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Sense and Sensibility: Rationalism and Irrationalism in selected novels of Ian McEwan

Submitted by **Candice de Canha** to the University of The Witwatersrand as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature, May 2013.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Date……Signature……...…….

Abstract

Critics have widely assumed that Ian McEwan, being a New-Humanist, advocates rationalism in his novels. In this study I interrogate this assumption by analysing the interplay between "sense" and "sensibility" in his fiction. My dissertation focuses on the themes, language, point of view, narrative structures and symbolism in McEwan's novels. It has taken the form of a comparative textual analysis and close reading of four of McEwan's texts which I believe highlight the debate around "sense and sensibility" most explicitly: *Enduring Love* (1997); *Amsterdam* (1998); *Atonement* (2001) and *Saturday* (2005). The fact that the characters who represent rationalism are always male brings into question the role of gender within McEwan's novels. Whether McEwan is a realist, modernist or postmodern writer, is another debate that emerges, when studying rationalism in his works. My project therefore addresses the conundrum of whether an author can be both a humanist and a postmodern writer, despite these ideologies seeming irreconcilable. This study examines the ways in which McEwan passes through these seemingly contradictory novelistic discourses, and ultimately rejects the moral indeterminacy of postmodern poetics, proving him to be a polygot writer. Finally, I conclude by arguing that McEwan does not promote "sense over sensibility" but rather suggests a balance between the two. This research stimulates debate around morality, gender and the challenges of 'defining' a postmodern novel.

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Introduction: McEwan and the Rational Man

In *Enduring Love* (1997), Joe Rose is a scientific rationalist and materialist science writer; Clarissa is an English lecturer specialising in Romanticism and John Keats; Jed Perry is a madman with strongly defined religious feelings. All three of these characters are lovers in different forms. Similar characters – the scientific rationalist, the obsessive religious madman, and the literary scholar – are often brought together in McEwan's novels. Henry Perowne, in *Saturday* (2005), is a rationalist and neurosurgeon; his daughter Daisy is a literary poet; and Baxter is a criminal who faces the loss of consciousness from the dreaded Huntington's disease. Much of the novels' action is motivated by the clash of the different worldviews of the rationalist and religious or literary characters. "Sense" and "sensibility" are thus juxtaposed in McEwan's novels.

Amsterdam (1998) similarly epitomizes the central concerns of McEwan's oeuvre. Like *Enduring Love* and *Saturday,* it is a study of extremely disturbed psychological states. Clive and Vernon's "self-deception" and total immersion in their professions echo the pathological psychologies of the characters in McEwan's other novels – Jed's obsession with Joe (*Enduring Love*), deep psychological trauma (Baxter's taking hostage of the Perowne family in *Saturday*), and the influence of the past on the present (Briony's attempt to atone for her "crime" in *Atonement*). McEwan depicts how a happy, stable environment can be disrupted by an external force or event, or by losing sight of reality. Joe in *Enduring Love* goes from being a happy character, on a picnic with his beautiful partner, to being stalked and harassed by a madman. Similarly, in *Saturday,* Henry Perowne turns down the wrong street and his car collides with the thug Baxter who terrorises his family. Although McEwan illustrates the fragility of love, in *Enduring Love*, with Jed's advances driving Joe and Clarissa apart, he argues for the redeeming power of love.

Ian McEwan, a self-proclaimed New Humanist[1], endorses a rationalist perspective of life, and critics have assumed that 'rationalism' is promoted in many of his texts. McEwan's critique of irrational reasoning has been noted, in particular where the biological, emotional,

[1] Humanism is "[t]he worldview founded on the belief in the irreducible dignity of humans, a belief in the efficacy and worth of human freedom and hence also of human responsibility" (Quine, 1987, p. 60). This form of humanism has its roots in the Enlightenment, in Kant's defense of the moral law. "New Humanism" is self-consciously "new," like New Labour; it has its own journal, the *New Humanist*, and its own sages, the most prominent of whom is Richard Dawkins, author of *The Selfish Gene* and vice-president of the British Humanist Association, of which McEwan is a member. The new humanism spends little time exalting man as an ideal. It says little about faith, hope, and charity; is scathing about patriotism and dismissive of rearguard actions in defense of family, public spirit, and sexual restraint. Instead of idealizing man, the new humanism attacks belief in God as a human weakness, and thus advocates rationalism (Brockman, 2006).

volitional, the unconscious or the existential is favoured at the expense of the rational. By contrast, the central aim of this study is to show that McEwan portrays the value of "sense" and "sensibility", although he shows that when characters base their beliefs on their emotions and intuition, they are "deceiving" themselves, as Jean-Paul Sartre would say (Sartre, 2003, p. 50). The reference to *Sense and Sensibility* in the title refers to debates around epistemology or different types of knowledge: "sense" has been used to refer to rationalism, and to the ability to think through things with a practical wisdom or common sense this is juxtaposed with the term "sensibility" which here has been used to refer to the capacity to "feel," or to a person's emotions, which is often associated with the "irrational." "Sense" and "Sensibility" are also used to represent the apparent juxtaposition of the sciences and the arts. I have examine this binary in Western thought, in order to illuminate the key characters in McEwan's fiction, who often represent or struggle with the "sense" versus "sensibility" dichotomy.

The title of the dissertation is clearly derived from Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). In *Atonement* (2001) the attitudes and actions of Briony – like Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* – are determined by 'sensibility' rather than 'sense'. McEwan clearly represents this as morally dubious and leading to disaster, much as it does with Marianne. Marianne's 'sensibility' constrasts sharply with Elinor's sceptical or pessimistic view of man's nature. Similarly, in *Atonement* (2001) the character Robbie represents rationalism and Briony irrationalism. "Sense over sensibility" would appear to describe the characters of Joe Rose, Henry Perowne and Robbie Turner, all of whom represent good sense, are able to distinguish between the "real" and fantasy, so that they can do the morally right thing in each situation, much like Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility*. It could thus be argued that McEwan's fiction – like Austen's – endorses sense or good reason over sensibility. This is the central assumption that my study sets out to interrogate.

Is is useful at this stage to provide an overview of critical responses to McEwan's fiction. David Malcolm (2002) explores the rational, as a function of knowledge, in *Enduring Love* and shows that McEwan illustrates that reason can only work with its own perspective on events, using available evidence to test its conclusions. He also suggests that the main message of the novel is that, "…knowledge is an uncertain thing, difficult to achieve, subject to revision, but is attainable, and the best way to it is through …rationalism, materialism and traditional science" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 178-179). I agree that objective disinterested truth is elusive, and I have argued that McEwan suggests that it does not make it less admirable to try.

Peter Childs points out an irony here, in that McEwan's endorsement of rationalism challenges the novel's ability to make sense of the world, as an art form rooted in the imagination. Advocacy of rationalism also contrasts with Clarissa's research interest in the Romantic poet John Keats. Significantly, Keats' famous dictum was 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' from 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (1820). While rationalism is praised in his novels, McEwan shows a deep interest in the stories that people tell in order to make sense of the world (Childs, 2006, p. 110). Thus the metafictional structure of McEwan's novels continues his concern with epistemological questions in the content of the novels.

As the critics Kiernan Ryan and Jack Slay point out, McEwan started out as a writer obsessed with the macabre and even came to be known as "Ian Macabre" (Childs, 2006). We also see a hint of Iris Murdoch's taste for the acceptably macabre in McEwan's latest novel *Solar* (2010). The continuities in McEwan's work are obscured by this early tendency, according to Ryan, and for this reason I have chosen to omit McEwan's earlier works such as *The Cement Garden* (1978) and *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), which deal more with the grotesque than the issues of society. McEwan himself recognises this trend in his earlier work and said in an interview that the greater political and social engagement in his later novels "was something [he] intended, because [he] had begun to feel rather trapped by the kind of thing [he] had been writing. [He] had been labelled as the chronicler of comically exaggerated psychopathic states of mind or of adolescent anxiety, snot and pimples."[2] Although psychopathology still haunts McEwan's work there is also a new interest in social issues, directly engaging with social and political concerns. In *Amsterdam*, the disastrous consequences of hyper-rationalism are shown with Clive and Vernon dying at the end of the novel. This brings to attention moral dilemmas, such as euthanasia, which have been studied in relation to "sense and sensibility." David Malcolm notes that books such as *Enduring Love* and *Amsterdam* revert to the closed-in, psychologically disturbed worlds of McEwan's earlier works and to overemphasise the social and political in these two more recent works would be wrong. Both novels focus on the psychological make-up of the characters although a political dimension is incorporated into the novel through the satirical representation of society (Malcolm, 2002).

McEwan, I argue, interrogates a specific range of related issues, probing a bit further and deeper in each novel. The four novels selected for this dissertation have been chosen because

[2] John Haffenden, *Novelists in Interview*, London and New York: Metheun, 1985, p. 175 (as cited by David Malcolm, 2002).

they represent rationalism (sense) in some way as well as the moral dilemmas that we face in contemporary society. *Enduring Love, Amsterdam*, *Atonement*, and *Saturday* suggest that humans are unreliable and are blinded by their emotions; cynicism therefore needs to be employed to determine the truth.

To reiterate, the central thematic concern of this study is thus to examine the apparent juxtapositioning scientific rationalism or "sense" and emotionalism or "sensibility" in these novels. A further objective is to show how individual works continue to inform and energize ontological debates today. In my examination of humanist concerns in McEwan's fiction, I have studied how the four novels in this dissertation all combine a concern with rationalism (sense) in some way with the moral dilemmas that we face in society. Indeed, in all four novels the question of morality is foregrounded: Joe, in *Enduring Love,* questions whether he was responsible for Logan's death in the ballooning accident; Henry Perowne, in *Saturday,* deals with his moral obligations to his patients; and a variety of profound moral questions are posed in *Amsterdam*, to do with everything from sexuality to euthanasia.

The question of whether McEwan is a postmodern writer is unavoidable when undertaking a textual analysis of his fiction. Certainly, the stylistic features of his novels that may be called 'postmodern' appear difficult to reconcile with his humanist concerns. Jameson states that postmodern discourses resist propositional truth, foundations or origins, affirmative content or closure, since they are self-referential, indeterminate and intertextual, thus refusing the autonomy of the author: "the crucial feature of what we have called a theoretical aesthetic lies in its organisation around this particular taboo, which excludes the philosophic proposition as such and thereby statements about being as well as judgements about truth" (Jameson, 1991, p. 392). If McEwan is to be seen as a postmodern writer he would, in theory, reject abstract systems of philosophy such as the rationalism of humanism. My project addresses the conundrum of whether an author can be both a humanist and a postmodern writer, despite the fact that these ideologies seem irreconcilable.

Patricia Waugh (2005) claims that McEwan is a postmodern writer, an indictment that curiously contrasts, for example, with Andrew Foley's contention (2009) that McEwan's fiction represents a continuation of the "great tradition" in English literature. Waugh and Foley's contradictory opinions are by no means a rare phenomenon in the critical assessment of McEwan's work. Indeed, sometimes critics hold contradictory opinions simultaneously. Malcolm, for example, writes that McEwan is a postmodern writer who covers a wide variety

of epistemological problems, while Brian McHale posits that the dominant mode of postmodern texts is ontological,[3] instead of being epistemological[4] as with modernist texts (McHale, 2000, p. 40). The question of whether McEwan is a realist, modernist or postmodern writer, is one of many debates raised when studying rationalism in his works. I will argue that McEwan's novels, seen as whole, in fact cover a wide variety of epistemological and ontological problems. McEwan himself is aware of the contradictions inherent in his work:

> I have contradictory fantasies and aspirations about my work. I like precision and clarity in sentences, and I value the implied meaning, the spring, in the space between them. Certain observed details I revel in and consider ends in themselves. I prefer a work of fiction to be self-contained, supported by its own internal struts and beams, resembling the world, but somehow immune from it… Against all this, I value a documentary quality, and an engagement with a society and its values…Perhaps I can reconcile, or at least summarise, these contradictory impulses in this way: the process of writing a novel is educative in two senses; as the work unfolds, it teaches you its own rules, it tells how it should be written; at the same time it is an act of discovery, in a harsh world, of the precise extent of human worth (www.contemporarywriters.com).[5]

Contradictory or seemingly irreconcilable critical positions point to the complexity of McEwan's fiction and consequently to the difficulty in pinning down his literary achievement in simple terms.

Although the novels diverge philosophically from realist and modernist conventions, they do not diverge structurally. Hutcheon states that to define something as "postmodern" is difficult because of the inherent paradox in the term: "Postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concept it challenges" (Hutcheon, 1980, p. 3). Fiction, according to Hutcheon, is a way of constructing reality; this construction and the need for it are forgrounded in postmodernism. In addition the postmodern novel offers "an infinite plurality of representations" (Hutcheon, p. 3), whereas the realist novel typically reflects the idea that if truth exists, it is "mind independent" (Wolfreys, Robbins & Womack, 2002, p. 85). In this sense McEwan may be seen as a

[3] Ontology is the "branch of philosophy addressing the meaning or essence of being" (Wolfreys, Robbins & Womack, 2002, p. 73).
[4] Epistemology is "the branch of philosophy which covers the grounds and forms of knowledge" (Wolfreys, Robbins & Womack, 2002, p. 37).
[5] I. McEwan. "Author's Statement," *Contemporay Writers*, 6 July 2009. Available URL:**http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth70**

postmodern novelist whose work exemplifies the tension between the "presentation and subversion of realist conventions" (Hutcheon, p. 6). The texts direct our attention "not to fictions of origins and ends but to the process of consciousness itself as it constructs and deconstructs such fictions" (Hutcheon, p. 6).

In "The Postmodern Condition," Jean-Francois Lyotard shows how customary knowledge has been eroded in our post-industrial world, while grand narrative has lost its credibility (Lyotard, 1979). McEwan uses this idea of the grand narrative as a mythic framework. Indeed, McEwan is preoccupied with the philosophical, cultural and political instability of the contemporary world and the difficulty of "knowing"-it – a postmodern concern. Moreover, just as Lyotard portrays the shift from the ideal of a common culture to a fractured, multicultural society, so too does McEwan. He therefore offers a humanist critique of the western metaphysical tradition and the positivism of modern science.[6]

In "Self, World and Art in the Fiction of John Fowles" (1996) Susana Onega argues that Fowles can be considered both an existential and postmodern writer. (Onega, 1996) I find this essay useful in terms of the similar argument I make about McEwan's fiction. Onega states that Fowles is an example of a creative and innovative author who provides "the missing link between modernism and postmodernism" (Onega, 1996, p. 37). I too argue that McEwan provides this "missing link," employing mimetic transparency, to rejuvenate established literary traditions. Onega states that Fowles renews the novel, while retaining intelligibility and the old humanist values of classic realism. I argue the same for McEwan. According to Hutcheon and John Barth (1980), this "longing for the return to the traditional relish in storytelling," along with the desire for the modernist "consolation of form," is the main characteristic of contemporary fiction.

I further argue that McEwan represents the tensions and oppositions between self and world, revealing important links between modernism and postmodernism as he tries to absorb and transcend the modernist mode of writing. At first glance McEwan's novels appear to be realist, in that they conduct mimetic reportage of reality, and seem to imply that reality can be known, or that there are explanations of the empirical world. However, this study will argue that while McEwan employs realist conventions, and is concerned with issues such as confronting the breakdown in political and cultural consensus, the emergence of new political identities, and of a new technologically driven information culture, he self-consciously

[6] Positivism is a philosophical system recognizing only facts and observable phenomena.

undermines this mode with the fragmentedness of his texts, and their metafictional components. In this way he assimilates continental versions of textual self – referentiality and social constructionism into a more conventional, realist tradition.

John Barth's parodic mechanism of absorption and rejection offers a way out of the intellectual stalemate between existentialism and postmodernism. Barth argues that parody is the only means through which the contemporary writer can assimilate and emulate past forms of literature.[7] In his article "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1967), Barth describes how literature reaches a point of exhaustion as it degenerates in the hands of multiple generations. A new literary form will be created by absorption of the old literary form and a remoulding of the exhausted form by the creative writer, taking the conventions of this form to the limit. In his essay, "The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodern Fiction" (1980), Barth takes this idea further, describing how classic realism and modernism are "exhausted forms" and how they contribute to the new literary form of postmodernism. Postmodern literature therefore absorbs and transcend classic realism and modernism, in a parodic manner. Drawing on Barth, my contention is that McEwan conducts a multilayered absorption and parodic recasting of the literary tradition he emerges from. While McEwan conveys the postmodern message that "words are lies", he simultaneously suggests in his fiction that there are empirical truths that fiction can capture, such as the "truths" about World War II, in *Atonement*. Thus McEwan parodies past literary forms, emulating their traditions, while simultaneously pointing out their flaws. Not only does he present the idea that fiction can capture parts of history, but he shows how it can go beyond this and can act as a form of catharsis for past hurts, as we see in *Atonement,* with Briony's novella. It is therefore not "sense over sensibility" that McEwan advances, since art or "sensibility" is able to capture reality through a form of catharsis.

According to Patricia Waugh, British and Irish novels have avoided the more exuberant textual playfulness found in other postmodern texts and have thus been seen as stagnant and backward-looking, because they do not explicitly engage with postmodern and poststructuralist ideas (Waugh, 2005). Waugh argues that reductive versions of postmodernism have been disseminated and as a result novelists such as McEwan, who have attempted to negotiate theoretical ideas through the framework of a contested empiricism, have been neglected. McEwan uses both the indigenous British tradition of philosophy-

[7] Parody is **"**[t]he exaggerated imitation of traditional styles, the mixing of high and popular culture" (Wolfreys, Robbins & Womack, p. 76).

rooted moral and cultural critique and the realist tradition in his fiction, in addition to postmodern stylistics (Waugh, p. 69).

McEwan constantly engages with the canon of English literature. In each novel he shows a longing for narrative authority, starting with *Enduring Love* (1997). The same can be said of his satirical novel *Amsterdam* (1998). *Atonement* (2001) also aligns McEwan with English fiction with its references to John Keats, and Jane Austen, even though it exposes our willingness to suspend disbelief at the end of the novel. *Saturday* (2005) and *Solar* (2009) continue to consider the debate about the value of the imagination and the moral question of aesthetically representing history.

When intertextuality is employed by an author, the meaning of the text is shaped by other texts[8] (Kristeva, 1980). Intertextuality works on two levels: it can be the absorption or recasting of a prior text, by the author, or it can refer to a reader's referencing of one text, while reading another. William Irwin states that the term "intertextuality" "has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Kristeva's original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence" (Irwin, 2004, p.228). Although the technique of intertextuality itself is not new, having been employed in the bible, as a theoretical concept it is associated with postmodernism, because it undermines the role of the author as a valid meaning creator (Irwin, 2004). Irwin bemoans the fact that intertextuality has come to be interchangeable with the literary device of allusion, which has a clear definition unlike the former term. Linda Hutcheon clarifies that intertextuality can be found "in the eye of the beholder" and does not necessarily have to be intended by the author, whose role as author then becomes obscured, unlike the device of allusion which is particularly intended by the author (Hutcheon, 1985). The literary device of parody, in contrast to intertextuality, involves the author actively encoding a text as imitation. According to Kristeva meaning is not imparted directly from the writer to the reader but is conveyed through "codes" transferred to the author and readers from other texts, and "the notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of intersubjectivity" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 69).

I argue that McEwan uses both the indigenous British tradition of philosophy-rooted moral and cultural critique and the realist tradition in his fiction. In his novels, humans are

[8] "Intertextuality" is a "[t]erm coined originally by Julia Kristeva, intertextuality refers to the ways in which all utterances (whether written or spoken) necessarily refer to other utterances, since words and linguistic/grammatical structures pre-exist the individual speaker and the individual speech. Intertextuality can take place consciously, as when a writer sets out to quote from or allude to the works of another. But it always, in some sense, takes place in all utterance" (Wolfreys, Robbins & Womack, 2002, p.5 7-58).

unreliable and blinded by emotions; cynicism must be employed to determine truth. Scientific rationalism (or "sense") and emotionalism (or "sensibility") are thus juxtaposed. McEwan shows opposed conceptions of self and world, illustrating important links between modernism and postmodernism, and tries to absorb and transcend modernist modes of writing.

The particular novels chosen for this study illustrate that McEwan progressively moves away from humanism and realism towards postmodern ideology, though hesitatingly. In *Saturday* McEwan conveys the most developed resolution to the question of self, world and art addressed in his earlier works. Baxter represents the fragmented subject; McEwan however, shows how myth or literature can reunite Baxter as a subject and cosmically integrate him, while at the same time reminding us that the human transcendence he provides is only an artificial expression. McEwan also uses realism-enhancing mechanisms so that the reader is more likely to accept the validity of Baxter's awe-inspiring transcendence, even though it is a constructed reality. McEwan's recurrent theme that "telling stories is telling lies" leaves it up to the reader to decide if the constructed reality is true. This creates the possibility to construct alternative readings, which illuminates the postmodern characteristic of uncertainty, proving Linda Hutcheon's point that it is "a problematizing force in our culture today [that is] fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical and inescapably political" (Hutcheon, 1988, p.xi). The "political" that Hutcheon uses could be replaced with "ideological," because even though McEwan parodies previous literary forms and includes metafictional components in his writing, his attempt to save the transcendental function of art resembles the old modernist longing for mythical closure.

Three works that are critical in this study of Ian McEwan are: David Malcolm's *Understanding Ian McEwan* (2002); Peter Childs' *The Fiction of Ian McEwan: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (2006); and Andrew Foley's *The Imagination of Freedom: Critical Texts and Times in Contemporary Liberalism* (2009). David Malcolm explores reason and rationalism in McEwan's *Enduring Love* and is therefore particularly useful to this project. He also concludes that *Amsterdam* in part is a psychological study and morality tale (Malcolm, 2002). Dominic Head also points out that a substantial theme of the novel *Amsterdam* is that, "it may be in the nature of an unself-conscious professionalism to dispense with ethical foundations" (Head, 2002, p. 47). Childs, while he looks at rationalism in his criticism, records the polarised reactions to McEwan's novels, particularly noting the problem reviewers have with placing McEwan's novels in terms of genre. Finally, Andrew Foley

provides an in-depth analysis of *Saturday,* providing insights into issues such as morality, consciousness and the value of art. These works are central to this thesis.

