of metaphor is "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" [6, p. 5]. Therefore, metaphor can be defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another one. Metaphors play an important role in consciousness, and therefore, in literature, they are important for creating an image of a character, especially a narrator, a character from whose point of view the narrative is conducted.

There are three central characters in the novel "Machines Like Me". The novel is written from the point of view of thirty-two-year-old Charlie Friend. Another human is Miranda, his neighbour who is to become Charlie's girlfriend. Finally, there is a robot named Adam, with the purchase of which the novel begins. In this article, we will focus on Charlie and Adam.

As Charlie proclaims, he bought Adam out of curiosity: he "handed over a fortune in the name of curiosity, that steadfast engine of science, of intellectual life, of life itself" [7, p. 13]. From the very beginning, the hierarchy of the relationship between Charlie and Adam seems to be predetermined by this fact of purchase. However, Charlie's curiosity takes the human relationship to the robot into a different dimension than the relationship between the owner and the owner's thing. Charlie initially recognises the presence of an "intellectual life" in Adam, but there is much more to Adam, as it turns out, and this is manifested through metaphors.

Let us now turn to the very beginning of the novel, namely its title and epigraph. The title contains part of Adam's phrase from Chapter 9. This is his so-called deathbed speech. Addressing Charlie and Miranda, Adam is going to read his last poem to them. Adam warns that although the poem mentions leaves and trees, it has a deeper meaning – it's about "*machines like me and people like you and our future together*" and "the sadness that's to come" [7, p. 279]. In this regard, the epigraph looks particularly meaningful. As an epigraph, McEwan chose two lines from a poem by Rudyard Kipling. It is the poem "The Secret of the Machines" (1943), the lyrical subject of which is a machine. McEwan brings out the main law of machines, namely: "We are not built to comprehend a lie" [8,

p. 306]. Obviously, this is the defining distinguishing feature between humans and machines. One way or another, in the novel this is refracted, and the line between man and robot is blurred.

In this article, we will highlight four main metaphors that are developed in the novel. Let us begin with the metaphor ANDROID IS A CHILD. The word *child* implies that the android has parents and a family. The text presents two versions of who Adam's parents are. A version close to real life is that Adam's parents are Charlie and Miranda. This should be taken metaphorically, because Adam is designed to be "a companion, an intellectual sparring partner, friend and factotum" [7, p. 3] and not a child. The metaphor in the novel manifests itself in the way Charlie sees him, and in the way Charlie and Miranda behave with him. In Chapter 1, Adam's skin is described as lifelike. It "was warm to the touch and *as smooth as a child's…*" [7, p. 3]. As for Charlie and Miranda's treatment, let us turn to Chapter 1 as well. Charlie says that "like eager young *parents*," they were "avid for his first words" [7, p. 3]. At the same time, Adam is perceived by Charlie not only as his child. In Chapter 1 as well, he calls electronics and anthropology a kind of parents of Adam: "Electronics and anthropology – distant cousins whom late modernity has drawn together and bound in marriage. The *child* of that coupling was Adam" [7, p. 13].

It is also interesting that in Chapter 1, Charlie talks a little about his childhood. This makes it possible to compare Charlie and Adam from that perspective. Charlie is "the only child of a musician father and community-nurse mother" [7, p. 12]. His childhood was "culturally undernourished" [7, p. 12] due to the lack of time. In a sense, Adam is also an only child, if you consider him the child of Charlie and Miranda. However, Adam gets what Charlie failed to get in his time, namely cultural development. We will return to this idea later.

The next metaphor is ANDROID IS A TOY. The original functionality of Adam does not imply that the robot will be used for gaming purposes or just as a toy. However, Charlie calls Adam his "interesting toy" [7, p. 53] in Chapter 2, and the upcoming coexistence with him for Charlie is an adventure. This revives the dead metaphor of LIFE IS A GAME due to the fact that although Charlie is playing with a computer, this computer is not passive and can respond to him. The metaphor of an ANDROID IS A TOY is not permanent, because a toy is an inanimate object, whereas in Adam Charlie gradually begins to see signs of what would seem to be unusual for a machine, namely signs of life, of a distinct self.

Here we should turn to Chapter 10. In the last chapter of the novel, the dialogue between Charlie and Sir Alan Turing takes place, after Charlie destroys his android. Turing assures Charlie that he was not "simply smashing" his "own toy" [7, p. 303]. Turing insists that Adam "was sentient. He had a self" [7, p. 303]. Meanwhile, in Chapter 7, as Charlie notices that Adam is gradually gaining knowledge about the world, he notes: "My mind was empty, his was filling" [7, p. 199]. It turns out that Charlie's mind also seems to be a kind of container that can be filled with knowledge (CONTAINER metaphor), just like Adam's mind, and they turn out to be the same in this ability, but different in the level of its development.

From Turing's speech, it can be concluded that in the novel there is a metaphor ANDROID IS A HUMAN BEING. But, as it becomes clear from the title of the novel, the conventional perception of robots is questioned and turned upside down. That is why we can speak about the metaphor of HUMAN IS A MACHINE. The scene that may be considered climactic in this regard is the one in which Miranda's father mistakes Charlie for a robot. The inversion also lies in the way Charlie views himself after Adam's "death": "I imagined myself as a servant in pre-industrial times…" [7, p. 296]. Charlie sees Adam as his lord, overturning the original hierarchy of the relationship between humans and machines. In addition, if we go back to what we talked about when discussing the ANDROID IS A CHILD metaphor, it is important to note that Adam develops as a person throughout the novel, whereas Charlie freezes in a state of stagnation. Adam writes a lot of poems, whereas Charlie has never written poetry. Adam falls in love, which is a capacity associated with human beings. Adam perceives his existence as life, which is also peculiar to humans.

To conclude, the human and the robot in Ian McEwan's novel seem to swap places. The properties characteristic of a human are attributed to a robot, and vice versa. Thus, one of the perennial questions of literature – what it means to be human – is raised by the author within the framework of posthumanism and is addressed through the use of conceptual metaphors.

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