**The role of metaphors in blurring the boundaries between humans and machines**

**in Ian McEwan's "Machines Like Me"**

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In the age when people are increasingly concerned about the growing omnipotence of AI, posthuman literature that features androids as central characters is gaining popularity. One of the examples of speculative/posthuman fiction is a recent novel by the contemporary British writer Ian McEwan "Machines Like Me" (2019), which shows an alternative version of the world in 1982, where manufactured humans become uncannily superior to their masters. The moral ambiguity of the relationship between androids and humans is conveyed primarily through the writer's choice of conceptual metaphors.

Metaphor has always been seen as a highly creative linguistic phenomenon [Semino 2008: 42] and identified as an integral part of literary texts [Freeman 2007: 1182]. 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 seminal study "Metaphors We Live By" (1980). They have shown that metaphor is widespread in everyday language and in thought and is defined as a conceptual mapping from the source domain to the target domain.

The essence of metaphor is comprehending and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another [Lakoff, Johnson 1980: 5]. Therefore, we can assume that the metaphor is inextricably linked with the inversion of a number of concepts for one purpose or another and the blurring of boundaries between them, which we will consider further.

In the novel "Machines Like Me" there are three main characters: the thirty-two-year-old narrator Charlie, his neighbour-turned-lover Miranda and a robot named Adam. Though the events are recounted by Charlie and seen from his perspective, the title of the novel is a quote from Adam: “It’s about *machines like me* *and people like you* and our future together.” [McEwan 2019: 279] Adam addresses Charlie and Miranda, while simultaneously drawing a line between humans and robots and uniting them in a common future. The epigraph to the novel, taken from the poem "The Secret of the Machines" (1943) by Rudyard Kipling, is also a text written from the point of view of the machine, which reveals one of its distinct features: “We are not built to comprehend a lie” [Kipling 1962: 306]. It is this lying, so characteristic of humans and so alien to robots, that leads to the unresolvable conflict of the book. At the beginning of the novel, when Charlie purchases Adam, the latter is expected to be “a companion, an intellectual sparring partner, friend and factotum” [McEwan 2019: 3]. However, as the text progresses, Charlie learns more about his android, trying to figure out who Adam is to him.

For example, one of the first metaphors introduced in the text is ANDROID IS A CHILD, that is, *Charlie, Miranda and Adam are a family* (the so-called genetic metaphor). Adam looks like an adult, he is not designed to play the role of a child, but Charlie perceives the process of Adam's adaptation to the environment as that of a child. This metaphor is manifested in Adam's descriptions (“<…> his lifelike skin was warm to the touch and *as smooth as* *a child's*…” [McEwan 2019: 3]) and in Charlie and Miranda's treatment of him (“<…> the kind of illusion parents have in relation to their children’s personalities” [McEwan 2019: 8]).

Another important metaphor that features in the text is ANDROID IS A TOY. In Chapter 2, Charlie calls Adam “my interesting toy” [McEwan 2019: 53]. At the end of the novel, Sir Alan Turing, talking to Charlie and accusing him of destroying Adam, returns to this metaphor, saying: “You weren't simply smashing up your own toy, like a spoiled child” [McEwan 2019: 303]. With his speech, Turing highlights the metaphor that is most important in terms of our research, ANDROID IS A HUMAN BEING, or at least Adam is a living creature with a personality(“You tried to destroy a life. He was sentient. He had a self” [McEwan 2019: 303]). This metaphor is reinforced by the ontological possession (*having* aself) and container metaphors (“<…> its merged personality installed…” [McEwan 2019: 53]), which also applies to Charlie (“My mind was empty, his was filling” [McEwan 2019: 199]). Interestingly, at the very beginning Charlie perceived Adam as a child, and at the end Turing compares Charlie to a child. This enhances the effect of inversion central to the novel.

But not only is it true that MACHINES ARE HUMANS, but HUMANS ARE MACHINES. Charlie's life is more like a programmed existence than Adam's. At the end of the novel, when Charlie destroys Adam, he sees himself as his servant, and Adam as his lord (“I imagined myself as a servant in pre-industrial times…” [McEwan 2019: 296]), overturning the original hierarchy of the relationship between humans and machines. In the process of learning, Adam becomes interested in literature and even writes his own poems, which is typical of people, whereas Charlie is mistaken for an android by his girlfriend's father. In the future, Adam's consciousness can be rebooted into another body, that is, there is a possibility of his rebirth.

To sum up, Ian McEwan's novel blurs the boundaries between humans and machines through the use of metaphors in relation to both Adam and Charlie and makes the reader question what constitutes humanity and moral integrity.

**References**

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