The critic David Malcolm points out that similar character types, such as, the scientific rationalist, the lover and mystic are present in most of McEwan's writing, for example in *Black Dogs* and *The Child in Time.* This is true also of *Enduring Love* (Malcolm, 2002, p. 155). Amanda Craig, in the *New Statesman*, criticises the novel's retelling of well known scientific ideas and the pointless fascination that many critics find in McEwan's "schematic" opposition of science and the supernatural (Craig, 1997, p. 158). On the other hand, Donna Seaman, in *Booklist*, writes positively that "McEwan, a master stylist, has the complex psychology of this extreme yet credible situation [Jed's stalking Joe] down pat, managing, too, to subtly transform the struggle between Joe and Jed into a life-or-death battle between reason and faith, rationality and madness" (Seaman, as cited by Peter Childs, 2006). I personally find that McEwan's schematic opposition of science and the supernatural is not "silly" as Amanda Craig states, but rather that it is valuable in illustrating the deep fissures that run between his characters and, indeed, in society as a whole. This is important to note because of what it means for morality and epistemology, which will be discussed in the following chapters. In terms of this engagement with epistemological issues, then, McEwan's novels have been shown to set up a number of competing ways of making sense of the world, many of which contradict one another. I therefore agree with A.S. Byatt, who states that *Enduring Love* "juxtaposes a mad version of the plotted-ness of human relations, the divine design, the instant recognition of the beloved and destiny, with a human love which is vulnerable, can be destroyed by madness and certainty" (Byatt, 2001, p. 83).

McEwan illustrates that society is bifurcated by different ways of viewing the world and suggests that the only way forward is through altruism instead of selfishness. In the end, storytelling is a way of making sense of the world. The message from McEwan's novels therefore seems to be that the truth will not remain forever unattainable, but that more or less accurate versions of events are always in the process of being constructed. McEwan therefore endorses reason or sense, and sees the value in sensibility or art too. The literary devices and figurative language that McEwan employs will thus be analysed in order to discuss what his novels imply about contemporary dealings with the nature of truth, self, art and ethical relations in today's society. I will analyse in great detail the themes, language use, point of view, structures and symbolism in McEwan's novels, in order to explicate what they say about sense and sensibility.

Chapter 1: Self-Deception and Rationality in *Enduring Love*

McEwan explores whether it is a rationalist perspective of life, or an emotionalist perspective, that one should endorse in his novel *Enduring Love* (1997). It seems that in his novel, *Enduring Love* especially, he investigates the truth value of individual perception and rejects "objective" generalisations and totalitarian value judgements. It would appear that McEwan seems to endorse the protagonist Joe Rose's rationalist approach to problem-solving. He has outwardly expressed that this is the case. Indeed, Peter Childs quotes McEwan as saying:

> I wanted a man at the centre of this who was a clear thinker, who appears to be right but then perhaps is wrong, but in fact is right…I wanted, in other words, to write a book somewhat in praise of rationality which I think gets a very poor showing in western literature. Novels often end with a sort of hidden message that well, it's the one who trusted her heart or his intuition that saw him through. Well I think that there are many situations or most situations in life where in fact clear thinking and the rational sees you through (*Ian McEwan In Interview*, *Book Club*, 2000, as cited by Childs, 2006, p. 108-109).

After a closer look however, it would appear that love and the family unit are emphasised, making it unclear if it is sense over sensibility that McEwan endorses.

Joe Rose, the protagonist, of *Enduring Love* is a rationalist science journalist, popularising scientific theories for the general public (McEwan, 1997).[9] His partner Clarissa however, whom he has lived with in an informal marriage for several years, is an English lecturer and from the humanities, and a Keats scholar. The novel is based on the events following a tragic ballooning accident in which a man dies. It is at the site of this accident that Joe and Clarissa meet Jed Parry, another person involved in the accident. Jed is a religious character, who (it turns out) is obsessive and has a psychological disorder called de Clėrambault's syndrome, a symptom of which includes believing, despite evidence to the contrary, that an individual (in this case Joe Rose) is in love with him. Jed stalks Joe, even though the word "stalk" is never actually mentioned in the novel. Joe is driven mad by Jed's relentless pursuit and lands up going on an unsavoury mission to buy a gun. The novel's climax includes Jed holding Clarissa hostage at knifepoint and Joe shooting Jed in the arm. Despite the thrilling plot, *Enduring Love* is a novel focussed on its characters' psychologies and how rationalism is challenged by self-deception.[10] The clash of the different worldviews of the rational Joe and

[9] All references in parenthesis are to this addition.

[10] "Self-deception" is defined as, "…the purposeful intention or evasion of fully acknowledging something to oneself" (Quine, 1987, p. 203). This definition involves two key aspects of self-deception, firstly that the self-deceived is not utterly oblivious to the deception they are undergoing, they are getting themselves wrong, while

irrational Jed, along with the interweaving of love between the characters, makes *Enduring Love* a compelling novel.

Ian McEwan and the 'Rational Man'

The main focus of *Enduring Love* is on the protagonist Joe Rose, who relentlessly endorses scientific materialism and rationalism. Joe is a complex character who is deeply self-conscious (Malcolm, 2002, p. 164). Just as the novel offers an analysis of his behaviour and thoughts, so too does Joe, he analyses his own thoughts and actions. He constantly and even relentlessly listens to and observes himself. For example, after the ballooning accident, Joe both acts and watches himself act, "Like a self in a dream I was both first and third persons" (p. 21). When lying in bed with Clarissa, Joe states, "I was in a soap opera. *Now he's talking to his woman* [emphasis in original]. It was intimacy, a tight two-shot" (p. 23). Joe also analyses his feelings of guilt about the ballooning accident and his feeling that someone is following him in the London library (p. 46). In the case of Joe this aspect of his character differentiates him from the character Jed Parry, because as Malcolm points out, "Such self-consciousness makes self-deceit more difficult" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 164). Joe's "inner narrative" is different to everyone else's because he obsessively reflects on his thoughts and actions. For example, he neglects Clarissa because of what Dominic Head calls his "pathological rationality" (Head, 2009, p. 31).

Joe's self-awareness is also marked by his thought processes being called "calculations" and "double-entry book-keeping" (p. 111). Joe's world is one in which truth can be determined through rational thought and empirical evidence. The "hundred feet or so of box-files" and "the little skyscraper of a hard disk drive" (p. 98), with all of the information he needs, helps him determine the nature of Jed's illness. This commitment to order and control is part of Joe's worldview, which is central to the psychological focus of *Enduring Love* (Malcolm, 2002, p. 165). Malcolm aptly describes Joe's mindset:

> Joe is a character who is fact-oriented, materialist, rational, distrustful of emotions and what cannot be discussed logically, and extremely authoritative and confident in his pronouncements on the world. He is also a character who has a strong sense of failure and disappointment and is prone at times to irrational behaviour and ways of thought (Malcolm, 2002, p. 166).

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being aware of an alternative. Secondly, self-deception has a purpose, it is used in order to achieve a specific result, a particular theme or model of the self is maintained or promoted.

Joe's scientific materialism and rationalism is shown in his being unable to write love letters to Clarissa, as he says, "all that sincerity would permit me were the facts, and they seemed miraculous enough to me" (p. 7). Joe is referring to the fact that beautiful Clarissa could love someone such as himself, who is bald and unglamorous, which he finds unbelievable. Joe often uses facts or empirical data in order to draw conclusions: for example in his attempt to deconstruct the ballooning accident he calculates the percentage gradient of the slope above which the balloon hangs (p. 10-11), and assumes that each man had an average weight of sixty pounds (p. 58). Joe also describes Logan's death in a very impersonal manner, as the "closing down of countless interrelated neural and biochemical exchanges" (p. 25). Therefore, philosophically speaking, Joe can be seen as an empiricist in that he gives precedence to physical evidence in determining the truth. This however, contradicts my earlier statement that Joe endorses rationalism, which differs vastly from empiricism. Rationalism employs reasoned thought in determining the truth, without needing the physical evidence that empiricism so heavily relies on.[11] As David Malcolm states, "the picture the novel paints of Joe seems foursquare and solid – a rationalist, a materialist, a man of science who speaks with confidence and certainty" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 169).

Certain rational arguments can also endorse the existence of God, who has no place in Joe's vision of the world. When immediately after the ballooning accident, Jed suggests that they pray together, Joe abruptly declines, saying, "Because, my friend, no one is listening. There's no one up there" (p. 29). Joe's journalistic writing also, as Jed points out, leaves no place for the divine and reduces creation to objectively observable physical processes, with no controlling plan or agency (p. 145-146). In this way, it seems that Joe only sees the world in terms of biological and chemical processes, and the laws of physics, with no agency or design, which is again asserted by his rejection of Clarissa's suggestion that Logan's death might have meaning behind it (p. 36).

Joe's belief that human behaviour should be based on reason and calculation however, I believe, makes him more of a rationalist than an empiricist. "Information, foresight and careful calculation" (p. 161), according to Joe, are needed in life, not Clarissa's and Jed's emotionalism. This idea that Joe is a rationalist is furthered by the fact that when Joe refuses to accept Clarissa's idea that Logan's death has meaning behind it, Clarissa says in

[11] For some of the complexities of this and related terms one need look no further than the Philosophical dictionary, Quine, W. V. Quiddities: An Intermittently Philosophical Dictionary. Cambridge: Belknop Press of Harvard University Press, 1987.

exasperation to him, "You're so rational sometimes" (p. 36). Jed also states that it is Joe's "reason and logic" (p. 70) that stops him from believing in God. Although Joe can be seen as an empiricist, advocating the sciences which base their theories on material facts, such as physics, biology and chemistry, Joe also endorses reason and logic. This is evident by his use of humanitarian disciplines, such as psychology which uses reason to determine diagnoses, "It really helps to know," he says to Clarissa when he has discovered what Jed's illness is (p. 159). Joe rationally deduces that Jed has a psychological disorder by the name of de Clėrambault's syndrome. The naming of Jed's disorder is extremely comforting to Joe, who loves to be able to explain what has happened and why. As Jago Morrison states:

> Through the syndrome, the novel identifies the power of medical-scientific discourse as a guarantor of temporal and epistemological security. In a social sense, the appended documents are significant because they cast Parry into a ratified linear-narrative framework that carries the force of juridical and disciplinary power. On a personal level, moreover, what de Clérambault offers Joe is a surrogate solution to his own sense of temporal dislocation (Morrison, 2001, p. 258-260).

Joe definitely experiences relief at being able to pin down what is wrong with Parry:

> The name was like a fanfare, a clear trumpet sound recalling me to my own obsessions. There was research to follow through now and I knew exactly where to start. A syndrome was a framework of prediction and it offered a kind of comfort. I was almost happy…It was as if I had at last been offered that research post with my old professor (p. 124).

Joe's belief in science is endorsed here with Jed's behaviour being fixed into a clinical syndrome. Here the sciences tend to depersonalise human experience, turning Jed's experience into a "case."

Joe's scientific rationalism is also conveyed in his use of scientific terminology in describing everyday events (Malcolm, 2002, p. 165). For example, during the ballooning accident he describes his feelings very technically, "barely a neuronal pulse later," and "less than one adrenally incensed heartbeat later" (p. 14). While Joe is a talented journalist who has "a talent for clarity," and the ability to make scientific theory understandable to the general public (p. 79), his thoughts about certain phenomena, such as the smiles of babies and making love however, come across as being very impersonal and lacking in emotion (p. 73-74, & p. 172-173). For example, when Joe and Clarissa are engaging in foreplay, he does not describe his feelings of love towards his partner but rather what is happening in scientific terms: "her hands were working across my buttocks towards my perineum" (p. 36). Joe speaks with the

same authority that is contained in the scientific discourse of the psychiatric journal article in Appendix I, with apodictic statements forming his speech. Joe is so consumed by his social role as scientific writer that he has brought its impersonal terminology into his personal life and it has clouded his judgement. This idea is furthered by Joe saying, "You can be right, save your lover, and still have got it all wrong" (p. 233-236). Therefore, although I show later that McEwan portrays emotions as being dangerous in affecting one's rationality, he does however, show love to be valuable, even though it can easily crack under pressure (Malcolm, 2002, p. 166). Joe even acknowledges that love is incredibly important (p. 121). It is therefore not yet quite clear whether McEwan promotes sense over sensibility. The scientific discourse also dominates the novel itself.

Joe speaks with authority in the novel, as if there is no question about his being correct. For example, he believes that "if [he] had been the uncontested leader the [ballooning] tragedy would not have happened" (p. 11). Joe is also not willing to accept responsibility for Logan's death (p. 14). After an argument with Clarissa, Joe states that he wants to go back to her "not because I had behaved badly or was wrong, but because I was so obviously, incontrovertibly right, and she was simply mistaken" (p. 98). Another instance, in which Joe's forceful certainty is evident, is after the shooting in the restaurant, when Joe declares to the police, in an apodictic statement, "I might as well tell you straight away that I know what happened" (p. 191). Jed also points out this confident and authoritative aspect of Joe's character, in one of his letters to Joe: "There's never a moment's doubt or hesitation or admission of ignorance" (p. 147).

Many times in *Enduring Love*, Joe pits his scientific rationalism against the arts and emotionalism:

> The science collection here was derisory. The assumption appeared to be that the world could be sufficiently understood through fictions, histories and biographies. Did the scientific illiterates who ran this place, and who dared call themselves educated people, really believe that literature was the greatest intellectual achievement of our civilisation? (p. 42).

At times Joe's confidence in his own worldview that "seeing is believing" (p. 131, 196) is cracked and he has abrupt awakenings to an alternative perspective. For example, when the police point out to him that achieving objectivity is impossible, he suffers "a familiar disappointment" (p. 196). While Joe is sceptical of the value of the humanities, his confidence in rationalism is not always as strong as it appears to be. There are times in the novel when Joe engages in irrational behaviour and imaginative speculation. There is an

incident in which Joe replaces a knocked over vase of flowers at a memorial to a dead woman, in the hopes that it will avert bad luck:

> I couldn't help feeling as I pushed the jar closer to the railings where it might escape being kicked over again that it might bring me luck, or rather protection, and that on such hopeful acts of propitiation, fending off mad wild unpredictable forces, whole religions were founded, whole systems of thought unfurled (McEwan, 1997, p. 45).

Joe's melodramatic gun-buying expedition is also certainly out of character for him, as Clarissa says he is "sometimes" so rational (p. 36).

Indeed, Joe seems at times to be aware that his rationalist, material approach to things is reductive. For example, Joe explains the grandfather of the boy being carried away in the balloon, running vainly after the balloon as being due to his "genetic investment" (p. 19). Later Joe realises that this cannot be his only reason for following the balloon, even though it was well out of reach: "Such is his genetic investment, I remember thinking stupidly" (p. 19). As Malcolm points out, Joe's language is not always that of scientific discourse, such as that in the *British Review of Psychiatry* in Appendix I (Malcolm, 2002, p. 170). Joe at times is capable of very literary, even poetic language. This is evident when he thinks to himself that Clarissa's adulterous brother "would have begun the relentless plainsong of the divorce novitiate – the pained self-advocacy that hymns the transmutations of love into hatred or indifference" (p. 49). This is deeply metaphorical, indicating that Joe is more imaginative and literary than he appears to be. He even uses a powerful simile in order to describe Jean Logan, "She looked a long way off, out on her own in unspeakable weather, like a lone Arctic explorer" (p. 117). Joe's use of figurative language makes the reader wonder if Clarissa really is right in thinking that the narrator-protagonist has imagined Jed and his obsession with him into being (Malcolm, 2002, p. 170). Joe also attempts to see the world from Clarissa's perspective, in chapter 9, where he relinquishes narrative authority. McEwan therefore presents that none of us are infallible. We are sometimes incorrect in our convictions, and we have awakenings to the truth and must correct our estimations.

There are also instances, in the novel, in which Joe, purposely, indulges in self-deceit. Walking past the homes of the wealthy in London, after having a fight with Clarissa and being pursued by Jed, Joe fantasises that he is a poor outcast (p. 95). Joe uses this moment of self-deceit as an escapist mechanism. Joe however, quickly reminds himself that this is a trick he has played on himself, in order to affect his mood. It is also at this point in the novel

that Joe dwells over the curtain image which will eventually lead him to diagnose Jed with de Clérambault's syndrome, he also ponders over the intricate thought processes in the brain (p. 96). Therefore, as Malcolm states, "Self – examination and self – consciousness run throughout Joe's story. The novel gains its psychological focus to a considerable extent from this self – scrutiny" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 164). It would therefore seem to me that McEwan endorses self – scrutiny and cynicism.

I would argue that while Joe represents rationalism in the narrative he does deceive himself in the novel, by becoming totally obsessed with a scientific view of life. He becomes so consumed with trying to get back into science, and trying to accurately describe the event of the ballooning accident, that he does not realise that his marriage is in trouble (p. 85). Joe is consumed by guilt over having let go of the balloon rope and thus causing Logan's death. His insistence that he is not at fault is perhaps a bit too ardent (p. 14). His "irrational" feelings of guilt are evident when he returns to the field where the accident occurred, and imagines different people coming up to him and accusing him of something, but he is not quite sure what (p. 128). This is yet another instance when we see Joe deceive himself. In order to make love to Clarissa, Joe has to drive images of Logan's mourning wife and children from his head. It is Joe's guilt which drives him to visit Mrs Logan, as he later realises, in order for her to confirm his guiltlessness (p. 116).

Therefore, although Joe turns out to have been correct in his diagnosis of Jed having de Clérambault's syndrome and his posing a legitimate threat, seemingly affirming McEwan's desire for the rationalist to have been right all along, whether Joe has in fact been right is ambiguous. There is irony in Jed's mocking comment in his letter that, "There's no problem with Joe Rose…His world is in place, everything fits, and all the problems are with Jed Parry" (p. 146). Here Jed can be likened to one of Shakespeare's "fools" or jesters of the court, who appear to be mad but ironically have wisdom in their words. If we take a closer look at the narrator-protagonist, even though he is a successful journalist, he has a sense of failure about him because he has never been able to come up with an original scientific theory; he merely regurgitates the ideas of others for the general public (p. 78-79). Again, it would seem to me that words of wisdom come to the reader from "the madman", when Jed sees Joe's rationalism as imprisoning him in a "little cage of reason" (p. 144).

Jago Morrison also points out that when Joe fails to re-enter scientific research and remains a mere mediator of knowledge, he becomes more intensely obsessed with Jed (Morrison, 2001,

p. 260). Joe cuts and pastes portions of Jed's letters and tries to arrange them in such a way that they appear threatening, so that he would have a case for the police. This act on the part of Joe echoes the time and energy that Jed puts into his letters to Joe and suggests that Joe himself has some sort of neurosis. Indeed, Joe becomes totally obsessed with Jed and their obsessions seem to feed off one another:

> Three times I crossed the street towards him with my hidden tape recorder turning, but he would not stay. 'Clear off then!' I shouted at his retreating back. 'Stop hanging around here. Stop bothering me with your stupid letters.' Come back and talk to me, was what I really meant. Come back and face the hopelessness of your cause and issue your unveiled threats. Or phone them in. Leave them on my message machine…I daydreamed violent confrontations that always fell out in my favour (p. 143-144).

Joe's fantasy however, becomes a reality at the end of the novel, and this is one of the ways in which McEwan valorises Joe's rationalism in the novel.

In this way Joe Rose is, at times, portrayed as an unreliable narrator, in that there are occasions in the novel when he often does not take salient features of himself and his situation into account and overemphasizes other features of his situation. Information on his errors also comes from him. Although Joe conducts self-scrutiny, he does at times form beliefs on insufficient evidence.

Alongside his guilt Joe also experiences what Malcolm has termed "deep existential upheaval" (p. 164). It is the random ballooning accident that turns Joe's mental and emotional world upside down, and he at times seems like a mere spectator of this upheaval. Joe's "existential upheaval", brought on by Jed's obsessive love, is evident in his silent cry to Clarissa, "*Don't leave me here with my mind*, I thought. *Get them to let me out*" (p. 61). Joe also thinks to himself, "It was as if I had fallen through a crack in my own existence, down into another life, another set of sexual preferences, another past history and future" (p. 71). Cynicism I would therefore argue is promoted by McEwan in his novels.

An example of total self-deception would be Jed Parry in *Enduring Love*, who has totally lost touch with reality; he has deceived himself about Joe loving him, and his purpose of bringing God to Joe, to the point that he has lost all track of an alternative:

> 'I love you, Joe,' he said simply, 'and it's wrecked my life.' He glanced at Clarissa as though acknowledging a repetition. 'I didn't want any of it, you knew

> that didn't you. But you wouldn't leave me alone and I thought there must be a point to it. You had to be leading me on for a reason. You were called to God and you were fighting it and you seemed to be asking me to help you…' (p. 210).

Although, Joe, the narrator, is definitely the primary focus in *Enduring Love,* Clarissa and Jed are complicated characters, psychologically speaking, and are explored in some depth in the novel. McEwan has presented Jed literally as a psychological case study. Jed as we are told does have de Clérambault's syndrome, thereby reinforcing having an emotionalist perspective of life as a negative, diseased way to exist. De Clėrambault's syndrome is a psychological disorder involving erotomania and the obsessional love of another person. One of the novel's main concerns is Jed's erratic emotional state and erotomania (which is passionate love which leads to violence). Jed's perspective is conveyed directly by him to the reader through his letters on three occasions (Chapter 11, 16, Appendix II). Joe or the implied author of the novel inserts these letters, from Jed, into the narrative and we hear his voice semi-directly. In these letters it becomes clear that Jed has extreme rapturous love for Joe and that he really believes that Joe truly loves him. These letters are quite terrifying because they reveal how terribly self-deceived Jed is, and how unaware of this he is. Jed's letters also reveal that he believes that Joe knows what he feels and the lengths that he will go to, to be with him. Jed is convinced that Joe reciprocates his love but cannot openly express it. Jed even goes as far as believing that Joe sends him secret messages of encouragement, even though he denies doing so. His unquestioning confidence in his religion, as in the belief that Joe loves him, also comes across. Here religion is portrayed by McEwan as on a par with self-deception. Another of McEwan's characters who is also a good example of self-deception is Baxter, from *Saturday*, who can be seen as a metonym for Islamic fundamentalist. Baxter, similarly to Jed, is portrayed as a criminal, who has a warped perception of reality, having a degenerative brain disorder, Huntington's disease (McEwan, 2005). *Enduring Love* and *Saturday* therefore represent extreme "otherness" and this has been explored in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Irrational behaviour, stemming from emotionality, is most evident in Jed's pathological love for Joe. Cressida Connolly makes the comment that Jed's obsession with Joe is even more disturbing for its close resemblance to everyday romantic attachment. As Paul Mullen and Michelle Pathe, in Appendix I, in the fictional *British Psychiatric Review*, state, "the pathological extensions of love not only touch upon but overlap with normal experience, and it is not always easy to accept that one of our most valued experiences may merge into psychopathology" (p. 242). Jed covers paper with Joe's name (p. 101-106), a practice

associated with teenagers that are in love. Many unrequited lovers also make the same pleas as Jed does in his letters everyday. The reader's ability to relate to Jed's experience, of love, becomes frightening as Jed's love quickly and ironically turns to violence. As Malcolm points out, "[Jed's] love is really an absorption in himself, a terrible and dangerous solipsism. That this love is largely expressed in terms familiar from love poetry and cherished notions of what love is, makes its pathological aspects all the more worrying" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 174). Jed's love is immune to external proofs; it would make no difference to Jed if Joe did profess undying love to him, because his relationship with Joe exists in his own reality. In this he is the exact opposite of Joe, who has been shown to constantly require empirical data to determine his beliefs. McEwan, I would argue, depicts how pathological love is very similar to "normal" experiences of love and therefore encourages cynicism as a way out of self-deception.

Just as Joe can be seen as a rationalist, Clarissa and Jed can be seen as emotionalists, using their emotions to determine the truth. What I here refer to as "emotionalism" can be considered to be, what Rachels in *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* refers to as, an "Ethical Subjectivism" (Rachels, 2003, p. 33). Rachels defines Ethical Subjectivism as being: "the idea that our moral opinions are based on our feelings and nothing more. On this view, there is no such thing as "objective" right or wrong" (Rachels, 2003, p. 33). In other words morality has to do with sentiment and not fact. Jed has an extremely metaphysical belief system and this is not apparent in Clarissa's worldview; she can be seen to be unsure of things, unlike Jed. She tends to be hesitant in her speech, never declaring finitudes: for example, she does not assert anything about Logan's death (p. 35-36). There are however, similarities between the two, in the way that they view the world. There are for example, a number of instances in the novel, in which things that Jed has written to Joe, echo things that Clarissa has said to Joe, on occasion (Childs, 2006, p.117). For example, in one of his letters to Joe, Jed responds to Joe's scientific articles:

> You write that we know enough about chemistry these days to speculate how life began on earth. Little mineral pools warmed by the sun, chemical bonding, protein chains, amino acids, etc. The primal soup. We've flushed God out of this particular story, you said, and now he's driven to his last redoubt, among the molecules and particles of the quantum physicist. But it doesn't work, Joe. Describing how the soup is made isn't the same as knowing why it is made, or who the chef is. It's a puny rant against an infinite power (p. 135).

If "God" is a metaphor for "love" in the previous passage, Clarissa and Jed can be seen to share similar beliefs (Childs, 2006, p. 117). This passage of Jed's thought closely resembles the thoughts that Clarissa has about why babies smile. While Joe analyses everything, even why babies smile, in rational terms, speaking about evolution, Clarissa sees the babies' smiles in terms of "love", not as a selfish survival mechanism, on the part of the baby, as Joe does (p. 75). Clarissa can therefore be seen as an emotionalist, not only by her comments to Joe about love, but also by her research interest in the Romantic poet Keats. Therefore, although Clarissa does not share the same metaphysical certainty that Jed displays, she seems to be closer to his worldview than to Joe's extreme rationalism. Clarissa is not as extreme in her valuing of emotion as Jed is and still recognises Joe's alternative rationalist perspective of viewing the world exists.

Through the characters of Clarissa and Jed, alternative subjectivities, narratives or points of view to Joe's rationalist outlook, are provided in *Enduring Love*. Clarissa can be seen to represent sensibility and perhaps romanticism, being an English lecturer, with English literature as a discourse employing the imagination and emotions. I would argue that during the novel, Clarissa with her emotional reasoning is portrayed in a negative light by McEwan, because she forms beliefs which conflict with evidence. For example, she does not see Jed Parry as a threat, despite what Joe has told her about him: "'…he's really not that much of a problem. I mean, ask him for a cup of tea and he'll probably never bother you again. He's not the cause of your agitation, he's a symptom'" (p. 84). Clarissa therefore clearly represents a different world-view and approach to problem-solving, than Joe's. Clarissa in this instance could believe Joe that Jed left thirty messages for Joe and has been following him, but she chooses not too, "…she thinks of the thirty messages that got erased. Perhaps Parry, or the Parry as described by Joe, does not exist" (p. 84). Clarissa maintains herself as an intuitive being, and uses her desire for Jed Parry not to exist, to come to a conclusion which suits her. This however, could be seen to be a healthy, reasonable scepticism that Clarissa exhibits, given the uncanny and extreme nature of the behaviour that Joe describes. McEwan's characterisation of Clarissa is therefore incredibly nuanced and this chapter will further explore her characterization.

All information about Clarissa's state of mind is mediated through Joe's narrative such as the fact that she cannot have children as being a central factor in her life. The fact that Clarissa is unable to have children according to Joe is always at the back of her mind and shapes her behaviour – for example she devotes herself to her god children (p. 34-35) and perhaps she

deceives herself that this will fulfil her, to avoid the harsh reality. Clarissa may have blamed Joe for the whole unfortunate mess (p.110), because it is an easier reality to deal with and she may be using this as an excuse to get out of the relationship and let go of the guilt and shame she feels about not being able to have children, even becoming excited at the prospect of starting a new life alone (p.161). Even Clarissa's motive for marrying rational Joe is suggested to be that her father died of Alzheimer's disease and she deceives herself that because Joe is extremely logical, he will not lose his mind and she will not experience the chaos and heartache that accompanies the disease.

I believe that Clarissa herself, as Malcolm states, is driven by her feelings instead of reason and logic and even finds Joe's extreme rationalism impersonal and disturbing (p. 36, 159). It seems for this reason McEwan has purposely made Clarissa a representative of the humanities, being an English lecturer, in order to contrast her worldview with Joe's scientific rationalism. As a New Humanist McEwan brings to mind the fact that "Humanism" and the "humanities" share the same root word, "human." The humanities conjure up ideas of being humane, kind, compassionate and intuitive according to colloquial definitions. This is ironic given the fact that the New Humanists and the humanities share very different bases for knowledge, New Humanism advocating rationalism and the humanities being associated with the imagination, intuition and emotions.

We cannot whole-heartedly say that Clarissa suffers from self-deception; it would appear however, that McEwan does use his characters as a mouthpiece for his view that non-rationalist or intuitive frameworks are a form of self-deception. In Chapter 23 however, Clarissa speaks directly to the reader through her letter and gives a different perspective on how to see the events. She states that Joe overreacted to Jed's advances and became distant from her. She also sees Joe as using Jed as a way out of his guilt about the ballooning accident and this seems like a plausible conclusion to draw. Joe might have deceived himself about the severity of Jed's obsession with him, in order for himself to become the victim of the ballooning accident, rather than one of the culprits leading to Logan's death. It becomes clear however, in Appendix I that this is not the case and Joe was in fact correct in his diagnosis of Jed having de Clerambault's syndrome. Therefore it is clear that McEwan is advocating Joe's rationalism (or sense) over Clarissa's emotionalism (or sensibility).

McEwan however, suggests that science and art are related in that they both start with an imaginative process and involve narration. Joe Rose states that storytelling remains important

in advancing theories and that science and novels are similar in that they both need to be aesthetically appealing in order to be accepted. As Joe points out, relativity theory was "too beautiful to resist" (p. 49). He also points out that Dirac's theory of quantum electrodynamics was "unattractive, inelegant… [And] Acceptance was withheld on grounds of ugliness" (p. 50). Here we see that although McEwan endorses Joe's rationalism, he does recognise the value of storytelling and sensibility. This can be linked to Clarissa's research on the Romantic poet John Keats (1795-1821), evoking his famous dictum: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" from "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820), contrasting romanticism and theoretical physics (Malan, 1997, p. 15). McEwan therefore possibly suggests that sensibility and the arts are not completely without merit.

Thus, while the novel presents different kinds of knowledge: Jed's metaphysical bliss, Clarissa's emotionalism and Joe's scientific rationalism, the novel also presents the idea that knowledge is hard to get and unstable, even though it privileges Joe's scientific rationalism. Even scientific knowledge involves wishful thinking and it is not as solid as it appears to be. For example, Joe states that the post-war consensual model of the social sciences has been called into question by biologists and evolutionary psychologists, because it placed too much emphasis on genetic inheritance rather than environmental factors in the development of the individual (p.73-74). Joe also points out that scientific theory has an imaginative start and proceeds on probabilities not certainties. This makes scientific knowledge as unstable as any other kind and sometimes "believing is seeing", instead of the other way around, as Joe quotes a colleague as saying (p. 131 & p. 196). It would therefore appear that although McEwan promotes sense, he does recognise that science and art, have a common ground and it is perhaps unfair to favour the one over the other.

As the title of the novel suggests, love is one of the central themes of the novel. Love as a psychological state is analysed for its pathology (Malcolm, 2002, p. 170). There are different pairs of lovers, in the novel, who represent different kinds of love. Clarissa's brother and the young actress, he chooses over his wife, could be seen to represent the kind of love that is made up of lust, and so too could the love between the eminent professor and his student, thirty years his junior, be seen as this type of physical love, as Joe notes of the young Bonnie, very pretty in "a line of descent from Marilyn Monroe" (p. 244). Just as Luke gives up his family and starts the painful process of divorce for the young actress, so too is the professor prepared to risk his career for the very quiet, possibly stupid Bonnie (p. 245 & p. 248). This is especially ironic as the Professor is a professor of logic, implying that he of all people

should be rational. The novel therefore seems to convey the message that love can cause one to do strange things and to act irrationally.

Mrs Logan is also a clear example of this, her love for her dead husband drove her to obsess over finding his supposed mistress, after she finds reasonable evidence that he had one (p. 124-126). Joe feels that he is watching in Jean Logan, "love and the slow agony of its destruction" (p. 121). Even when she discovers that her husband never had an affair, she is riddled by guilt for having thought otherwise, "But who's going to forgive me?" she asks, "The only person who can is dead" (p. 247). McEwan thus presents love as a dangerous emotion which can drive one to irrational thoughts and behaviour. McEwan however, does depict quite unrelentingly how emotions can cloud judgement and Jean Logan is a prime example of this. Her grief over the loss of her husband clouds her judgment and she concocts a story about what happened, and even though she says, "this story doesn't make sense" (p. 122), she continues to believe it. It is only when Jean hears the story of the Professor and his student, from the Professor himself, that she recognises that she had been wrong. As Roger Clark and Andy Gordon point out, "It might well be that McEwan makes the Oxford don a professor of logic in order to suggest that some narratives have more credibility than others – this, after all, is the true story" (Clark & Gordon, 2003, p. 47-48).

Joe and Clarissa seem to have the type of love that should endure: they are companions, they mutually support each other emotionally and they enjoy each other physically (Malcolm, 2002, p. 172). The novel however, suggests the ambiguity and vulnerability of love. Joe wonders if Clarissa is glad to leave him (p. 161). The frightening message about love that the novel conveys is that a chance encounter can test even the best kind of love. Even though it would appear that Clarissa and Joe's love will endure, because Appendix I states that they do get back together after everything, the reader has been made aware of the fragility of their love and one sentence at the end of the novel is not really sufficient to dispel the scepticism that their love might not endure. David Malcolm agrees with this reading of *Enduring Love*, stating:

> The overall vision of love in *Enduring Love* is, however, altogether darker than in the previous novels, except perhaps in *The Comfort of Strangers*. It is central to the characters' lives but very fragile, and in some forms very dangerous and damaging. And redemptive? One does not see much hope of non-pathological love enduring and enriching characters' lives. What future do Bonnie and the professor have? Mrs Logan's life will continue to be riddled with grief and guilt. All one knows of Joe and Clarissa in the future is a laconic sentence in a

> psychiatric paper. Only Jed is happy and transfigured in his love, and he is crazy and in an asylum (Malcolm, 2002, p. 175).

Jed also has the last word, with his letter in Appendix II ending the novel, proving that it is only his love that endures. As Peter Childs observes, "While both Joe and Clarissa at points in the novel say that they had always believed their love would endure, it is Jed Parry's love that is the most impervious to time and change and that reveals Joe and Clarissa's own love as indeed human, and therefore vulnerable" (Childs, 2006, p. 104). This type of extreme self-deception however, is not only portrayed as diseased but is also shown to lead to hatred and violence, as Jed attempts to have Joe assassinated and finally attempts suicide after holding Clarissa hostage. This can be seen as a very cynical jibe at the idea of enduring love, on the part of McEwan, because the only love which endures is that of a man with a psychiatric disorder.

The ending before the appendices in Chapter 24 could be seen as the ending representing Clarissa's emotivist worldview, because this ending emphasises love and human relationships, ending with children in an Edenic setting (Childs, 2006, p. 116). This chapter ends with a picnic, just as the novel started with one and this might be a suggestion on McEwan's part that with an emotionalist perspective of events, no progress will be made in determining the truth, mere circles will be made. Although Logan has also been proven to be innocent in this chapter, Jean Logan has still not received closure because now she blames herself for having thought he was guilty (p. 247).

In this chapter, children are important, with Rachael Logan asking Joe to tell her brother, "the thing about the river" (p. 231). Joe has told Rachael that the "smallest possible bit of water that can exist [is] Two atoms of hydrogen, one of oxygen, bound together by a mysterious powerful force" (p. 225). Joe then goes on to say that the river is made up of millions of these particles. This is a metaphor for the family unit, made up of two people and their child, bound together by the mysterious force of love (Childs, 2006, p. 116). It is interesting to note here that we are told in Appendix I that Joe and Clarissa successfully adopt a child (p. 242). This analogy however, can also be seen to refer to Joe, Clarissa and Jed being bound together by the mysterious force of love. Although this ending before the appendices appears to incorporate yet another scientific point of view, it is important to note that it seems to suggest a common ground for science and emotionalism. Clarissa's emphasis on love, drawn from her literary background, is present in this analogy. Rachael also asks Joe to tell Leo the story

that he told her, and this again suggests that science and fiction share a common reliance on storytelling (Childs, 2006, p. 116).

Themes of psychology and love therefore add to the novel's major concern of knowledge, as Malcolm writes about *Enduring Love*: "It is a kind of epistemological fiction, presenting and contrasting different kinds of knowledge and also considering both the limits and the possibilities of knowing the world" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 175). In *Enduring Love* a great deal of emphasis is placed on the different worldviews mentioned above and the role that narratives and fictions play in characters' and readers' lives, "Questions of knowledge – epistemological questions, how much one can know, how one can know anything – are frequent in McEwan's novels" (Malcolm, 2002, p.157). Many of the accounts and interpretations of events that the characters give in the novel are untrustworthy and biased, as Malcolm states, "Throughout the novel, too, characters make up stories to explain things, to justify themselves, to make life bearable" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 180).

In this novel, like McEwan's earlier novels, the role narratives play in our lives is examined. Joe and Clarissa, after the ballooning accident, attempt to make sense of the horrific accident so that the truth is more tolerable (p. 33-34). Mrs Logan imagines her husband is an adulterer perhaps to make his death more bearable (p. 121). Jed also makes up a narrative of how Joe will leave Clarissa for him (p. 154). Therefore the novel shows how characters (and the readers by extension) make up stories, which play a part in the lives we live and the novel exposes the limits of these stories. McEwan's novel exposes the theme that disinterested truth is hard to achieve, but that rationalism is the best way in the end.

Adam Mars-Jones (Mars-Jones, 1997, p. 16) also sees the novel's main theme as being that we as human beings are innately unreliable, as Joe states, "our sense data came warped by a prism of desire and belief, which tilted our memories too" (p. 180). He points out that even Joe is unreliable, saying that his sorbet was "apple" (p. 180), during police questioning about the shooting in the restaurant, when earlier he said it was "lime" (p. 171). Mars-Jones sees this as a crude example of how self-interest gets in the way of objectivity, as Joe asks, "But exactly what interests of mine were served by my own account of the restaurant lunch?" (p. 181). Enlightenment thinkers believed that science is created by a scientific observer, gathering data and rationally interpreting it. McEwan argues that this is impossible because the scientific observer cannot be objective about the data that they collect because all human understanding is hermeneutic, whether it is in the natural sciences or the social sciences. We

see the same problems created with the social sciences, the sciences declaring its knowledge incomplete and fragmentary. McEwan thus portrays sense and sensibility; or science and the arts as being on a par with each other.

There are also lots of examples of dubious certainty in the novel, such as Jed's conviction that Joe loves him or Mrs Logan's conviction that her husband had an affair. This idea that objective truth is hard to come by, is brought to full fruition in the police station after the shooting in the restaurant (p. 193-198). The policeman reels off a list of subjects on which none of the witnesses have agreed and Joe responds with a "familiar disappointment" (p. 196). Joe reflects here on the idea that knowledge is an allusive concept and that "disinterested truth" is hard to find. Joe states that "Selfishness is also written on our hearts" (p. 14). Joe however, comes to the conclusion that even though objectivity is allusive, it does not make it any less admirable to try, even though, "it couldn't save us from ourselves" (p. 196).

The structure of the novel also stresses the problematic of narration. There are metafictional elements, of *Enduring Love*, which are connected to the novels different kinds of knowledge. The critic Reynolds notes that "the opening sentence is one of a number that proclaims a self-aware narrative, a story as experiment, one where the telling will distance us from what is told" (Reynolds, 1997, p. 12). The novel draws the reader's attention to the fact that it is a fictional text, a number of times. Joe states, "The beginning is simple to mark," in the first sentence of the novel, indicating that it is a story. Other examples of the constructedness of the narrative include statements, by Joe, such as, "Let me freeze the frame" (p.12). Even Joe is aware of his role as narrator, self-consciously changing point of view in chapter nine and even telling the reader what the climax of the story is (p. 231). As Malcolm states about the novel:

> Knowledge is embodied in stories, and these stories are seen to be limited in a variety of ways. Either the authors deliberately distort, as it seems Jed does, or just get things wrong through inattention and human frailty or through the particular discourse they employ. But that does not mean that McEwan is arguing all stories are equal; quite the reverse. For all the reservations the reader may have about Joe's vision of the world and the makeup of his mind, he is righter than the rest and wins in the end (Malcolm, 2002, p. 181).

While the critics Peter Childs and David Malcolm and McEwan himself, state that the novel endorses Joe's rationalism over emotionalism, the critic James Wood believes that the novel

juxtaposes these two worldviews. Wood states that the main focus of *Enduring Love* is on how rationalism and irrationalism compete in making up the world, "McEwan wants to examine how the irrational might undermine a man's rationalism; and how two people who supposedly love and know each other – Joe and Clarissa – can interpret the same experience quite differently, and quite selfishly" (James Wood, 1997, p. 9). Although I agree that rationalism is endorsed in the novel, I also believe that the *Enduring Love* illustrates how impersonal it can be and attempts to put forward the antidote of cynicism. I would therefore argue that McEwan parodies rationalism: advocating sense, while pointing out its downfalls according to postmodernism. The novel I believe shows that while emotions cannot be dissected logically, they should be valued nonetheless, as Clarissa argues in her letter to Joe; he was right about Jed but handled the matter incorrectly in terms of emotion (p. 235).

The different belief systems represented in the novel are also apparent in the tripartite structure of the novel, having three different endings (Childs, 2006, p.116). Jed has the last say in Appendix II, in which he writes to Joe that "faith is joy" (p. 245). Appendix I, the penultimate ending is the psychiatric review which offers a scientific case-history of Jed's disorder. The appendices to the novel are the only instance in which it may be said that Joe is not the narrator. Appendix I contains an "article" from the *British Review of Psychiatry* about Jed's case. McEwan used authentic references in Appendix I, except for one, including the names Dr Wenn and Dr Camia which is an anagram of Ian McEwan, adding a metafictional twist to the novel, reminding the reader that it is a text that they are reading which has been written by McEwan (Byrnes, 2002, p. 266). McEwan has therefore created a pastiche of a scientific paper, copying everything from the layout to the conclusions and references. In a way however, as Malcolm points out, Joe's perspective has not been abandoned in the appendices.

> Like him, the authors of the paper are men of science, and everything they write reinforces what Joe has been saying throughout the novel. Jed is dangerous, does show symptoms of de Clerambault's syndrome, and should be locked up. Almost everything in the novel goes to provide a unified point of view on the action, a point of view that is reliable and authenticated by such other perspectives as the novel gives. The reader is surely meant to feel at ease about Joe's account, and to believe and trust him (Malcolm, 2002, p. 161).

The anagram of McEwan's name therefore points out and reminds the reader that McEwan is the author of this text and that he clearly endorses Joe's rational narrative. This reminder that McEwan is the author of the novel is a postmodern characteristic which seems to contradict

the idea that *Enduring Love* is a novel which follows the "great tradition," which Malcolm puts forward (p. 160). Malcolm points out *Enduring Love* can be seen as, "a version of a very traditional, triangular, psychological love story…" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 162).

Childs states that McEwan's endorsement of Joe's rationalism however, is ironic as he proves to be an unreliable narrator at times, as Adam Mars-Jones has pointed out. This endorsement of Joe's rationalism ironically brings into question the novel's ability, as an imaginative art form, to make sense of the world (Childs, 2006, p. 110). Even Joe ponders the value of storytelling:

> In the nineteenth century the dominant artistic form was the novel, great sprawling narratives which not only charted private fates, but made whole societies in mirror image and addressed the public issues of the day. Most educated people read contemporary novels. Storytelling was deep in the nineteenth-century soul (p. 48).

Joe goes on to describe how the advances in science and the emergence of modernism changed the perception of the novel, he does however state that storytelling still remained important in advancing theories. Therefore while McEwan praises Joes's rationalism, he does see the value in emotions and storytelling, as stated earlier.

Some critics consider McEwan to be a postmodern writer. Misleading the reader, is one of the mechanisms that McEwan employs, in order to convey the message that, "telling stories is telling lies" (Mars-Jones, 1997, p. 16). Postmodern texts are sceptical about rationalistic grand narratives, and social theorising is not definite and is done gradually through fiction, rather than grand theory. If McEwan is to be seen as a postmodern writer he would therefore be against abstract systems of philosophy such as rationalism. I have therefore argued that McEwan sees the postmodern motto that "telling stories as telling lies" has been taken as far as it can and that he therefore sees the need to return to the more traditional novel, while still acknowledging the postmodern ideal. While there are postmodern elements to *Enduring Love*, they come up as subtopics in the novel rather than the whole thrust of the novel.

Thus, the metafictional components of *Enduring Love* are an extension of the novel's interest in epistemology. The novel examines the problematics of knowledge in its psychological and metafictional content. Joe and Clarissa seldom share the same viewpoint. The way in which the novel draws attention to its own textuality, its attention to perception and relativity; and the contrast of the two extremely different world views of Jed and Joe – all contribute to

McEwan's concern with the problematics of knowing the world. Indeed, *Enduring Love* as Malcolm states takes the form of an "epistemological thriller" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 157).

Jed is equally as confident in his assertions as Joe, even though their perspectives on life are so different. Jed believes in God and has a deeply metaphysical view of the world. He follows his emotions and material facts mean nothing to him. Jed having de Clėrambault's syndrome believes that Joe loves him despite a plethora of evidence that the opposite is true. As Malcolm observes, "Joe argues that Jed is immune to any proof beyond his own feelings and convictions, a fantasist and solipsist who would be quite incapable of giving an account of events or his feelings that would be lucid to others" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 177). This is ironic because Joe is also unreliable and solipsistic, the tables could have been so easily turned, with Joe being the delusional one, as Clarissa notes Jed and Joe's handwriting is very similar and Jed could have been a figment of Joe's imagination (p. 108). Joe's rationalism also cannot be tested against others, for example, neither Clarissa nor the police inspector accepts Joe's diagnosis of the situation, but Joe chooses to believe his reason nonetheless. Just as Jed's perception of reality is totally immune to Joe's rebuffs and entreaties, so too is Joe's perception immune to the ideas of others.

McEwan therefore illustrates that reason can only work with its own perspective on events, using available evidence to test its conclusions. According to Malcolm, the main message of the novel is that, "…knowledge is an uncertain thing, difficult to achieve, subject to revision, but is attainable, and the best way to it is through …rationalism, materialism and traditional science" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 178-179). I agree with this reading, that objective disinterested truth is hard to come across, and I will argue that McEwan suggests that it does not make it less admirable to try. Therefore, while rationalism and knowledge are praised in his novels, McEwan shows a deep interest in the stories that people tell in order to make sense of the world (Childs, 2006, p. 110).

A response to McEwan's ideas, about rationalism and emotionalism, is that it could be argued that the characters that do immerse themselves in a particular role are the happiest and have an easier life; therefore their lives cannot be tragic. Jed's love for example, makes the world a brighter place for him – his senses are heightened by his emotions, he notices the sunlight on a wall and the branches of a cherry tree and even experiences joy in feeling an insect crawl over his hand. Paul Mullen and Michelle Pathe, real authors that McEwan creates ficticious quotes from in Appendix I, state that, "The act of love, even if unrequited, is itself still

accompanied by a feeling of great happiness, regardless of whether it occasions pain and sorrow. For those whose lives are empty of intimacy the rewards of even a pathological love may be considerable" (Pathe & Mullen, 1994, p. 239).[12] Indeed, even Jed recognises this, writing to Joe that "faith is joy" (p. 245).

McEwan's schematic opposition of science and the supernatural is valuable in illustrating the deep fissures that run between his characters and, indeed, in society as a whole. This is important to note because of what it means for morality and epistemology, which will be discussed in the following chapters. Although McEwan himself declared he wanted the rational man to come out on top, and this appears to be the case at first glance, I have shown how McEwan in fact does not endorse sense over sensibility, but at various points in the novel acknowledges the value of sensibility. He illustrates with the tripartite ending of *Enduring Love* that science and the arts are on a par. Scientific theories have to be beautiful to be accepted, and involve narration, just as the arts do. McEwan also portrays that love is valuable as it holds the family unit together. While being totally guided by your emotions is shown to be dangerous and synonymous with madness, as portrayed in the character of Jed, McEwan shows that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" as Keats would say, proving it is both sense and sensibility that McEwan promotes.

[12] M. Pathe and P. E. Mullen, "The Pathological Extensions of Love", *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 165 (1994), p. 239, as cited by Byrnes, 2002.

Chapter 2: Masculinity, Professionalism and Self-Deception in McEwan's *Amsterdam*

Moral perspectives are a key concern in McEwan's *Amsterdam* (1998). The central protagonists Clive – a composer, and Vernon – a newspaper editor, are two successful, middle-aged friends, who both face moral dilemmas. The novel is set in the mid-1990s and revolves around the dilemma of whether or not to publish pictures of a Conservative Party politician cross dressing. By the end of the novel, the two are no longer friends and land up arranging each other's death. How McEwan's novels judge the forms of thought and behaviour they illustrate is a much contested issue. McEwan has been viewed as a moral relativist and at other times as casting a clear cut moral judgement. It would appear that McEwan critiques society in his short novel *Amsterdam* and expresses a sour view of the world. This is illustrated by the fact that when Vernon comes to a conclusion as to whether or not to publish the pictures of Garmony (p. 103)[13], it results in him being fired. It is the rest of the newspaper however, who remain on the fence, that benefit from his decision: "Vernon was winning the argument because everyone, lowly journalists included, now saw they could have it both ways – their paper saved, their consciences unstained" (p. 100).

Conservative Party Central Office defeats Vernon in a clever twist (p. 134-136) and Vernon is shown to be a bigot, as Clive says to him: "'I think your staff is right. It's a really terrible idea (to publish the pictures of Garmony)…Tell me this. Do you think it's wrong in principle for men to dress up in women's clothes?...You were once an apologist for the sexual revolution. You stood up for gays'" (p. 72-73). It would therefore seem that McEwan does not encourage conservative social roles of masculinity, but rather persecutes characters that are consumed by traditional roles and their prejudice.

The psychologies of both Clive and Vernon are explored in detail in the novel; the reader has direct access to the thoughts of these characters, with the extensive sections of free indirect thought of the characters and their internal dialogue. One of the ways in which McEwan conveys the stream of consciousness of his characters is by creating his own syntax, writing one or two word sentences, which aptly portrays how a person's mind works, sometimes only saying one word to itself, without further need for explanation. An example of this would be when McEwan gives Clive's direct thoughts about himself being "A genius" (p. 133). We are therefore allowed direct insight into the characters' feelings, hopes, dreams, jealousies, doubts

[13] All references in parenthesis are to this edition.

and grandiose delusions (Malcolm, 2002, p. 192). The thoughts are those of the characters and not those of the narrator: for example, at the beginning of the novel we are given Clive's thoughts about Garmony in the form of indirect internal speech (p. 16-17).

It will be argued that McEwan shows how his characters' emotions and desires can get in the way of them seeing the truth. Idealizations of professional success and social roles along with a lack of communication are shown to lead to disaster. Clive and Vernon become totally immersed in their professions. The absence of God in the character's lives is shown in Clive's musings on the state of the world and his decision to be consumed by his profession instead of a belief in God. Clive thinks to himself that global warming can be blamed on "neither God nor his absence" (p. 4). He thinks of "Man's first disobedience, the Fall," and immediately is reminded of his music: "a falling figure, an oboe, nine notes, ten notes" (p. 4). We then become aware of how Clive's profession or social role as a musician has become Clive's vision of "completion" and music has replaced God and religion for him.

Professionalism

When someone is defined purely by their occupation, gender or social role, they cannot transcend their situation to achieve happiness by living authentically. It is clear that both Clive and Vernon are defined purely by their professions. For example, Vernon feels like he does not exist when not on the job: "He touched the side of his head. Now that he was in company again, back on the job, his interior absence was no longer an affliction" (p. 34). He also realises that he has sacrificed something by becoming consumed by his profession of newspaper editor: "Lately he had realised he was learning to live with non-existence. He could not mourn for long the passing of something – himself – that he could no longer quite recall" (p. 31).

The characters have fashioned themselves according to particular ideals, servicing these ideals, and have actually become the objects of their roles and nothing else:

> Vernon's chair was empty because he was in Jerusalem, the House of Commons, Cape Town and Manila, globally disseminated like dust; he was on TV and radio, at dinner with some bishops, giving a speech to the oil industry, or a seminar to European Union specialists. In the brief moments during the day when he was alone, a light went out. Even the ensuing darkness encompassed or inconvenienced no one in particular. He could not say for sure that the absence was his (p. 30).

This passage makes it clear that without being defined as a newspaper editor, Vernon does not know who he is. The scientific jargon "disseminated" and the simile comparing Vernon to "dust" adds to the idea that Vernon objectively does not exist. He has become totally defined by his profession because his sole purpose in life is to know the news so that he can pass it on in his newspaper, *The Judge*. McEwan shows that with the advent of technology, while it has allowed for a global community, it has also enabled people to communicate without actually having to be in the same place or have human contact and this has led to a very impersonal world, in which people can become "globally disseminated" and lost in their professions. This is especially seen in the character of Vernon who when not working feels "a light" go out and feels that his chair is "empty". Vernon also feels that no one would miss him if he wasn't there (p. 30).

During an existential crisis, Vernon makes it clear that he is totally immersed in his social role of editor (p. 29-30). We are told that Vernon occupies a position of "authority" and of the tasks he carries out: "he had decided, prioritised, delegated, chosen, or offered an opinion that was bound to be interpreted as a command" (p. 29-30). Despite Vernon's immersion in this role as editor, it does not "sharpen his sense of self, as it usually did." Perhaps this is because of Molly's death. McEwan uses scientific diction such as "diluted" and "dissolved" and refers to Gestalt therapy, which sees the whole as the sum of the parts, to describe Vernon's subjective state of being: "he was the sum of all the people who had listened to him." This scientific description of a subjective state, adds to the idea that he only exists as an editor and the unease experienced by Vernon during his existential crisis (p. 29-30).

Vernon's role as editor with a front-page that will expose a politician reaffirms his confidence however: "It seemed strange to him now that not so long ago he had been afflicted by a numbness of the scalp and a sense of not existing that had provoked in him fears of madness and death. Molly's funeral had given him the jitters. Now his purpose and being filled him to his fingertips. The story was alive, and so was he" (p. 101-102). In this quote life is compared to a story, and attention is drawn to how we narrate our own lives. Despite this Vernon is described as not being "entirely convinced" of his existence.

McEwan does not believe in ontology, which will be further discussed in chapter 4 of this dissertation. Consciousness, according to McEwan, cohabits with the material body but has no objective reality. It also has the ability to conceptualise possibilities and to make them appear or to annihilate them. This is illustrated in Clive's description of himself as "an

anthropologist to his own existence…He had imagined everything here, he had willed it all to be here, without anyone's help" (p. 139). Social categorisation of formal identities can however cause self-deception.

At the beginning of the novel we are made aware that "feisty" Molly Lane, an ex-lover of Vernon and Clive's, has died of syphilis (p. 7). It is her death that makes Vernon and Clive paranoid about their own sanity. They then made a pact to each other that if they started exhibiting the same symptoms as Molly, they would euthanize each other (p. 105). In the end, although there is no mention of the disease, the idea that they are showing the neurological symptoms of the tertiary stage of syphilis, makes them believe that they are doing each other a favour by carrying out the pact. Clive and Vernon both experience a "tingling" or "numbness" just as Molly did at the beginning of her illness:

> It began with a tingling in her arm as she raised it outside the Dorchester Grill to stop a cab; a sensation that never went away. Within weeks she was fumbling for the names of things. *Parliament*, *chemistry*, *propeller* she could forgive herself, but less so *bed*, *cream*, *mirror*. It was after the temporary disappearance of *acanthus* and *bresaiola* that she sought medical advice, expecting reassurance. Instead she went for tests and in a sense, never returned (p. 3).

Clive believes that Vernon has become ill with syphilis which attacks the mind, in its tertiary stage:

> …the symptoms: unpredictable, bizarre and extreme antisocial behaviour, a complete loss of reason. Destructive tendencies, delusions of omnipotence. A disintegrated personality. The matter of pre-meditation was discussed. How should it be administered? A glass of champagne was suggested, which seemed to Clive to strike the appropriate festive note (p. 156).

Both Clive and Vernon engage in "extreme antisocial behaviour" in pursuit of "some high ideal" (p. 138). Clive expresses his worry when he says to Vernon: "'I'd want you to get me there on a plane. It's a heavy responsibility, something I could only ask of a close friend like yourself. All I can say is that I'm not in a state of panic or anything. I have given it a lot of thought'" (p. 49). Vernon, similarly, expresses the concern that he is losing his mind (p. 69).

Vernon invited Clive to dinner to ask for advice about the lead about Garmony that he received. Vernon wanted an objective view of the situation. Clive however, states that he thinks it is a terrible idea for Vernon to publish the pictures (p. 73). Vernon maintains that his reason would be: "'His Hypocrisy, Clive. This is the hanger and the flogger, the family

values man, the scourge of immigrants, asylum seekers, travellers, marginal people'" (p. 73). Clive retorts that "'[i]f it's OK to be a transvestite, then it's OK for a family man to be one too. In private, of course.'" This inevitably leads to a disagreement between the two. Vernon wanted an objective perspective of his situation and the irony is that Clive gave it to him and actually realises what was really happening: "'You know what this is really about? You're doing George's work. He's setting you on. You're being used, Vernon, and I'm surprised you can't see through it. He hates Garmony for his affair with Molly. If he had something on me or you, he'd use that too'" (p. 74). Clive even recognises the ethically right thing to do, in the situation, stating that the pictures belonged to Molly and that it was something private between her and Garmony and had nothing to do with Vernon's readers and publishing the pictures would be a betrayal of Molly (p. 75).

The fight that they had however, plagues Clive and he thinks of Vernon on his train journey to the Lake District:

> But Clive stared ahead at the empty seat opposite, lost to the self-punishing convolutions of his fervent social accounting, unknowingly bending and colouring the past through the prism of his unhappiness. Other thoughts diverted him occasionally, and for periods he read, but this was the theme of his northward journey, the long and studied redefinition of a friendship (p. 66).

This passage brings to mind how fallible human memory and perception is and how hard it is to achieve an objective view of reality. Vernon also dwells on the fight that he had with Clive and although he believes he is being successful at work, the fact that he and Clive are not on good terms denies him from fully enjoying his victories as an editor:

> But one small matter denied him complete happiness: Clive. He had addressed him in his mind so often, sharpening the arguments, adding all the things he should have said that night, that he could almost convince himself he was winning his old friend round, just as he was triumphing over the dinosaurs on the board of directors. But they hadn't spoken since their row, and Vernon was worrying more as publication day approached. Was Clive brooding or furious, or was he locked in his studio, lost in work and oblivious to public affairs? (p. 102)

The characters withdraw and are emotionally cold, illustrating the effects of consumption in a role. Vernon as the editor of *The Judge* is described as having: "an instinctive talent for making neither friends nor allies" (p. 30). As the novel progresses both he and Clive realise that they are neglecting their friendship because of the professions they have chosen to pursue. Vernon was so busy with meetings and being an editor that when Clive phoned him,

having had a panic attack that he like Molly had syphilis, and asked him to come around, Vernon had an "ungenerous response" (p. 43). Vernon realises that Clive is a good friend, and if he continues to only care about his newspaper and profession, he will lose the friendship. Indeed, Clive thinks to himself that the "lopsidedness" of his relationship with Vernon possibly "evoked Vernon's passivity and self-absorption. Now, after last night, Clive was inclined to see these as merely elements of a larger fact – Vernon's lack of principle" (p. 66).

Illness as Metaphor

Susan Sontag in her book *Illness as Metaphor* argues against the use of illness as metaphor (Sontag, 1979, p. 29). Sontag uses tuberculosis and cancer as her two main examples of how metaphorical thinking about illness has come about. Repressed emotion according to Sontag became the metaphor for cancer. This can be related to the romantic idea that the disease expresses the character. Sontag promotes that moralistic notions surrounding disease should be replaced with a purely biological view of it, instead of putting blame on the patient for their predicament. She states that the metaphors we ascribe to disease are detrimental to a patient's health (Sontag, 1990, p.87). She highlights the problems of our culture and how we approach illness, similarly to how McEwan satirises the society and characters in *Amsterdam*. McEwan illustrates the metaphorical thinking about illness that Sontag so vehemently opposes. By using metaphors however, we can discover meaning in our lives and perhaps by depicting metaphoric thinking about illness McEwan allows us to see the disastrous consequences it can have. McEwan portrays, much like Sontag, that metaphors of fear can be lethal and emphasises that the power of the intellect is needed in order to defeat them, perhaps promoting sense over sensibility. Once a scientific cure is found for a disease its horror and mystery disappear.

Self-Deception

McEwan portrays the fragility of consciousness and sanity, with the character of Molly Lane. Perhaps this is why Vernon believes he is going "mad" as with Molly's loss of her neurological functioning she spiralled into "madness" (p. 4). This is only one of the instances which illustrate Clive and Vernon's fear of syphilis. If there is a certain insubstantiality about the characters, perhaps that is intentional on McEwan's part, to make the reader wonder if Clive and Vernon have contracted the disease. To some extent they are nonentities, men taken up by their careers and material success and in a sense absorbed by that. In any case,

both Clive and Vernon feel themselves dying slowly. Clive's left hand starts to go dead on him (26-27); Vernon thinks the right side of his brain has already died (33-34, 41).

Clive and Vernon are hyper-rational characters. They do not display holistic thinking however; they are both consumed with the small details. For example, Vernon was preoccupied with "*The Judges* declining circulation" and was trying desperately not to be the fifth editor of *The Judge* not able to reverse the declining circulation figures. Vernon illustrates his lack of holistic thinking when he thinks to himself that "all that was needed was a couple of sharp taps to the side of the head with a medium sized hammer" (p. 31-32). Vernon is so consumed by his profession that he even dreams about it: "His dreams were simply a kaleidoscopic fracturing of his week, fair comment on its pace and emotional demands, but omitting – with the unthinking partisan bias of the unconscious – the game-plan, the rationale whose evolving logic had in fact kept him sane" (p. 99).

It would appear that Clive buries himself in his work, as a composer, in order to cope with the difficulties that life throws at him, such as the fear of having syphilis: "When at last he directed his attention out of the window, a familiar misanthropy had settled on him and he saw in the built landscape sliding by nothing but ugliness and pointless activity" (p. 63). Clive buries himself in "sensible thoughts" and rationalizes the tingling in his hand to being merely the cold. Clive receives "solace" in his work; people may die but "there was always work" (p. 26).

Clive sees himself as a creative being, responsible for everything that he is and that the sole purpose of life is to "make something and die" (p. 19). Clive's reasoning that work is the one constant in life is logical, but it is devoid of human warmth and companionship and it is a very impersonal way of viewing the world. While Clive is being rational, he is in fact living in self-deception that work is all that is important. Sensibility is shown by McEwan to be an important part of existence.

In order to gain perspective Clive goes to the Lake District for inspiration (p. 77-78). This is because when in the city it is easy to become distracted by the inane and have it foil your judgement. It is in the countryside that one becomes aware of the basic human need to survive: "a reluctance to be overcome," and is reminded of this. This is emphasised by McEwan personifying "the mass of rock rising above the valley" as describing it as frowning at Clive, and the stream as hissing at him like a threatening snake. It is in the countryside

"affronted" by a colossal emptiness that Clive is reminded of his own unimportance in the larger scheme of things and hopes to gain some perspective (p. 77-78).

While Clive is walking in the Lake District, he imagines that someone is following him and "waiting to kill him", but as a test of his bravery he makes himself continue walking. It is also during this incident that Clive has a moment in which he has an intuitive feeling that he should not carry on walking: "His shrinking spirit and all his basic inclinations told him that it was foolish and unnecessary to keep on, that he was making a mistake" (p. 77-78). Clive however, ignores his instinct and goes on to witness the "Lakeland rapist" attacking his next victim and Clive loses his inspiration for his millennial symphony. McEwan does not seem to always portray sensibility or intuition in a negative light.

After the endorphins kick in and Clive is feeling better, after his walk in the Lake District, he also realises that his dispute with Vernon is petty: "He thought affectionately about the people in his life. Perhaps he had been too hard on Vernon, who was only trying to save his newspaper and protect the country from Garmony's harsh policies. He would phone Vernon this evening. Their friendship was too important to be lost to one isolated dispute. They could surely agree to differ and continue to be friends" (p. 82-83). This is an example of Clive's awakening to the reality of what is important, such as his friendship. McEwan therefore shows that sensibility is a significant part of life.

Clive being a musical composer can be representative of the arts. The manner in which Clive composes his music is in direct contrast to all of the Enlightenment scientific criteria, his creative process involving him being inspired, like the Romantics, by nature: "The Lake District, perhaps. The best ideas caught him by surprise at the end of twenty miles when his mind was elsewhere" (p. 24). Clive's music catches him by "surprise"; he also describes his work as a "non-language" which his imagination, or "point where emotion and intellect fuse", has to capture (p. 159). It is out in Nature that Clive is reminded that he is "insignificant" in the greater scheme of things, with the "elemental indifference" of the countryside. He has an awakening from his total immersion in his self-important role as a composer: "crouching over a piano for hours every day – had reduced him to a cringing state" (p. 78).

Clive realises that he is in a state of self-deception, striving for material success in order to forget that he will die one day:

> The open spaces that were meant to belittle his cares, were belittling everything: endeavour seemed pointless. Symphonies especially: feeble blasts, bombast, doomed attempts to build a mountain in sound. Passionate striving. And for what? Money. Respect. Immortality. A way of denying the randomness that spawned us, and of holding off the fear of death (p. 78-79).

Unfortunately, it is not long before Clive retreats back into his self-deception and continues to see his music as being more important than anything else in his life.

Clive tries to reassert the importance of music, stating that music is a universal part of human nature, and it is only by gaining fundamental truth that beauty can be captured, thus aligning the arts and sciences that both need to be beautiful in order to be of any value:

> it was time to reassert music's essential communicativeness, for it was forged, in Europe, in a humanistic tradition which had always acknowledged the enigma of human nature; it was time to accept that a public performance was a 'secular communion' and it was time to recognise the primacy of rhythm and pitch and the elemental nature of melody. For this to happen without merely repeating the music of the past, we had to evolve a contemporary definition of beauty, and this in turn was not possible without grasping 'fundamental truth' (p. 22-23).

Clive therefore reasserts Keat's famous dictum: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" in this passage. McEwan thus shows sense and sensibility or the arts and sciences to be on a par.

Self-Deception Leads to Immorality

McEwan shows a loss of faith in humanity with Clive's ignoring of a woman in trouble and perhaps his sensibility. Clive does not act morally. Clive closely resembles Adrian Leverkuhn the protagonist of Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, which is a reworking of the Faust legend in 20th century Germany (Mann, 1997). Leverkuhn like Clive is a composer and wishes to achieve greatness. Leverkuhn makes a bargain to achieve success as in the Faust legend. He believes he needs to be deranged in order to deepen his creativity so he intentionally contracts syphilis. The syphilis however, reduces Leverkuhn to an infantile state in which he is obsessed with the Apocalypse and cannot creatively function at all and has to be taken care of by his family. Although Clive does not want to contract syphilis, and we are not sure if he has, he comes to the same end as Leverkuhn, not being able to complete his symphony. Like Leverkuhn, Clive bargains his human relationships away in return for success which never comes.

Clive's thoughts are consumed with Molly. "Clive Linley had known Molly first, back when they were students in'68 and lived together in a chaotic, shifting household in the Vale of Health" (p. 4). The name "Vale of Health" is ironic as the term "vale" conjures images of death and perhaps prefigures what is to become of the two. Clive however, "surprised himself by saying rather savagely, 'You know, I should have married her" (p. 8).

Molly is depicted as the fallen woman. In both cases Clive and Vernon's minds betray their bodies, their fear and dread lead them to make a deadly pact. This portrayal is reiterated by Molly and therefore women being associated with emotions, the uncontrollable or the unknown. It is only through neurological brain degeneration that George Lane is able to regain control of his wife Molly (p. 6). Clive recalls an incident in which some of his friends put on a play of *Adam and Eve,* in which the biblical story was not taken seriously at all (p. 7). This is ironic yet again as Molly appeared as Eve, the biblical character who can account for the downfall of man, and she contributes to the downfall of Clive and Vernon.

In *Amsterdam* it is the characters' sensibility or fear that brings about the collapse of their rationality. Their death may be seen as the penalty for their secret love affairs with Molly Lane, and indeed even Molly's death. Thus, Vernon and Clive display paranoia at having syphilis. Vernon believes that he has empirical evidence that he has contracted syphilis when he thinks to himself that: "There was a physical symptom" (p. 31). We are told here that there was "no word" for the sensation that Vernon was experiencing (p. 31). McEwan illustrates the negative consequences such dialogue, or lack there of, can have on the patient. Sontag compares syphilis with cancer and tuberculoses, and states that it is also seen as a vulgar, embarrassing and shameful disease (Sontag, 1990, p. 56). Being caused by a taboo subject, sexual promiscuity, the word "syphilis" further brings embarrassment and shame to the sufferer, apart from the neurological symptoms suffered. Indeed, no where in the novel is the disease actually named, it is only by deduction, after reading about her symptoms, that we the reader come to the conclusion that Molly Lane died of the disease. Clive says at the beginning of the novel that he would "have killed [Molly] with a pillow or something and saved her from everyone's pity" (p. 8).

Self-deception occurs in *Amsterdam*, when the characters of Clive and Vernon make rationalizations about their moral responsibility. Vernon imagines himself as doing the world a great service by exposing Julian Garmony's secret life as a transvestite. Vernon even goes as far as comparing Garmony to cancer that "his sure hands were about to cut away" (p. 111). Vernon ironically sees himself as exposing "hypocrisy," and as enlightened, feeling that he

has “a light, a glow of competence and well being,” despite the fact that he himself is a hypocrite, persecuting Garmony (p. 111), while he is also having an affair and not living a moral life (p. 100). Vernon even euthanizes his best friend at the end of the novel, making hypocrisy a recurring theme in the novel and this can be linked to the self-deception that the characters undergo. Vernon’s “self-deception” is most evident in his grandiose delusions believing his front-page would become “a classic which one day would be taught in journalism school” (p. 116). Vernon also ironically believes his instinct to be “unerring.” He fails to realise that there are problems of narration and the picture might turn out telling a different story to the one he wanted it to, which inevitably lands up happening (p. 116).

Vernon is so self-deceived that even after the world has proclaimed his publishing the pictures was ethically wrong, he still believes that he did the right thing (p. 147-148). When Vernon is fired, he even expected his colleagues to gather around him and say what an injustice it was, “What was there to pack easily fitted into his briefcase – a framed photograph of Mandy and the kids, a couple of pornographic letters from Dana, written on House of Commons paper. And it looked like no one was popping in to express their outraged sympathy. No raucous crowd of shirt-sleeved colleagues to bang him out in the old style” (p. 146). The House of Commons being made up of the countries leaders, and Vernon having pornographic letters, from his mistress, written on House of Commons paper, is ironic and exposes the immorality and hypocrisy of the whole of society.

Similarly, Clive’s incredible ambition, which eventually blinds him to the truth, is illustrated in his calling himself a “genius” (p. 133). McEwan therefore shows that emotion can play an integral part in determining the truth, as Clive “sounded it [the idea that he is a genius] guiltily on his inner ear” (p. 133). If Clive had acknowledged the guilt he felt about calling himself a genius perhaps he would have helped the woman in the Lake District or been a better friend, instead of playing the “genius card” (p. 62). The irony is that Clive applies scientific requirements to art. He states that there must be an empirical standard for arts, which is contradictory as it is usually assumed that the aesthetic cannot be measured empirically. Clive states “surely there was a certain level of achievement, a gold standard that was non-negotiable, beyond mere opinion” (p. 133). Clive acknowledges that the arts are very subjective “mere opinion” but asks for something more substantial for this, even putting Shakespeare, representing the arts, as on a par with scientists such as Darwin and Newton. McEwan puts sense and sensibility, or science and the arts, on a level playing field here with

Clive's comparison, but with his satirising of Clive's arrogance and inflated view of himself, perhaps he points out the folly of such a view.

Indeed Clive considers his work to be more important than any social engagements, because of his grandiose delusion of a "higher calling":

> It would have been possible to back out of his engagements by assuming the license of the free artistic spirit, but he loathed such arrogance. He had a number of friends who played the genius card when it suited, failing to show up to this or that in the belief that whatever local upset it caused, it could only increase respect for the compelling nature of their high calling…A mask for mediocrity, was Clive's view (p. 62).

Clive ironically does not realise that he is describing his own behaviour, backing out of social engagements and obligations "assuming the license of the free artistic spirit" (p. 62).

Dominic Head argues that a substantial theme of the novel *Amsterdam* is that: "it may be in the nature of an unself-conscious professionalism to dispense with ethical foundations" (Head, 2002, p. 47). Clive was so caught up with wanting to be recognised as a great composer, that he ignored a woman in trouble. Clive's self-absorption is particularly expressed, with his thinking that the man and woman were actors, "there for his benefit alone" (p. 85). He like Vernon lapses into existential moments in which he thinks "*I am not here.*" He thinks this to himself at very convenient moments. Clive, like the men in *Enduring Love* during the ballooning accident, faces a moral dilemma: does he intervene when he sees the man and woman fighting or not? His thought process is illustrated in the following passage:

> Was he really going to intervene? He imagined running down there. The point at which he reached them was when the possibilities would branch: the man might run off; the woman would be grateful, and together they could descend to the main road by Seatoller. Even this least probable of outcomes would destroy his fragile inspiration. The man was more likely to redirect his aggression at Clive while the woman looked on, helpless. Or gratified, for that was possible too; they might be closely bound, they might both turn on him for presuming to interfere (p. 86-87).

Clive comes across as being "hyper-rational" in this passage, while his thoughts about the different possibilities and consequences seem reasonable, it would appear that Clive is rationalizing his moral responsibility away. It is important to note that Clive "imagined" running down to the arguing couple, which implies that reasoning requires the imagination or

sensibility, proving that perhaps sense and sensibility are not mutually exclusive. He considers the fact that these are not the only possibilities; he might not have come across the arguing man and woman at all, if he had taken another route (p. 87).

It becomes evident that Clive is simply making excuses and it is his own self-importance and music which hold him back from helping the woman, Clive even realises this himself: "…Clive knew exactly what it was he had to do. Even as he was easing himself back down the slope he understood that his hesitation had been a sham. He had decided at the very moment he had been interrupted" (p. 88). McEwan also conveys the idea that the imitation of nature is not enough to create a work of art, innovation or the imagination is needed, proving sensibility to be valuable. "He also had no doubt that it was not a piece of music that was simply waiting to be discovered; what he had been doing, until interrupted, was *creating* it, forging it out of the call of a bird, taking advantage of the alert passivity of an engaged creating mind" (p. 87).

After Clive has made the decision not to intervene, he seems to have a guilty conscience (p. 89-90). Ironically, Clive's reason for going to the Lake District was to retreat from the unwholesome city to the purity of the countryside. He lands up wanting the "anonymity of the city" however, so that he would not need to be morally responsible, because there would be other people around to do the right thing and he would not be accountable. He justifies his decision to himself again, only revealing his self-deception and entire entrenchment in his role as a composer:

> He was trying to call it back but his concentration was being broken by another voice, the insistent, interior voice of self-justification: whatever it might have involved – violence, or his embarrassed apologies, or, ultimately, a statement to the police – if he had approached the couple, a pivotal moment in his career would have been destroyed. The melody could not have survived the psychic flurry. Given the width of the ridge and the numerous paths that crossed it, how easily he could have missed them. It was as if he wasn't there. He wasn't there. He was in his music. His fate, their fate, separate paths. It was not his business. This was his business, and it wasn't easy, and he wasn't asking for anyone's help (p. 89).

As Malcolm argues Clive and Vernon "have outrageous delusions of grandeur, Clive seeing himself as a latter-day Beethoven (p. 133) and Vernon as one of the great newspaper editors of his day (116)" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 194). It is also these grandiose delusions that Clive and Vernon live out, in their drugged state, before they are administered lethal injections (p. 176). Vernon Halliday, the editor of *The Judge*, and composer Clive Linley, experience an ethical

dilemma and act with self-interest, revealing how contemporary ideals of professionalism hinder morality. Dominic Head concurs, stating that: "The idea of a 'spoiler' is central to the novella and to McEwan's satirical anatomy of the kind of self-contained professionalism that kills off the ethical sense" (Head, 2009, p. 117).

Masculinity

In both of these cases it is the characters' professions, which have been shaped by their social roles as men, which hold them back from seeing what the right thing to do is, in humanist terms, as a vision of Molly says to Clive before he dies: "You always put your work first, and perhaps that's right" (p. 168). Their professions stem from their beliefs and attitudes; they chose their professions according to their social role and belief system. I have looked at their professions as part of their broad personal worldview, instead of as a separate category. The self-worth of these characters is tied to their professions and this helps them evade their true identity, along with the rest of humanity. It is important to specify that "self-deception" is not self-ignorance. It is the sacrifice of all extraneous to the role. The ultimate value for them is to be a great editor or composer. The characters sacrifice their lives in the service of their callings; that is if it is impossible to truly become one's role, for example a great composer, without sacrificing all that is extraneous to the role. The sacrifices can also not be made unwittingly, because then a true sacrifice has not been made. The characters recognize the value of the things that they are giving up; they are refusals rather than failures.

Work through socialization has come to be a source of male self-esteem (Middleton, 1992, p. 153). Men have thus come to define themselves by their profession, and this can lead to self-deception. The characters are limited by their social roles. They trust certain ideas pertaining to themselves, but evidence in society makes them question these ideas and their image may be "cracked," after which they may retreat back to their original hypothesis, as I would argue both Vernon and Clive do so as to maintain their self-interest.

What is ironic about Clive and Vernon's situation is that they both recognise each other's state of self-deception but fail to recognise it in themselves. Both Vernon and Clive accuse each other of losing their grip of reality (p. 119). Vernon also tells Clive that he was wrong and is too wrapped up in his music (p. 73). Vernon at a later stage even openly says to Clive, "'There are certain things more important than symphonies. They're called people'" (p. 119), to which Clive cleverly responds, "'And are these people as important as circulation figures, Vernon?'" (p. 120). Clive and Vernon seem to be deceived on two levels; they misunderstand

themselves as well as one another. When Vernon is fired for his poor editorial judgement, and his "poky suburban squeamishness", Clive is happy that his assertions that Vernon had been wrong are confirmed (p. 143). This is ironic because Vernon, similarly, judges Clive's behaviour and realises that it is ethically dubious, while Clive does not (p. 147). McEwan therefore uses the literary device of irony in order to convey that Vernon and Clive are self-deceiving. Each recognises that the other is consumed by his profession, with dire consequences for their ethical conduct.

The Euthanasia Debate

Another aspect of Vernon and Clive's situation that is ironic is the fact that Vernon's newspaper *The Judge* actually published an article on the euthanasia practices in Amsterdam, "the Dutch medical scandal" (p. 112), and Vernon ironically does not realise that Clive has asked him to Amsterdam for this exact purpose. Clive lists a number of mundane features next to the article on euthanasia, such as how British table tennis had lost its way; illustrating McEwan's satire of how society has become desensitised to matters of important ethical concern. This is also illustrated in George Lane and Julian Garmony commenting on Amsterdam and how, as a city, it can be seen to take rationalism too far, legalizing euthanasia (p. 177).

Euthanasia is illegal in England (p. 49), so they have to travel to Amsterdam where it is allowed and where Clive's symphony conveniently is being rehearsed. Vernon thinks to himself what a rational city it is as he goes through it, and admires it precisely for this reason. The irony of Vernon thinking that the city is "rational" and of his referring to "the modest Van Gogh bridges" is that he mentions an artist, Van Gogh, famous for being "mad" and cutting off his own ear, in the same sentence as he mentions the city as being "civilised" (p. 155). He refers to the children in Amsterdam as being "level-headed", an oxymoron, given that the reasoning function in children is still being developed. Vernon also uses similes to describe the shopkeepers who he says "look like professors" and the street sweepers who "look like jazz musicians." McEwan thus satirises the so called "rational man" as Vernon believes himself to be, because as has been illustrated his ideas are completely irrational including his hyperbolic conclusion that "There was never a city more rationally ordered [than Amsterdam]" (p. 155).

Despite Clive's perception being "coloured" (p. 66) by his feelings, he is a character that can be said to try to be rational, illustrated in his expression of his belief in suicide and euthanasia if one is sick:

> They could manage your descent, but they couldn't prevent it. Stay away then, monitor your own decline, then when it was no longer possible to work, or live with dignity, finish it yourself. But how could he stop himself passing that point, the one Molly reached so quickly, when he would be too helpless, too disoriented, too stupid to kill himself? (p. 25).

Clive believes that it would be the right thing to commit suicide if he became unable to "to work, or live with dignity" (p. 25). His reasoning is devoid of any emotion however, and he fails to take into account the fact that we as human beings cling to life and committing suicide or euthanizing a loved one is not as easy as he makes it out to be:

> He felt himself to be the only one who really missed Molly. Perhaps if he'd married her he would have been worse than George, and wouldn't even have tolerated this gathering. Nor her helplessness. Tipping from the little, squarish brown plastic bottle, thirty sleeping pills into his palm. The pestle and mortar, a tumbler of scotch. Three tablespoons of yellow-white sludge. She looked at him when she took it, as if she knew. With his left hand he cupped her chin to catch the spill. He held her while she slept, and then all through the night (p. 11).

While it would appear that Clive is expressing his rationalism here, with wanting to have euthanized Molly, and his thoughts while imagining doing it, being devoid of any emotion, his response might be highly emotionally overwrought, imagining himself murdering someone he loved so as to save them from humiliation.

In this instance it is Clive's fear of neurological degeneration from syphilis that is swaying his thoughts towards how he would handle the situation and his thoughts are seemingly reasonable, but are however motivated by the emotion of fear. McEwan demonstrated a similar belief to that of Clive about euthanasia, which could also be motivated by his fear of losing his mental faculty as his mother did in real life. In an interview with *The Daily Telegraph*, McEwan joined in the call for law reform regarding assisted suicide. McEwan declared his support of legislation to allow terminally ill patients to receive medical help to die. He stated the new law should permit assisted dying only to "people who are about to die anyway, who may well die in great pain and would rather make a good end, surrounded by the people they love." Their suffering would have to be "unrelievable" rather than terminal, as this is tricky to define. McEwan explained his position in *The Daily Telegraph* saying:

"The issue is not really of death but of how you live out that last chapter, those last sentences…To do it calmly with all the people around you that have mattered and you love, in familiar surroundings should be a wonderful thing."[14]

If euthanasia were to be made legal, it would lead to people deciding who should live and who should die. Although one can feel sympathy for a sick person and we might think that they would be better off dead, as Clive and Vernon thought about Molly, this is dangerous thinking. As it is stated in Rachels' *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*:

> If we accept any kind of mercy killing, we will have stepped onto a "slippery slope" down which we will inevitably slide, and in the end all life will be held cheap. Where will we draw the line?...what about other disabled people? What about the elderly, the infirm, and other "useless" members of society? In this connection, the Nazis, who sought to "purify the race," are often mentioned, and the implication is that if we do not want to end up like them, we had better not take the first dangerous steps (Rachels, 2003, p. 10).

Arguments that involve speculation about the future are difficult to assess. Reasonable people can offer equally sound arguments on opposite sides. This can lead to a frustrating stalemate: the differences in opinion might be simply due to the previous dispositions of the parties. Those that believe in euthanasia will believe the characters' predictions to be realistic, while those against it would say they are irrational. Rachels provides two criteria for morality: "first, that moral judgements must be backed by good reasons; and second, that morality requires the impartial consideration of each individual's interests" (Rachels, 2003, p. 11).

Clive conveys his fear by telling Vernon he has had "a little scare" (p. 48-49). Clive thus asks Vernon to euthanize him if he ever shows symptoms of having the disease that Molly had, a symptom of which he states is showing "errors of judgement" (p. 49). The dilemma arises when trying to distinguish whether a person is exhibiting errors of judgment because they have a neurological disease, or if they are just making a human mistake. McEwan thus argues that to be "irrational" is to be human. Clive asking Vernon to judge whether it is "the right thing" for him to be euthanized, is therefore problematic because Vernon is also human and can display the human characteristic of being irrational, as we saw earlier (p. 33). Unfortunately, they fail to recognise that being irrational is part of being human, and both

[14] McEwan's inspiration (Mail online) "Change the law" (The Telegraph) Ian McEwan (on Wiki). Posted on Wednesday, February 16, 2011 by exiteuthanasia retrieved at https://exiteuthanasia.wordpress.com/page/4/

interpret each other as having lost their rationality, when in fact they are merely self-deceived and consumed by their professions.

Although rational arguments can be made in favour of euthanasia, in *Amsterdam* we are shown how reason can be used to advance selfish arguments. Vernon takes out his anger at being fired, on Clive (p. 148). Vernon compares the spiteful postcard that Clive sent to him to a "knife, the salt in his lacerations" as being twisted in his back by Clive, conveying the extent of his rage and possibly illustrating the incredible passion he felt and how he might have been driven to killing his friend (p. 148).

Clive, similarly, takes out his anger at not being able to finish his symphony, in the way he would like, on Vernon's making him go to the police station to report the incident he witnessed at the Lake District. Clive's work is "sullied" and he sees himself as "Ruinously cheated out of its greatest moment. He dreaded the première" (p. 155). Clive rationalizes that it is the right thing to euthanize Vernon and McEwan, ironically, shows how reason can be used to advance irrational ideas. Clive states ironically that it is not "fury that drove him, or hatred or disgust, or the necessity of honouring his word," despite the fact that it is anger and a desire for revenge that motivates him (p. 161). The implication of Clive stating that it was not these things that drove him is that decisions motivated by emotion are dangerous and irrational. Clive then rationalizes that "he did not feel a thing" so that his decision appears to be reasonable and "contractually right" (p. 161). It would thus appear that McEwan portrays emotion as being very dangerous and as getting in the way of one being rational, one has to overcome their emotions in order to make the right decision.

Considering the strong feelings that both Clive and Vernon experience, it can be said that they are not impartial in their reasoning. Strong feelings according to Rachels are:

> An impediment to discovering the truth: When we feel strongly about an issue, it is tempting to assume that we just *know* what the truth must be, without even having to consider the arguments on the other side. Unfortunately, however, we cannot rely on our feelings, no matter how powerful they may be. Our feelings may be irrational: they may be nothing but the products of prejudice, selfishness, or cultural conditioning (At one time, for example, people's feelings told them that members of other races were inferior and that slavery was God's plan) (Rachels, 2003, p. 11).

Masculinity as a Relational Construct

Lynne Segal suggests that violence is linked to masculinity (Segal, 1990, p. 265). It is men divorced from their emotions that allow them to go to war. It would appear that Clive and Vernon have become so deadened in their social roles that they resort to euthanize each other, in the same way that it is men divorced from their emotions that allows them to go to war. Butler argues that the subject needs to be decentred so that gender identity can be refuted and social roles can be more fluid, with various identities being available for men and women (Butler, 1990, p. 113). John McLeod similarly points out that masculinity is not an inert fact of men's identity, which is a liberating fact (McLeod, 1998). He points out however, that masculinity profits in cultural capital and that masculinity requires repeated public and private performance if its value is to be enjoyed (McLeod, 1998, p. 220-221).

Michael Roper and John Tosh also describe masculinity as a "relational construct, incomprehensible apart from the totality of gender relations" and state that an "understanding of mutations of male dominance over time and their relation to other structures of social power, such as class, race, nation and creed", is needed (Roper & Tosh, 1991, p. 2, 7). McEwan seems to focus on individual psychologies; the focus of his novels however, can be broadened to the social and political. Indeed, while the characters are extremely introverted with corrupt self-interest and self-delusions, the wider political and social world does play a role in determining their fate. *Amsterdam* appears to be a stern criticism of the political and moral life of Britain at the time. The novel is not only satirising Clive and Vernon, who are self-absorbed and choose self-interest over moral conduct, but in fact their whole generation. Indeed, Julian Garmony who is the Conservative Party's Foreign Secretary and puts forward traditional family values and strict social laws is a transvestite (p. 73).

Vernon tries to argue that Garmony being a transvestite poses a threat to the rest of society, but ultimately comes short. Apart from his dress tendencies in private, Garmony is no different to the rest of society in his moral character or contribution to society. Vernon's conservative view is that he is a threat to "family values" (p. 73). It would appear however, that Vernon desires to deny Garmony precisely the right to family values because of his transvestism. McEwan points out how gendered social roles lead to a masquerade, with people living inauthentic lives and living in self-deception. In triggering his cross-dressing dream, Garmony is no longer depressed. Sedgwick concurs, stating that "patriarchy structurally requires homophobia" (Sedgwick, 1985, p. 3-4). Nothing can be morally right or wrong because an authority says so, there has to be good reason to support such notions. The

main problematic expressed here is not Garmony's transvestism, but the nature of morality. Morality is determined by considering arguments and following the best reasoned action. Being reasonable is different from following one's feelings, we may even use our reason to advance what we feel is right.

McEwan seems to be adverse to conservative views of class and sexuality, having even stated in 1978 that he is critical of the "good, well-made English novel," which was seen to be that which is observant of the nuances of class and sensitive to the norms and mores of sexuality (McEwan as cited by Malcolm, 2002, p. 190). *Amsterdam*, like *Enduring Love,* is solidly traditional, with an authoritative and omniscient narrator. However, it would not seem that McEwan endorses the conservative tradition of the English novel. The narrator is omniscient without explicitly advertising himself. Right at the beginning of the novel the narrator fills the reader in on the relationship that Molly Lane had with the two central protagonists (p. 4-5). When Clive goes to the Lake District by train, the narrator tells us what Clive does not see (p. 71). In chapter II of part three of the novel, the narrator even starts with the authoritative statement: "What actually happened was this…" (p. 68). The narrator makes universal statements such as: "It can happen sometimes with those who brood on an injustice, that a taste for revenge can usefully combine with a sense of obligation" (p. 149). *Amsterdam* also switches from Clive's point of view to Vernon's point of view with ease and is told in a linear, chronological fashion that would make the novel appear to follow the nineteenth and conservative twentieth century traditional narrative.

Capitalist self-serving promotion is explored in the novel however. McEwan refers particularly to the consequences of Margaret Thatcher's reign. During Thatcher's reign public shares were sold off and the city of London became rich, along with massive bonuses for cost-cutting and society became "me first" orientated. In "The Paradoxes of Thatcherism" A. H. Halsey states that "Mrs Thatcher affirms that there are no societies, only individuals and families" (Skidelsky, 1989, p. 173). The book heavily relies on satire pointing out our reward-orientated and selfish modern culture. Satire exposes the folly of humanity. We have an omniscient narrator controlling his creations. There is a gap between the characters' understanding and the narrator and author's knowledge of events. We witness greed and professional competitiveness. The novel offers an attack on Thatcherism and pragmatism, for example Clive's obsession with his music is satirised and he even says of himself that "He'd always been of the hammer and tongs school" (p. 8).

Clive shows that he still values his profession above anything else, stating that it was a good thing that he and Molly did not get married, because he would possibly not have gone on to write his best music the *Three Autumn Songs* in less than a month and been so successful (p. 8). When Clive's "Millennium Symphony" is completed however, his symphony is said to be a failure as the final movement plagiarises from Beethoven (p. 176). McEwan's novel therefore satirises the self-interest of professionalism that emerged after the Thatcher era.

Clive's complete emersion in his role as a composer means that his personal relationships have suffered despite his apparent "success." Clive withdraws from society, only having time for a long distance relationship with Susie Marcellan who lives in New York. Clive feels that he has a "higher purpose" and therefore does not have time for people: "The open house was no more" (p. 46-47). Unfortunately, it is only at the end of the novel that Clive realises, too late, once the drugs have been administered, that there are more important things in life than work, "Perhaps, if he put his mind to it, if he could stop thinking about work for a week, he could bring himself to fall in love with Susie" (p. 167). Vernon also realises too late that: "He had to save this friendship" (p. 102). Vernon's devotion to his calling cuts him off from the possibility of an open and acknowledged emotional relationship with Clive and vice versa.

McEwan seems to be endorsing the idea that by following a particular role, harm is done to the self because human warmth and companionship are sacrificed. McEwan therefore endorses cynicism, indeed, the only character that is not really depicted in a negative light is Grant McDonald along with his "his scepticism": "McDonald went on to describe his doubts – personal privacy, tabloid methods, hidden agendas and so on…'But I've learned over the years that there are times in this business – not many, mind – when your own opinions have to take a back seat. Vernon has made his case with a passion and a deadly journalistic instinct…'" (p. 114). Cynicism or scepticism therefore, I would say is valued by McEwan because of its lucidity and its ability to find truth.

A response would be that in order to pursue any project or profession, you would have to become that role in order to do it properly. However, if a person has become their role to the point where their actions are solely defined by that role; they have become that role and nothing else, then they are not being their true self, because to be defined as one thing is not the right way to describe human beings. In other words to become the actual profession or social role itself, the object of that role is not being authentic, the true human state should aim for ambiguity, never quite reaching a conclusion, and this would be living authentically.

If we take a look at the backgrounds of the central protagonists, they are yet again upper-middle-class white males who have established themselves in British ranks: "Clive and Vernon are presented as social types, young men of the 1960s who have made good and become respectable in the 1980s and 1990s" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 193). We are told very little about their families and perhaps this has been done by McEwan to show that it is now irrelevant. In fact all of the characters seem to be from the same social class: "the chattering classes," made up of politicians, journalists, artists, surgeons and musicians. It is the middle-aged, upper-middle class bliss that McEwan satirises here:

> Nobody else was missing her. He looked around at his fellow mourners now, many of them his own age, Molly's age, to within a year or two. How prosperous, how influential, how they had flourished under a government they had despised for almost seventeen years. *Talking 'bout my generation*. Such energy, such luck. Nurtured in the post-war settlement with the State's own milk and juice, and then sustained by their parents' tentative, innocent prosperity, to come of age in full employment, new universities, bright paperback books, the Augustan age of rock and roll, affordable ideals. When the ladder crumbled behind them, when the State withdrew her tit and became a scold, they were already safe, they consolidated, and settled down to forming this or that – taste, opinion, fortunes (p. 12).

It is stated that first their generation was: "Nurtured in the post-war settlement with the State's own milk and juice, and then sustained by their parents' tentative, innocent prosperity." By the time Thatcher came into power however, and declared that children would not receive milk in school any longer, Clive and Vernon were already safe (p. 12).

McEwan depicts the hubris and greed of the post-Thatcherite Britain. There seem to be no admirable characters in *Amsterdam; e*ven the police are morally corrupt, faking their evidence (p. 166-168) and not really paying attention to their jobs, being more interested in Clive's music. McEwan satirises society's valuing of famous individuals with the police realising "what a dilemma [Clive] had been in when he was crouching behind that rock. They seemed rather keen to understand all the difficulties associated with composing the crucial melody" (p. 151). In light of the rape the police should be investigating, the details of Clive's composition seem a frivolous topic in the face of a serial rapist roaming around. The ambivalence of the police is mocked here and indeed perhaps the arts (sensibility), with the Chief Inspector's interest in Blake also being portrayed as unimportant, when compared to what he should have been focussing on during his interview with Clive: "Now just take us back to what you saw of this man" (p. 151).

Lanark, the critic of Clive and Vernon's work, is a paedophile (p. 164). Clive also discovers Hart Pullman, "the Beat poet, the last survivor of the Kerouac generation" (p. 10), had a relationship with Molly when she was just sixteen, constituting statutory rape (p. 11). Thus, there are no good characters to be rewarded in *Amsterdam* and those that are rewarded, such as Frank Dibben and George Lane, are equally as morally repugnant as Clive and Vernon. Some however, do get their comeuppance.

A further moral absence is implied in the character of Molly's husband George Lane: "her morose, possessive husband," (p. 3), who is a rich publisher, lives an immoral life, taking revenge on all of his deceased wife's ex-lovers: "the sad, rich publisher who doted on her and whom, to everyone's surprise, she had not left, though she always treated him badly…Her death had raised him from general contempt…He appeared to have grown an inch or two, his back had straightened, his voice had deepened, a new dignity had narrowed his pleading, greedy eyes" (p. 5). The action of the novel is actually motivated by George Lane's desire for revenge on his wife's ex-lovers: "George had made it clear there was to be no memorial service. He didn't want to hear these three former lovers publicly comparing notes from the pulpits of St Martin's or St James's, or exchanging glances while he made his own speech" (p. 8). It is George's bitterness and anger that drives him so powerfully in his quest for revenge which drives the novel's satire of an entire generation. The name of Vernon's newspaper is also ironically called *The Judge*, emphasising McEwan's satirising of society.

It is not only the characters of Clive and Vernon that McEwan satirises, by showing how complete immersion in their social roles as men, using their professions as a source of self-esteem, leads to them becoming morally corrupt, but also with other characters such as Frank Dibben: "Frank had become deputy foreign editor on his twenty-eighth birthday. Four years and three editors later, he was still there and rumoured to be restless. They called him Cassius for his lean and hungry look…" (p. 105). Frank is aptly described as "Cassius" the Roman Senator that conspired against Caesar and successfully assassinated him. This acts as a prediction of how Frank will later treat Vernon in the novel. Frank works for Vernon and pledges to Vernon that he would like to help him: "He wanted to be of use, which was why it wouldn't be right for him to be openly identified as the editor's ally. He excused himself and went to the food counter to order sausage and mash, and Vernon imagined a bedsit or studio flat, and no one there, no girl waiting for the deputy foreign editor to come home" (p. 106). Vernon imagines that Frank lives a lonely life, due to his being so ambitious.

Lynne Segal claims that the "inconsistent and contradictory meanings" which have come to make up men's social roles, has led to "masculinity" replacing "femininity" as "the problem of our time – a threat to civilisation itself" and this is what I argue McEwan advances in his novel *Amsterdam* (Segal, 1990, p. 60). This is evident by the fact that there are still prejudiced views on how men should look and behave, illustrated in Vernon's thoughts on Frank Dibben having an earring (p. 36). This does not stop Frank from asserting his masculinity however, by showing that Vernon does not intimidate him at all, by being able to relieve himself "copiously" in front of his boss (p. 38). Vernon realises that Frank is a threat and in order to reassert his superiority, in a display of masculinity, Vernon puts Frank in his place (p. 39).

It is therefore not entirely clear that it is sense over sensibility that McEwan endorses, as had Vernon trusted his intuition, he would not have been tricked by Frank and lost his position as editor to him. McEwan however, I would argue does clearly convey the idea that when one is consumed by their profession, they can lose sight of their morality and humanity, illustrated in the irony of when Frank is shown the pictures of Garmony, and he says: "'Incredible. The hypocrisy of the man'" (p. 107), even though he is also a hypocrite, deceiving Vernon in order to get ahead at *The Judge.* Later, Frank shows that he is not as loyal as he claimed to be (p. 110). Although Frank does not receive his comeuppance, both Vernon and Clive are punished at the end of the novel for their hubris and greed, "A whole generation (or at least its men, for there are almost no women in this novel) within an important section of society is being mocked in Clive's and Vernon's moral shabbiness and delusive self-esteem" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 194).

Adhering to Thatcherite ideology, Clive sees time and memory as commodities that need to be manipulated in order to achieve personal success. This is reinforced by the rape scene. This scene emphasises the dehumanising and corrosive effect of Thatcherism on the morals of society. It depicts how our experience of the world has become shrouded in self-interest and led to the loss of interconnectedness. McEwan provides a critique of the forms of masculinity and professionalism that have come to dominate middle-class capitalist Europe.

Understanding Gender

The female characters themselves are also far from admirable. While Garmony's surgeon wife Rose is portrayed as nurturing and healing, being a doctor, her actions are not entirely wholesome. Although she could be construed as a good character, even she is morally dubious, having colluded with the Conservative Party and their media campaign to manipulate the public, with her public service being used as a defence against *The Judges* sabotage of the Garmony campaign:

> The Party managers thought long and hard about the matter and made some reasonable decision. One was to allow cameras into a well-known children's hospital that morning to film Mrs Garmony emerging from the operating theatre, tired but happy, after performing open-heart surgery on a nine-year-old black girl called Candy. The surgeon was also filmed on her rounds, followed by respectful nurses and registrars, and being hugged by children who clearly adored her. Then, captured briefly in the hospital car park was a tearful encounter between Mrs Garmony and the little girl's grateful parents. These were the first images Vernon saw after he had slammed down the phone, searched in vain for the remote control among the papers on his desk, and bounded across to the monitor mounted high in a corner of his office. While the sobbing father heaped half a dozen pineapples into the arms of the surgeon, a voice-over explained that one could rise so high in the medical hierarchy for it to become inappropriate to be addressed as 'doctor'. It was Mrs Garmony to you (p. 121).

This is a contrived and melodramatic scene in which Rose shows the picture to the public before Vernon has a chance to print it as his frontpage (p. 124-125). Rose points out that the newspaper had "a political agenda of its own", ironically so given that her "spoiler" has also got the political agenda of trying to save her husband's reputation, instead of as she says exposing prejudice (p. 124-125).

R.W. Connell suggests that there are four different types of masculinity that exist: "to understand gender …we must constantly go beyond gender" taking note of the interconnectedness of masculinity, race and class. (Connell, 1995, p. 76) The first type of masculinity that Connell suggests exists is hegemonic masculinity, which is a design that puts men in a more powerful position in society than women. The second type of masculinity is subordinate masculinity which describes the relations between men with different gender identities, for example the material superiority of heterosexual men over homosexual men. Men that take on the traditional patriarchal role without seeming to take on the worst aspects of hegemonic masculinity are named as "Complicit masculinities" by Connell. Lastly the fourth kind of masculinity that Connell names, is that of "marginalised masculinities", which are persecuted in society and Connell gives the example of "black" masculinities.

McEwan is fascinated by taboo subjects illustrated in Garmony's transvestism. Rowland asserts:

> Fears of homosexuality and effeminacy haunt representations of masculinity in many of the texts analysed here, as the myth of male dominance is propped up by a sharply defined heterosexuality used to maintain power over women. Theorists of sexuality from both sociology and cultural studies have highlighted the opposition between male heterosexuality and homosexuality for an understanding of male sexuality. In his study of the production of modern sexualities, Jeffrey Weeks argues that, 'Masculinity or the male identity is achieved by the constant process of warding off threats to it. It is precariously achieved by the rejection of femininity and homosexuality.' Warding off the threat of homosexuality seems to be a constant of male sexual identity in many modern texts… (Rowland, 1998, p. 13).

McEwan explores this issue with the character of Julian Garmony, the foreign secretary, ironically so as "He had made a life in the political marketplace with an unexceptional stall of xenophobic and punitive opinions" (p. 13).

When Vernon first sees the photographs of Garmony cross-dressing, he states, "This was not something that could ever be passed off as fancy dress, or a lark in front of the camera. The strained, self-absorbed expression was that of a man revealed in a sexual state. The strong gaze into the lens was consciously seductive" (p. 70). Vernon then comes to understand what it was that attracted Molly to Garmony, his "vulnerability" and her wanting to indulge his desires which his role of politician would not allow for (p. 70). The irony is that the House of Commons, is made up of the leaders of society, and Garmony is not satisfied with the position of power he holds, he would prefer to be dressed as a woman: "dreams that the House of Commons could not fulfil," (p. 70).

Despite Garmony's secret life as a transvestite, in public he conforms to traditional versions of masculinity, showing off to Clive that it was actually due to his influence, at cabinet level, that Clive was given the commission for "The Millennial Symphony" (p. 14). Garmony also goes on to take credit as a politician for artists, such as Clive, having the freedom to do their work (p. 15). Clive refers to Garmony as being "his generation," which was the Thatcher generation, in which the individual was promoted and we see the distinct self-interest of that generation represented in the characters. Clive accounts for Garmony's egotism as being due to his high office (p. 15).

Clive cleverly recognises that Garmony like all politicians is acting a part: "The minister was performing and Clive was a kind of prop…It had been a while since he had met a politician close-up, and what he had forgotten was the eye movements, the restless patrol for new listeners or defectors, or the proximity of some figure of higher status, or some other main chance that might slip by" (p. 13-14). McEwan satirises society by portraying the hypocrisy of the characters in *Amsterdam*.

The male body is a crucial characteristic of masculinity and McEwan digresses from the tradition of hiding men's bodies, and makes Garmony and Joe Rose, in *Enduring Love*, the subjects of the homoerotic gaze. McEwan definitely fractures conventional ideas about gender by introducing different narratives of masculinity and desire, portraying effeminacy, homosexual attraction and transvestism. McEwan therefore represents the "unrepresentable" according to traditional cultural preferences. Women are typically objectified with their nakedness being portrayed, but McEwan turns this on its head, by portraying the naked man who is now made to be vulnerable, which has always been taboo: "As one young journalist would remark to another later in the canteen, it was like seeing someone you know stripped in public and flogged. Unmasked and punished" (p. 116). Judith Butler states that it is only the male heterosexual body that is never represented and gay and bisexual bodies, which do not adhere to traditional notions of the body, should be celebrated for their refusal of fixed categories (Butler, 1990, p. 112-113). She also states however, that male heterosexual bodies are still portrayed as the invisible norm. For this reason Butler states that male sexuality needs to be problematized in texts so that it can be reassessed and McEwan does just this (p. 141). The simile comparing the exposé of Garmony: "As if some criminal political conspiracy had been uncovered, or a corpse under the table in the Foreign Office," works to emphasise the triviality of what Vernon made such a fuss of. The idea that "Vernon [was] loathsome, [and] he had to be mad," is thus created (p. 141).

According to Antony Rowland, "Difficulties in theorising masculinity relate to the restrictive and stereotypical ways in which men have been culturally constructed both in literature and society" (Rowland, 1998, p. 5-6). The patriarchal tradition has categorised men as oppressors of women, but this idea is constantly being undermined however, by "other men's assertion of contrasting gay, anti-sexist or Black male identities" (Segal, 1990, p. xi), as is evident in the case of Garmony. Although there is an outcry at Vernon's prejudice and ill-conceived front-page exposé, Garmony's reputation is soiled: "in the country at large the politics of emotion may have bestowed forgiveness, or at least tolerance, but politicians do not favour such

vulnerability in a would-be leader" (p. 174). McEwan therefore presents us with "a world still lost to categories" (McLeod, 1998, p. 239).

Rowland claims that the lack of comment on the male body or sexuality, in the novel in fact, speaks more loudly on the subject than if it had been addressed: "that silences effectively produce more discourse on the subject, as the current interest in the 'empty', enigmatic category of male sexuality perhaps confirms" (Rowland, 1998, p. 13). Garmony with his uncertain masculinity poses a threat to bourgeois society, according to Vernon (p. 36). There is therefore a clearly defined masculinity that benefits in cultural capital: "In the third of the pictures he wore a boxy Chanel jacket and his gaze was turned downwards; on some mental screen of selfhood he was a demure and feasible woman, but to an outsider what showed was evasion. Face it, you're a man. He was better off looking to camera, confronting us with his presence" (p. 71). This would mean that it is only during childhood that men are free from hegemonic masculine designs. Julian Garmony secretly cross dresses complete with bra and lipstick, but his desire for his transvestite self to exist simultaneously with his Political life is not possible, because of the conventional confines of masculinity:

> Perhaps it was the lingerie he was wearing. The effect was less successful, unmasking completely the lurking masculinity and revealing the pathos, the impossible hopes of his confounded identity. Molly's artful lighting could not dissolve the jaw bones of a huge head, or the swell of an Adam's apple. How he looked, and how he felt he looked, were probably very far apart. They should have been ridiculous, but Clive was somewhat awed. We know so little about each other. We lie mostly submerged, like ice flows, with our visible social selves projecting only cool and white. Here was a rare sight below the waves, of a man's privacy and turmoil, of his dignity upended by the overpowering necessity of pure fantasy, pure thought, by the irreducible human element – mind (p. 71).

How Garmony "looked" in empirical reality and "how he felt he looked" is differentiated here by McEwan. We see the dichotomy of sense and sensibility represented in this passage. "How he looked" represents sense or objective reality and "how he felt he looked" represents sensibility or subjective emotion. The use of the simile comparing people to ice flows which are submerged under water shows that the "visible social selves" we project are different to our authentic selves. The comparison of the ice-berg to a person brings to mind the ice-berg that was submerged beneath the water and caused the Titanic to sink upon impact; implying that if part of our being is submerged and hidden when discovered it can lead to tragedy as it does for Garmony. McEwan thus suggests that authenticity is important and includes a marriage of mind and body; reason and emotion or "pure fantasy." It is therefore not sense over sensibility that he endorses.

As Vernon learns the construction of masculinity that he tries to enforce on Garmony is seen as inappropriate and out of date and no longer an accurate reflection of men, as Mrs Garmony states. Rose refers to the watchword for the previous decade as being "self-advancement" and that "greed and hypocrisy were the rank realities" (p. 126). Despite her saying that the age they lived in now was a "reasonable, compassionate and tolerant age," her own actions along with the other characters ironically prove the contrary. Vernon is a "blackmailer" and Clive is "self-righteous" proving "greed and hypocrisy" to be rife. Rose concludes by comparing Vernon to "the common flea" (p. 126).

For this reason, Vernon's front page is seen as "'a serious failure of editorial judgement'" (p. 127), and:

> Front-page headlines divided more or less equally between 'blackmailer' and 'flea' and most made use of a photograph of Vernon taken at a press association banquet looking somewhat squiffy in a crumpled dinner jacket. On Friday afternoon two thousand members of the Transvestite Pink Alliance marched on Judge House in their high heels, holding aloft copies of the disgraced front page and chanting in derisive falsetto…*The Judge* had gone too far and was a disgusting newspaper, that Julian Garmony was a decent fellow and Vernon Halliday ('The Flea') was despicable and his head was urgently needed on a plate. In the Sundays, the lifestyle sections portrayed 'the new supportive wife' who had her own career *and* fought her husband's corner. The editorials concentrated on the few remaining neglected aspects of Mrs Garmony's speech, including 'love is greater than spite' (p. 126-127).

It is often in the media that men's identities and violence, homosexuality and gender relations are discussed and this is the case with Vernon's newspaper. A lack of cultural images can account for the need to alter our perception of men, so that the same traditional and often redundant images of maleness can be outmoded. This idea is furthered by the image of Garmony that *The Mirror* and *The Sun* decide to run:

> The *Mirror* and the *Sun* had concentrated on Garmony at his farm in Wiltshire. Both papers displayed similar grainy long-lens photos of the Foreign Secretary and his son disappearing into the darkness of a barn. The huge doors gaped wide, and the way the light fell across Garmony's shoulders, but not his arms, suggested a man about to be swallowed up by obscurity (p. 109).

Here Garmony is being portrayed as being "swallowed up by obscurity" because society has no place for transvestites, as of yet, and this would explain why: "The *Telegraph* had a psychologist theorising pompously on cross-dressing, and the *Guardian* had given over a double-spread, dominated by a picture of J. Edgar Hoover in a cocktail dress, to a sneering,

wised-up piece on transvestites in public life" (p. 109). The image of Garmony with his son however, suggests that family and love are all that is important and can save us from being swallowed up by "obscurity."

All of McEwan's novels studied in this dissertation unveil some form of hegemonic masculinity, while *Enduring Love* and *Amsterdam* portray subordinate masculinity, with Garmony the transvestite and Jed, the homosexual stalker being portrayed in a negative light, "…a brick had been thrown through the window of Garmony's constituency headquarters in Wiltshire. Ragged applause followed this news…" (p. 113). Male heterosexuality is an important part of hegemonic masculinity, "hegemonic masculinity interacts with male heterosexuality in order to highlight the pressure-point in its design" (McLeod, 1998, p. 223). While McEwan exposes these rhetorics of masculinity, he does not seem to bring them to crisis and as McLeod states, McEwan's works are in danger of depicting "complicit masculinity which (unwittingly perhaps) restructures and refurbishes certain elements of hegemonic masculinity while seeming to dissent from its claims" (McLeod, 1998, p. 222).

McEwan in his recent fiction seems to continue to exclude women from areas of human activity from which they had previously been excluded, and this is a major feminist concern. "In traditional versions of Western culture, men have been classified in terms of attributes such as 'activity, culture, reason', whereas women are generally associated with 'passivity, nature, emotion', characteristics linked to concepts of the corporeal." (Rowland, 1998, p. 8) There are points in the McEwan's novels when female characters are debased and portrayed as only good for their beauty, for example the conductor of Clive's symphony, Giulio, says "'I think the second oboe, the young girl, is very beautiful but the playing is not perfect. Fortunately you have written nothing difficult for her. Very beautiful. Tonight she will have dinner with me'" (p. 161).

It would appear that McEwan expresses deep unease at the present state of the world and its uncontrolled male-dominated science and technology. As Malcolm states, in McEwan's novels, "Men will destroy the world; women will save it. Men are linear, Newtonian exploiters of the natural world; women are the source of life and healing, with a much less absolutist and controlling set of mind" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 187). Adam Mars-Jones, similarly, states that McEwan can be seen to "decommission…the male ego in favour of a new personality attuned to women and children" (Adam Mars-Jones, 1998, p. 16).

Amsterdam does not explicitly set up the binary of male-female struggles for power, it does however, touch on the psychological makeup and social conditioning that can lead to stereotypical notions of gender and nowhere is this more evident than in the characters of Clive and Vernon who are extremely taken up in their social roles to the point of being unable to think rationally.

Language according to McLeod also plays a major role in maintaining hegemonic masculine designs, language "can become marbled with masculinist rhetoric" (McLeod, 1998, p. 226). *Amsterdam* displays hegemonic masculinity, which excludes women from proceedings, much as there are few female characters in the novel and those included are only acknowledged by their absence such as Molly Lane. By excluding women from the narrative they are disempowered and seem to go unacknowledged by the omniscient narrator. Molly is disempowered in the novel because her illness is not mentioned.

McEwan exposes the designs of hegemonic masculinity and its destructive consequences, with the use of satire and irony, and in doing so subverts its designs (McLeod, 1998, p. 229). McLeod also states however, that "McEwan's subversion is of limited impact; at another level there is little sense that hegemonic masculinity has been effectively challenged. It remains a carceral structure that entraps men within its suffocating, repressing confines…" (McLeod, 1998, p. 230). Antony Easthope concurs stating that, "In so far as men live the dominant version of masculinity…they are themselves trapped in structures that fix and limit masculine identity. They do what they *have* to do" (Easthope, 1986, p.1). Clive and Vernon seem to be sealed in their social roles, as men consumed by their professions. Although McEwan shows hegemonic masculinity in a negative light at times and satirises its designs, he does not offer a way out of these designs and its authority remains intact. The characters remain in self-repeating and flawed designs from the beginning to the end of his novels. If the circuitry of hegemonic masculinity is to be broken, new narratives are needed and new relations between men and women, which I have argued *Enduring Love* and *Amsterdam* give the opportunity for showing a common ground between the arts and sciences. They however, are still limited to the roles that hegemonic masculinity restricts them to.

Rose Garmony's performance is disturbing because although she is granted a perverse empowerment as a willing female subject, she is complying with her husband's desires instead of her own:

> He had driven from Wiltshire last night, then stayed up late sipping scotch, she knew, in front of a video of Bergman's The Magic Flute. Then he pulled out all Molly Lane's letters, the ones that stupidly indulged his grotesque cravings. Thank God that episode was over, thank God the woman was dead. The letters were still spread out over the carpet and he would need to put them away before the cleaning lady came (p. 95).

Rose's reference to her husband's desires as "grotesque" is also significant because it expresses the same sentiments that Vernon has of her husband's preferences. Rose hypocritically calls Vernon "a flea" however, despite secretly feeling the same way about transvestism.

This is also the case with Melissa in McEwan's latest novel *Solar*, in which she has an affair in order to capture the attention of her philandering husband Michael Beard, and in so doing achieves power over him, by making herself desirable to him again. This is one of the problems with the design of hegemonic masculinity, the fact that Melissa is placed as a sexually active subject that has agency but remains subordinate to the man, "Her agency must be both acknowledged and disavowed" (McLeod, 1998, p. 225). In each novel we therefore see the same tension between male and female being presented. The novels however, continue to be male-dominated. We encounter male nastiness both institutional and personal in *Amsterdam.* Although the women characters have careers of their own and are shown to be successful, such as Rose Garmony, McEwan is in danger of continuing stereotypical notions of gender roles.

Amsterdam is not only a psychological novel and social satire but it is also a "moral fable" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 194). "The moral could scarcely be clearer if the narrator set it out: "Thus perish the hollow men" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 194). The fact that the main characters come to untimely ends can be seen to carry a significant message. The reader is left with a sense that both Clive and Vernon brought on their own deaths. There is a lack of overt condemnation of their acts from the protagonists and the narrator. I would argue however, that McEwan suggests that self-deception equals tragedy and immorality, and thus illustrates that a balance is needed between sense and sensibility. McEwan's characters are depicted as being consumed with an ideal of professionalism, making their lives tragic. This is the case because their self-interest and materialism in their profession, blinds them as to right moral conduct, and leads to them having no successful relationships in their lives. Clive and Vernon are punished for their lack of morality along with the hypocritical Garmony. The corrupt George however, wins and starts an affair with Vernon's widow, Mandy Halliday (p. 177). The

largely male world of the novel is morally corrupt, and it seems that no moral standard is provided within the novel by any of the characters.

In conclusion, professionalism or social roles can result in wasted opportunities, by leading one's life. Cynicism allows authenticity because it includes an abrupt awakening or realization that we are not things or roles and includes taking on a new mode. We do not have to move from mode to mode however. Forgetting that we live in a society is not acceptable, as the characters of Clive and Vernon do, both of whom are ethereal characters, only floating on the surface of life. In McEwan's characters, professionalism is their guiding thread, it is not all they are however; they are not identical to their role. McEwan's novels prompt the reader to test this philosophy of what it means to be authentic as human beings. McEwan therefore argues in his novel, *Amsterdam*, that humans are unreliable and are blinded by their emotions, cynicism therefore needs to be employed in order to determine the truth. He shows how the characters are free and transcendent, and how their interpersonal relationships are affected by the self-deception that they as characters employ. It would therefore appear that McEwan does not endorse sense over sensibility but rather sees that both are necessary in order to make moral decisions. This brings to attention morality in society, and this will be studied in relation to "sense and sensibility" in the chapter entitled: "McEwan's Humanism of the Other: Morality in *Saturday."* It is love and family that we should look to, to help us face the anxieties of life and not our profession or social roles. McEwan thus emphasises that it is human warmth and companionship which is the only redeeming quality of a society motivated by self-interest and as Mrs Garmony says "'love is greater that spite" (p. 126-127).

Chapter 3: Sense and Sensibility: Realism, Modernism and Postmodernism in McEwan's *Atonement*

Atonement is a novel about narratives, not only our own but those of others too. Specifically it is an examination of the precise value of storytelling. Does Briony achieve "atonement" for her "crime"? The answer depends on the value and power of stories. Briony addresses the crux of the problem in her statement: "How can a novelist achieve atonement when, with her absolute power of deciding outcomes, she is also God?" (McEwan, 2001, p. 371).[15] Despite Briony's desire for a happy ending between the lovers, she also realises that "a certain kind of reader will be compelled to ask, But what *really* happened?" (p. 371). McEwan not only questions how it is that we as human beings should be living, but he also questions how the public relates to the private, two humanist preoccupations. McEwan could also be called a "historical novelist", as Natasha Alden asserts (Groes, 2009, p. 59). In *Atonement,* McEwan documents events surrounding World War Two; and in *Saturday* it is 9/11. It would appear that McEwan's novels ultimately confuse boundaries between 'realist', 'modernist' and 'postmodern' writing, while simultaneously expressing the particularities of time and history, revealing him to be a polygot writer.

Finney (2002) shows how McEwan can be seen as a postmodern writer; I will develop this idea however, by arguing that postmodern fiction also investigates the truth, by discussion and logical argument, by merging realism within its framework. As Patricia Waugh (1984) states, there has been a widespread move towards metafiction[16] and an ironic and parodic playfulness, along with the mocking of classic realism, while employing its conventions. What ensues from this parodying of classic realism is "the death of the subject," and I show how McEwan does this.[17] It will therefore be concluded that McEwan attempts to recover the transcendental component of writing, and that he displays a humanist and patriarchal stance in his creative writing. We cannot deny his effort to absorb and recast the Western tradition of writing however, which adds to his own often contradictory humanist, or should we say, postmodernist convictions?

Although many critics have paid attention to McEwan's adherence to "the Great Tradition", others, such as James Wood, have explored McEwan as a postmodern writer. Wood

[15] All further references to McEwan's novel *Atonement* (2001) will be made by page number only.
[16] Metafiction is, "A fictional mode that takes fictionality – the conventions of writing fiction – as part of its own subject matter" (Wolfreys, Robbins & Womack, 2002, p. 64).
[17] "Parody is the exaggerated imitation of traditional styles, the mixing of high and popular culture" (Wolfreys, Robbins & Womack, 2002, p. 76).

describes the metafictional ending of *Atonement* as making "the book a proper postmodern artefact, wearing its doubts on its sleeve, on the outside, as the Pompidou does its escalators" (Wood, 2009, p. 27). Postmodernism not only refers to a specific period in time but a style of art, namely that which came after modernism, it is still an ongoing debate however. This is important because there are elements of modernism that arise throughout *Atonement* and other novels of McEwan's. Modernism stemming from the Enlightenment is a project dealing with science, politics and culture, which believes that through experiment and rational thought, the world can be known. Postmodernism on the other hand shows that the natural world can not be objectively represented and even when it is, these representations are limited. A problem thus arises when studying the works of McEwan – how can he on one hand refer to Leavis, with his firm belief in a certain reality and morality and endorse rationalism in his novels, while on the other hand give his texts postmodern metafictional endings, which convey a rejection of certainties? As Cormack and Wood state, there are aspects of *Atonement* that show it to be a postmodern novel, for example Briony's accounts of the truth are questioned in the novel.

McEwan and Postmodernism

The protagonist Briony represents sensibility in the novel, as the imaginative author. Writing is Briony's mechanism of coping with an uncontrollable world; it allows her to order the world so that it is more pleasing and acceptable for herself. We see her desire the world to be "just so" with her arrangement of her farmyard figurines all in straight lines facing her as if they are about to burst into song:

> The orderly troupe of farm animals lined along the window-sill and the strait-laced dolls poised in the various rooms of their open-sided mansion waited for the gem of her first sentence. At that moment, the urge to be writing was stronger than any notion she had of what she might write…But how to do justice to the changes that had made her into a real writer at last, and to her chaotic swarm of impressions, and to the disgust and fascination she felt? Order must be imposed. She should begin, as she had decided earlier, with a simple account of what she had seen at the fountain (p. 115).

Briony's desire still remains for fiction to capture reality however, and this is played out in her arrangement of facts to implicate Robbie in the rape of her cousin Lola. McEwan draws a distinction between "knowing" and "seeing". Briony realises later that "the understanding of what she knew was not literally, or not only, based on the visible" (p. 169). It would appear that Briony has logically put the evidence together in order to determine who attacked Lola. She pieces the fact that Robbie sent an "obscene" word in a letter to Cecelia, which he asked

her to deliver; Robbie's "assault" on Cecelia in the library, which was in fact his making love to her and the earlier scene by the fountain between Cecelia and Robbie, which Briony incorrectly interprets as hostile. Rather than being a rational piecing together of evidence, Briony's account is motivated by emotion or sensibility. It is her desire for neat endings that leads to her ordering the evidence in a particular manner. It can also be argued that Briony's actions could be motivated by her jealousy that Robbie had chosen her sister and not herself, as she used to fantasize about Robbie saving her (p. 158). It is Briony's imagination that runs away with her and prevents her from "seeing" the truth of Robbie's innocence given his being a trusted family friend. McEwan, it would therefore appear, suggests that fiction or sensibility cannot depict reality and that it can be dangerous with its imaginative component imposing "order", as Robbie is convicted of a crime he did not commit (p. 115).

Robbie is the son of the cleaning lady Grace Turner, who cleans the Tallis house. Sensibility is also represented in the novel by the "shilling's glimpse of the future" offered by Grace Turner (p. 83). Robbie, ironically, does not know that the future is "unavailable" to him. The novel in its entirety has this knowledge however, self-consciously exposing its realist framework. Cecelia and Robbie become lovers on the day in question and are presented as having a hopeful future in their imaginings, but these are later, ironically, shown to be only possible in fiction. At the close of *Atonement* we are made aware that the section at Belham was made up by Briony and that Cecelia and Robbie both died during the war. We as readers then become disillusioned about the fabrication we have been absorbed in. All of the ponderings at their future prospects in the first part of the novel are ironically expelled in the second. Cecelia for example ponders her future husband: "Cecelia wondered, as she sometimes did when she met a man for the first time, if this was the one she was going to marry, and whether it was this particular moment she would remember for the rest of her life – with gratitude, or profound and particular regret" (p. 47). We are also shown the uncertainty of life, with Robbie's false accusation, when ironically just before the disastrous event; he was contemplating the great future he had ahead, "he made himself think about time, about his great hoard, the luxury of an unspent fortune. He had never before felt so self-consciously young, nor experienced such appetite, such impatience for the story to begin" (p. 92). McEwan here illustrates how disaster can seep in to disrupt our lives, and perhaps that we live in a postmodern world of uncertainty. It is in this way that McEwan self-consciously brings up the question of omniscient narration and could thus be regarded as a postmodern writer. It would therefore appear that the gap between the signifier and the signified cannot be bridged.

It is only later in the novel, in the third section, that we come to realise that the first section pays particular attention to the role of Briony Tallis as writer, and that there is particular significance to the fragmentation of the narrative. In the third section it is 1940 and Briony is a nurse and has completed a novella, which we later find out is called "Two Figures by a Fountain". The coda is told in the first person by Briony. In it she explains how she has written several drafts of the novel in order to achieve "atonement" for her "crime." The coda is metafictional in that it draws attention to the fact that we have been reading a work of fiction, even though as Briony states "Nothing is Disguised." Briony also addresses the problem of narrative:

> The age of clear answers was over. So was the age of characters and plots. Despite her journal sketches, she no longer really believed in characters. They were quaint devices that belonged to the nineteenth century. The very concept of character was founded on errors that modern psychology had exposed. Plots too were like rusted machinery whose wheels would no longer turn…It was thought, perceptions, sensations that interested her, the conscious mind as a river through time…She had read Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* three times and thought that a great transformation was being worked in human nature itself, and that only fiction, a new kind of fiction, could capture the essence of the change (p. 281-282).

In *Atonement* McEwan thus addresses the precise value of literature. Here we see self-referentiality in the text; Briony is reflecting on the constructedness of texts and this, ironically, draws our attention to the novel's own ability to portray reality, and we realise that it is "the conscious mind as a river through time," we have been presented with that Briony too is interested in. The use of the simile comparing plots to "rusted machinery whose wheels would no longer turn", perhaps shows us that McEwan is steering away from realism with its "age of characters and plots." Characters and plots according to Briony are the "quaint devices that belonged to the nineteenth century" (p. 281-282).

Postmodernism challenges any institutions which have a claim to knowing reality, such as Christianity, Marxism and the Sciences. Any human claim of capturing reality is seen to be warped by human desire for power and control. Jean-Francois Lyotard's "The Postmodern Condition," translated into English in 1984, said goodbye to the Enlightenment idea that truth could be discovered through the rationally intelligible structure of nature, stating that, "…postmodernity is not a new age, but the rewriting of some of the features claimed by modernity, and first of all modernity's claim to ground its legitimacy on the project of liberating humanity as a whole through science and technology" (Lyotard, 1979, p. 65).

Theory according to Lyotard aims at exposing realist science for not being able to convey the truth, as a narrative imagination or *mythos* is always involved, and is no longer used as a narrative of the Laws of Nature (Lyotard, 1979, p. 65). Postmodernism therefore, unlike modernism, discards the Enlightenment. Postmodern art will also often advertise the constructedness of its narratives, which appear to capture the truth (Jameson, 1991, p. 393). By foregrounding its own fabrication, a novel can highlight how different forms of knowledge come into being and McEwan's novels do just this.

The self-consciousness of the novel is shown in the rejection letter that Briony receives from a magazine called *Horizon*, for her novella. The editor of the magazine, who signs off "Yours sincerely, CC," standing for Cyril Connolly, criticises Briony's story, in the letter, for the character's behaviour seeming improbable, and for an inapt expression of emotion in her style. Cyril Connolly suggests changes be made to the novella, such as that it should be a Meissen vase and not Ming that Cecelia takes to the fountain because no one would take such an expensive vase as Ming outside.

As editor of a literary magazine, Connolly writes that Briony's novella is uninteresting, only giving the dry facts:

> Your most sophisticated readers might well be up on the latest Bergsonian theories of consciousness, but I'm sure they retain a childlike desire to be told a story, to be held in suspense, to know what happens (p. 314).

Here Connolly is referring to the theory of Henri Bergson, which describes how consciousness is fluid, with present thoughts constantly being combined with past memories, and is heavily influenced by modernist aesthetics (Cormack, 2009, p. 75). This reference brings to our attention the modernist mode of writing, with its representation of consciousness, and how it seems insufficient; we want to know how the story ends. The letter illustrates postmodernism by making us aware that we have been tricked; it makes us realise that the whole first section of the novel is a pastiche of different character's perspectives of events, which McEwan has written, in order to illustrate the modernist aesthetic, with the reader passively watching the flow of different minds at work. Up until now, the reader trusts that the different perspectives make up what has happened, but now we are told that Briony is the author, and this trick reminds the reader that McEwan is the author of the novel, and that it is a fiction we are reading. We are therefore reminded that McEwan has imitated the modernist aesthetic as if Briony, a fictitious character, had written it. This metafictional

component, with the drawing of attention to the fictionality of *Atonement*, points to the novel being postmodern. The fact that Cyril Connolly and Elizabeth Bowan are the editors of a real magazine, called *Horizon*, and comment on a fictional fiction, also adds to the self-referentiality of the text and suggests it is formally postmodern (Cormack, 2009, p. 75).

There have been many scholarly efforts to delimit and categorize the slippery term "postmodernism" in literary discourse (Hutcheon, 1980, p. 3). The term has been used to delineate a historical period after literary modernism and define formal elements of narrative that diverge both structurally and philosophically from realist and modernist conventions. Although the particular novels being studied in this research diverge structurally from the realist and modernist conventions, they do not philosophically. Hutcheon states that to define something as "postmodern" is difficult because of the inherent paradox in the term, "Postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concept it challenges" (Hutcheon, 1980, p. 3).

In John Barth's article, *The Literature of Exhaustion* (1967), he describes how literature reaches a point of exhaustion as it degenerates in the hands of multiple generations. A new literary form will be created by absorption of the old literary form and a remoulding of the exhausted form by the creative writer, taking the conventions of this form to the limit. In his essay, *The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodern Fictio*n (1980), Barth takes this idea further, describing how classic realism and modernism are "exhausted forms" and how they contribute to the new literary form of postmodernism. Postmodern literature therefore, according to Barth, attempts to both absorb and transcend classic realism and modernism in a parodic manner (Barth, 1980, p. 7).

Fiction, according to Hutcheon, is a way of constructing reality; this construction and the need for it are foregrounded in postmodernism. The postmodern novel therefore offers "an infinite plurality of representations" (Hutcheon, 1980, p. 3). This differs from the realist novel however, which states that if truth exists, it is mind independent (Wolfreys, Robbins & Womack, 2002, p. 85). In this way, it would appear that McEwan is a postmodern novelist who includes a tension between the "presentation and subversion of realist conventions" in his novels (Hutcheon, 1980, p. 6). The texts direct our attention, "not to fictions of origins and ends but to the process of consciousness itself as it constructs and deconstructs such fictions" (Hutcheon, 1980, p. 6). Therefore, according to Hutcheon, a contradiction is evident in postmodern literature in that classic realist elements are employed, along with modernist

metafictional elements, which undermine realism. Linda Hutcheon (1984) describes this paradoxical tension as the main feature of postmodern fiction, namely: "a longing for the return to the traditional relish in story telling while simultaneously underlining the fact that this return is problematic" (Hutcheon, 1984, p. 124-125). McEwan's fiction contains this paradoxical feature of postmodern literature. For example McEwan uses classic realism, describing events in great detail but at the same time has metafictional components to his novels, which draw attention to their fictionality.

The novel has a tripartite structure, with it switching narrators and other strategies for confusing the reader, making it a self-conscious metanarrative. We find out that we are reading a novel written by Briony, which is her attempt at atonement for her "crime" by giving the lovers a happy ending. *Atonement's* fictive self-consciousness therefore contradicts the novel's realist appearance, with its immediate depiction of events, which are later revealed to be fictional. In other words, McEwan's imaginative description of Briony's mind and, in turn, his entry into her imaginings of other character's mind, has a modernist thrust with a postmodern twist that all of these consciousnesses are in the end his creation.

McEwan therefore includes metafictional components to *Atonement* in order to alert us to the fact that we are reading a work of fiction. It is at this point in the novel that its full self-consciousness is realised, as the differences between Briony's novella and the original story, told from the perspective of different individuals, are pointed out to the reader. As Frank Kermode illustrates, the divergences the novella makes from the original, can be tracked; for example, the fountain at the Tallis home is only a copy of one in the Piazza Navona, the vase is Ming not Meissen and Cecelia keeps her clothes on when going into the fountain (Kermode, 2001, p. 8). Most significantly, in the original, the driving force of events is present; it is Briony's mixing of fiction with reality that lands Robbie in jail, making it appear as if McEwan endorses sense over sensibility.

McEwan shows how fragmentary our perceptions can be; a postmodern characteristic. In the first section Briony sees a limb looming – (Emily's), similarly Robbie sees the leg of a child in a tree (p. 161 & p. 192). It is here that we see genre mixing, a postmodern practice. McEwan combines tragedy, horror and comedy with the limb hanging in the tree. This is reminiscent of the opening scene of *Enduring Love*, in which McEwan depicts the tragedy of a ballooning accident by mixing different genres. The experiences of the nurses, witnessing maimed bodies, also suggest fragmentary, distorted and surreal perceptions of the body.

McEwan would therefore appear to be postmodern. However, the limbs connect the different sections of the novel, which suggests that we are all fundamentally the same as human beings, a humanist conviction.

Uncle Clem's vase also connects the three sections of the novel but illustrates the magical power of literature, reminding one of Keat's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (1820). Uncle Clem was in the war; the vase survived WWI and is then broken in Briony's "Two Figures by a Fountain" and repaired by Cecelia. The vase then falls to pieces in Betty's hands in the war section. Briony's novella, like Cecelia's repairing of the vase, is fragmentary and insufficient to save the vase. Keats' Ode shows the presence and absence of posthumous existence in art, reminding one of how in the novel during the war "The dead were not yet present, the absent were presumed alive" (p. 287). In reality we are alerted to the fact that Cecelia and Robbie died during the War. McEwan illustrates how, as Keats' "Grecian Urn" preserves a particular moment in time forever, so too can literature preserve a moment in time, as Cecelia and Robbie's lives can be preserved in Briony's novella, even though they did not survive in reality. Another aspect of *Atonement* that can be described as postmodern is that in the epilogue, which jumps forward to 1999, Briony makes the argument that there might not be only one ontological reality; there might not be an objective reality, as she says: "When I am dead, and the Marshalls are dead, and the novel is finally published, we will only exist as my inventions" (p. 371).

Theorists such as Frederic Jameson (1984) illustrate the philosophical validity of the concept of "the death of the subject" (Jameson, 1984, p. 56) and the move from the modernist "alienation of the subject" to the postmodern "fragmentation of the subject." (Jameson, 1984, p. 61). Briony gives an example of "the death of the subject," the lovers will exist in her novella forever. Jameson has described this as a "mutation in the sphere of culture," leading from the old humanist to the new postmodernist "cultural dominant" (Jameson, 1984, p. 56). It would therefore appear that *Atonement* illustrates various key features of postmodern fiction.

McEwan therefore shows opposed conceptions of self and world, displaying important links between realism, modernism and postmodernism and that he tries to absorb and transcend these modes of writing. For this reason the title, "Sense over Sensibility," has been chosen as it alludes to Jane Austen's novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, which is a realist text. This is important because at first glance McEwan's novels appear to be realist, in that they conduct

mimetic reportage of reality, and seem to imply that reality can be known, or that there are explanations of the empirical world. As Bradford claims:

> Placed on a scale whose opposing points are a naturalistic realism and radical experimentation…McEwan [is] substantially closer to the former while electing to use precedents and techniques initiated by the latter at [his] own discretion. Open one of McEwan's works at random, read 500 words, and one will encounter a narrative presence disclosing events with urbane transparency and effecting an unobtrusive choreography of dialogue that is both compelling and authentic; McEwan's early work in film screenwriting apprenticed him well for the latter. The building blocks of his fiction are made up of the familiar and the conventional. It is in their assembly that he creates unsettling discordancy between the world we know and that which unfolds in the novel (Bradford, 2007, p. 24).

While McEwan employs realist conventions however, he self-consciously undermines this mode with the postmodern ideas that he presents, with the fragmentedness of his texts, and their metafictional components. McEwan also shows apocalypticism in confronting the breakdown in political and cultural consensus, the emergence of new political identities, and of a new technologically driven information culture. McEwan's novels concentrate on the moral and domestic dilemmas of his characters, in narratives that reflect upon a problematic, violent and arbitrary universe. The characters in *Enduring Love*, *Amsterdam* and *Saturday* experience fragmentation such as terrorism, crime, random accidents and disasters. He has therefore been shown to assimilate textual self-referentiality and social constructionism into an indigenous fictional tradition.

Fragmentation is evident in *Atonement* and Brian Finney agrees with Wood's reading of the text; that *Atonement* presents a postmodern message throughout, with a metafictional component, obtrusive intertextuality, and a self-conscious narrative:

> In 1935 the West was suffering from a collective myopia in the face of the rise of fascism, which only a minority on the left seemed prepared to confront. Robbie's is typical of the collective delusion at the time with his fantasies of a future life spent as a family doctor and casual reader. The West is about to be hurled into a war that will usher in a radically different, postmodern era to which this narrative, completed in 1999, belongs (Finney, 2002, p. 77-78).

The huge cultural divide between the Enlightenment and Postmodernism is therefore represented in the two time frames of the novel, according to Finney. Although many critics have been perturbed with the novel's metafictional conclusion, calling it "contrived" and "gimmicky" and would have preferred it if the first section of the novel had not been

interrupted, Finney points out that the first section of the novel is also postmodern; after a closer reading it becomes apparent that McEwan is undermining the comforts of classic realism. Yet again, the world, in many of McEwan's novels is represented as being blissful. There are signs however, that it is more fragile than it appears. McEwan sketches an idealised scene at the beginning of each novel and then gradually tears apart the paradise presented. For example, the comfortable country house setting of the Tallis home is actually not as authentic as it first appears; as it attempts to portray the "ambience of solidarity and family tradition" but is only a few years old (p. 145). Paying closer attention, we discover the ornamental building overlooking the manmade lake, has a "mottled, diseased appearance," with "exposed laths, themselves rotting away", which look like "the ribs of a starving animal" (p. 72). The conventional expectations of the classic realist novel are, therefore, actually being undermined, even in the first section of the novel. The comfort that the reader experiences with the first section's classic realist narrative is false, as Cormack states: "This is an England whose tradition is a visibly decomposing fake" (Cormack, 2009, p. 76).

Brian Finney takes this argument a step further, stating that *Atonement* is not only postmodern because it criticises modernism but also because it criticises the Enlightenment and representation:

> To draw attention to the narrative process is not an act of self-indulgence on the part of the metafictional novelist…It is central to the book's concerns…when novelists force us to understand the constructed nature of their characters, they invite us simultaneously to reflect on the way subjectivity is similarly constructed in the non-fictional world we inhabit…the use of metafiction in the book serves to undermine the naturalization of social and economic inequalities that especially characterized British society in the 1930s (Finney, 2002, p. 76).

Finney therefore points out how the different time settings in the novel, namely; 1935 and 1999 set up the binary between classic realism and postmodernism. McEwan argues that the novel shows us that the processes of narration can be misleading and that we ourselves use these same processes to make sense of our everyday worlds. Finney also argues that classic realism is revealed to be no more than a clever device and that it, along with tradition, oppresses people.

Alistair Cormack, while admitting that Finney makes a convincing argument, disagrees that it is classic realism that is being subverted in the first section of the novel, but rather modernism:

> This is key: classic realism is characterized by a mediating discourse – what Colin MacCabe influentially named 'meta-language' – whereas modernism presents its consciousnesses without an overarching and containing discourse (MacCabe 1979: 13-38). This sort of 'point of view' modernism is what we encounter in the first section and is commented on by Briony's novella *Two Figures by a Fountain*. McEwan is thus not using his novel to challenge the ideological functions of a novelistic discourse assaying verisimilitude, but rather to attack static, morally disengaged, plotless modernism (Cormack, 2009, p. 77).

It seems to me however, that both of these critics are right; McEwan critiques both of these modes of writing in *Atonement*. He criticises not only the false tradition that is represented in the Tallis country house and the moral simplicity of Briony's first literary work, "The Trials of Arabella", but he also criticises Briony's later modernist novella for its moral disengagement, as has been illustrated. The novel therefore parodies both classic realism and modernism.

Finney states that *Atonement* is particularly a criticism of classic realism, that Briony's integration of fiction with reality, which leads to her "crime", points to postmodernism:

> From the start, [Briony's] powerful imagination works to confuse the real with the fictive…The young Briony suffers from the inability to disentangle life from the literature that has shaped her life. She imposes the patterns of fiction to the facts of life. To complain about the metaficitonal element in the book is to fail to understand that we are all narrated, entering at birth into a pre-existing narrative which provides the palimpsest on which we inscribe our own narratives/lives (Finney, 2002, p. 78-79).

Cormack disagrees with Finney's reading stating that, although Briony does mix literature and life, it is not evident that the only message sent by this insight is that "we are all narrated." Cormack goes on to argue that the implication of Briony imposing fiction on reality is that there <u>is</u> a reality which lies beyond the narratives we create in order to make sense of our lives, and that it is our duty to ensure that we know what the reality is so that we can distinguish the real from the fictive and not cause a "crime" as Briony is portrayed to have (Cormack, 2009, p. 78).

If Cormack is correct, this would indicate that McEwan is not a postmodern writer as postmodernism rejects the idea of an objective reality and states that all we have are our illusions because "we are all narrated." *Atonement* however, definitely criticises the ways in which we construct reality because those constructions can lead to devastation, as Briony's construction of reality does. Thus McEwan illustrates the "danger of an imagination that

can't quite see the boundaries of what is real and is unreal" (Reynolds and Noakes, 2002, p. 19). Therefore, although *Atonement* at first glance appears to be a postmodern text, it appears to be realist with its Enlightenment philosophy, that the world can be known, rather than the uncertainty of postmodernism. It would therefore seem that the metafictional component of the novel acts to criticise the process by which narratives are made with the imagination, rather than to indicate that reality is uncertain. Joe, in *Enduring Love,* points out this problematic and then goes on to describe how modernism in art changed this, along with science, but he also states that storytelling remained important, in determining the fate of theories (McEwan, 1997, p. 48). McEwan shows a deep interest in the stories that people tell in order to make sense of the world (Childs, 2006, p. 110).

Despite the fact that this chapter has, hitherto, argued that *Atonement* appears to be a postmodern novel, it does not seem typically postmodern, because it does not celebrate fragmentation and moral relativism. The novel rather leaves the reader dissatisfied, being left to dwell on the troubles and uncertainties we face, along with Briony our narrator. Therefore although *Atonement* contains many postmodern characteristics such as pastiche and self-referentiality, it lacks the jouissance or exhilaration at the prospect of multiple meanings being available, that postmodern texts usually exhibit. It becomes clear that the novel is only postmodern at face-value. I will now discuss how this relates to the realism of the novel.

McEwan, the Great Tradition and History

It would appear that McEwan endorses English empiricism rather than rejecting it as Finney describes. In some ways, McEwan's novels can be regarded as realist texts, in that they seem to put forward the idea that there are explanations for the empirical world (including minds) in terms of the real world. The novels therefore seem to convey the message that a complete theory of mind can explain the existence and functioning of minds in terms of their reality. In other words, truth exists regardless of whether anyone thinks, hopes or fears it exists; truth enjoys mind-independent existence. English empiricism, according to McEwan in an interview, can be traced back to the works of Jane Austen:

> What are the distances between what is real and what is imagined? Catherine Morland, the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, was a girl so full of the delights of gothic fiction that she causes havoc around her when she imagines a perfectly innocent man capable of the most terrible things (Reynolds and Noakes, 2002, p. 20).

When reading this, Briony is brought to mind and it becomes clear that McEwan wanted to draw a parallel between *Atonement* and *Northanger Abbey* (1803), by quoting from *Northanger Abbey* in its epigraph. McEwan's *Atonement* passes through all of the past literary forms, and postmodernism, and appears to return to the tradition of English empiricism as Cormack argues (Cormack, 2009).

McEwan recognises that all narratives are mediated and we cannot have direct access to the past. This is shown in the coda "London 1999." We are told that Briony had to do research at the Imperial War Museum in Lambeth in order to write about the Dunkirk WWII experience, much the same as McEwan. Not only did McEwan recreate what it was like to be a soldier at Dunkirk, but also what it was like to be a nurse at St Thomas' hospital in London. Mr Nettle the "old colonel of the buffs" (p. 359), writes to Briony and we are shown how her representation of the past has to be corrected to be factually correct and realistic. Briony imagines what the war "might" have been like, and thereby self-consciously acknowledges the constructedness of the narrative and, in turn, its fictionality, as does McEwan. The third section exposes mistakes Briony made in her first draft, for example, Mr Nettle corrects her portrayal of an RAF man as wearing a beret: "'You have your RAF chappie wearing a beret. I really don't think so. Outside the Tanks Corps, even the army didn't have them in 1940. I think you'd better give the man a forage cap'" (p. 359). The final realisation in the third section of the novel that we have been reading a fiction written by Briony and not a detailed historical story is quite jarring to the reader. The value and meaning we invest in works of fiction is exposed by this shocking realisation.

McEwan used two memoirs as background material for the third section on Briony's training as a probationer nurse. One of them was Lucilla Andrews's *No Time for Romance* (1977), which is her account of being trained at St Thomas' in 1941. Much like Briony's research at the Imperial War Museum, McEwan also used "The Memoir of Mrs A. Radloff" which was an unpublished typescript. Like Andrews, Radloff was trained at St Thomas' in London and Basingstoke and she came across casualties from Dunkirk. Natasha Alden traces the similarities and differences between Radloff's and Andrews's experiences and McEwan's work.[18]

[18] Natasha Alden has written an essay, "*Words of War, War of Words: Atonement and the question of Plagiarism"*, addressing questions of historical representation of the past in *Atonement* in Groes, 2009.

McEwan was accused of plagiarising parts of his novel *Atonement* (2001) from the autobiography of Lucille Andrews (Groes, 2009). His inclusion of these events however, serves to expose the myths about Dunkirk. Many academics came to his defence as Erica Wagner pointed out that it might not be possible to be original, given that all stories have been told in some form or other. She went on to compare *Atonement* to novels that are "in dialogue" with other novels, such as Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* (2005), which Smith herself stated is a "homage" to E.M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910). Smith also stated that McEwan does not plagiarize from Andrews but rather uses her work for historical background information (Smith as cited by Alden in Groes, 2009, p. 58). The accusation of plagiarism adds to my argument that McEwan creates a universal subjectivity in his novels, with the inclusion of intertextuality, so that his novels are "in dialogue" with other works so as Matthew Arnold would say the best that has been thought can be shared (this will be elaborated upon in chapter 4).

The novel therefore explores the value of the mixing of history and fiction. Although the line between fiction and history is distinctly drawn in the coda of *Atonement*, we are still given the impression that there are truths that can be captured, as we are told which parts of the novel "really happened." Rather than expressing total ontological doubt, as with other postmodern metafictional works sceptical of historical representations, McEwan shows that there is an objective reality with the undeniable deaths of Cecelia and Robbie – whom we are explicitly told died in 1940. McEwan thus presents the dilemma of how history and fiction are inseparable and at the same time completely separate. It would appear however, that McEwan conveys the consoling and therefore valuable power of fiction, and while there is a difference between fiction and reality, more or less accurate versions of reality do exist. Although there are competing narratives, there is also empirical certainty. McEwan, for example, represents "the collective insanity of war" (p. 353). By documenting the Dunkirk episode, McEwan demythologises the nostalgic view of war. It is here that McEwan rejects the postmodern relativism that history and fiction are equal. McEwan, as Alden points out, is as historically accurate as possible, perhaps refuting postmodern relativism (Groes, 2009, p. 58).

McEwan depicts how individual experiences occur at the same time as public or historical events and how time is dynamic and seems to change with individual perception. The ways in which events are documented and how individual experiences are made sense of, when different versions of events exist, is explored by McEwan in his novels. The divergent

recollections that exist between individuals and the public are the subject of particularly intense scrutiny. This is true of *Atonement*. He shows how lives are affected by larger socio-political issues, with Robbie getting out of prison early for joining the infantry (p. 208). The parallel between the public and the private is also drawn with McEwan's description of Hermione's divorce as "a bitter domestic civil war" (p. 70).

The protests in *Saturday* are another example of this; McEwan explores the events of 9/11, depicting the experience of the masses and the individual. *Atonement* could be called a "Historiographical Metafiction" as Linda Hutcheon defines Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), questioning its own ability to represent history. The interconnectedness and, at times, disconnectedness of the public and the private are depicted by McEwan. Henry Perowne, like the protagonist, Saleem Sinai, of *Midnight's Children* is an unreliable narrator. This may have been done by McEwan so that Perowne does not stand as an authority on the post-9/11 and pre-Iraq War history. Perowne, like Rushdie's Saleem however, is not a stupid character, and instead of the reader deciphering what is happening through the narrator's unreliable vision, we are shown how a perfectly rational man can get things wrong. We are even reminded in McEwan's novels that the writer himself gets things wrong, but as Rushdie says of Saleem's and his own mistakes, their "wrongness seems right" (Rushdie, 1992, p. 23). If Henry Perowne was to always get things right, there would be the taint of artificiality to his character. For this reason, it could be said that McEwan emphasises his mistakes in order to explore how, with our memories, we recreate the past in order to suit our present desires, and the same can be said of Briony.

Briony sets out to write down the events of her life, in order to give meaning and significance to events. Briony is by no means a neutral, indifferent chronicler of the past. Briony assumes central control of the narrative, dissecting the past to suit her own objectives, so that the reader is bound to follow her authority. Briony writes from memory, and memories are factually flawed and coloured by perception. This relates to the problematic of narration, such as the tensions between competing accounts and recollections of the past, while still needing to arrive at an accurate description. McEwan therefore displays an interest in society and historical events: "I value a documentary quality, and an engagement with society and its values; I like to think about the tension between the private worlds of individuals and the public sphere by which they are contained".[19]

[19] I. McEwan. "Author's Statement," *Contemporay Writers*, 6 July 2009. Available URL:**http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth70**

It is the ongoing stream of news on TV which makes private events public in *Saturday*, such as the burning cargo plane that Perowne, in *Saturday*, witnesses go down in smoke. Not only does Perowne watch the news on TV but he also listens to it on the radio. The news broadcasts present events as if they were in the past. Perowne's consumption of his surroundings is taken in, in a similar manner, as if the present were in retrospect. This and the TV news' manner of conveying the present in retrospect draws attention to representation and how our thoughts are mediated. This illustrates how the public and private intermingle, whether it is the internal that shapes the public or the public (for example in the form of the news) that shapes the internal beliefs of the private.

While Perowne and his wife, in *Saturday,* try to console themselves by creating their own private world, by making love, they cannot put Baxter out of their heads. Similarly, in *Enduring Love,* Joe and Clarissa make love after the ballooning accident but their minds are elsewhere. This is again the case in *Black Dogs* (1992), in which the protagonist Jeremy receives a phone call to tell him that the Berlin wall will be brought down, while he is making love to his wife. They continue after the phone call "But the spell had been broken. Cheering crowds were surging through the early morning gloom of our bedroom. We were both elsewhere" (McEwan, 1998, p. 69). The problems of memory and the need for narratives to make sense of these experiences are thus foregrounded in McEwan's novels and he does recognise the value of sensibility or literature.

McEwan shows how the values of the previous generation and their experiences are passed on. Even though certain beliefs about Islam sprung up after 9/11, these values will be passed on to the next generation. Similarly, as he depicts that certain values about class existed before WWII, they continue to be passed on. As the critic Marianne Hirsch (1997), states McEwan explores "post-trauma" or "post-memory"; the idea that long after a traumatic incident has occurred, the people who experienced it will live it out and pass it on to their children. This is evident not only in *Enduring Love* but also in *Atonement*. The implication of this is that we are never fully conscious of our present time. Laura Marcus suggests that this "ideological time-lapse" is shown to shape our present experience, calling it "modernist time" (Groes, 2009, p. 85). McEwan cannot therefore be exclusively categorised, as for or against postmodern poetics.

There is however, still the message in the novel that all narratives are mediated. Alden writes McEwan was true to Andrews's story, only transplanting her experiences to London. This

reveals again that we are reading a work of fiction as McEwan changes history so that Briony can be in London to witness Lola and Paul Marshall's wedding, and for her to be able to meet Cecelia and Robbie. In a self-conscious metafictional moment, Briony herself reveals how she conflated her experiences as a nurse at Alder Hey, the Royal East Sussex and St Thomas' in order "to concentrate all [of her] experiences in one place" (p. 356). In the coda however, Briony explains that she "never saw [Cecelia and Robbie] in that year. [Her] walk across London ended at the church on Clapham Common [and] a cowardly Briony limped back to the hospital, unable to confront her recently bereaved sister" (p. 370-371). This means that Briony would have been in London just after Robbie's death on 1 June and the September Blitz 1940 in which Cecelia died.

In all of his detail about Briony's life as a probationer and nurse however, McEwan remains true to the two memoirs (Alden, 2009). Indeed, an incident that Briony recalls was in fact an experience of Radloff's:

> The dragon who met us (the sister) thrust a tray of labels disdainfully at my front and without looking at me…It was marked N. Reeves. Naively, for I didn't realise that I had no identity, I protested that my initial was A. 'Stupid girl, do not you know that N. stands for Nurse?' (Radloff, p. 1, as cited by Alden in Groes 2009).

Alden notes that while the Sister's answer to Briony is less harsh, the stripping away of identity is no less alarming in McEwan's recreation of the scene (Groes, 2009):

> This was how it was going to be. She had gone up to the sister to point out courteously that a mistake had been made with her name badge. She was B. Tallis, not, as it said, on the rectangular broach, N. Tallis.
> The reply was calm, 'You are, and will remain, as you have been designated. Your Christian name is of no interest to me. Now kindly sit down, Nurse Tallis' (p. 275).

Drawing from Andrews's and Radloff's experiences, McEwan lists Briony's medical tasks and experiences, Briony had "dabbed gentian violet on ringworm, aquaflavine emulsion on a cut, and painted lead lotion on a bruise" (p. 277). McEwan recreates the impersonal, unrelentingly harsh and boringly hard work of the nurses:

> The day before began with bedpans. Sister did not approve of them being carried down the ward 'like tennis rackets.' They were to be carried 'to the glory of God,' and emptied, sluiced, cleaned and stowed by half past seven, when it was time to start morning drinks (p. 283).

Briony treats a patient with shrapnel wounds, which is a composite of two patients treated by Andrews, according to Alden (Groes, 2009, p. 66). When Briony removes the shrapnel from the patient he swears and Sister Drummond reprimands him:

> 'How dare you speak that way in front of one of my nurses?'
> 'I beg your pardon, sister. It just came out.'
> Sister Drummond looked with disdain into the bowl. 'Compared to what we've admitted these past few hours, Airman Young, your injuries are superficial. So you'll consider yourself lucky. And you'll show some courage worthy of your uniform. Carry on, Nurse Tallis' (p. 300).

Alden points out that McEwan rushes Briony from one patient to another so as to convey the lack of human connection between nurse and patient (Groes, 2009, p. 67). Here McEwan seems to be condemning stringent, dehumanising social roles such as that of nurse and patient. The rigid rules that Briony has to follow make her move from one patient to the next as if they are merely problems to be solved and not people. Even Sister Drummond's contemptuous reaction to the soldier swearing lacks empathy. McEwan therefore, criticizes rigid ideals of professionalism or social roles and encourages empathy between individuals.

After gaining an overall picture of McEwan's fiction, it becomes apparent that there are certain patterns and continuities in his work to date. An awareness of the epistemological problems of providing accurate records of events or the truth seems to be continuously presented in his works. Misleading the reader is one of the mechanisms McEwan employs in order to convey the message that "telling stories is telling lies" (Childs, 2006, p.116). Although he employs metafictional elements, McEwan shows that a consensus about reality and the human condition can be achieved. McEwan therefore possibly sends the message to the reader that we need to question everything. His novels broach both political and philosophical subjects.

McEwan appears to be a polygot writer, appealing to a number of literary movements and diverse audiences. In the first section the events of a single day are recounted to us by a third person omniscient narrator, making the novel appear realist in form. The consciousnesses of four characters, namely: Briony; Cecelia; Emily and Robbie however are also given and this suggests a modernist interest in consciousness, such as that of Woolf. In the third section of *Atonement* labelled "London 1999" Briony maintains the same perfectionist character trait as she describes "now the drafts are in order and dated, the photocopied sources labelled, the

borrowed books ready for return, and everything is in the right box file. I've always liked a tidy finish" (p. 353). It is in this way that McEwan is able to parody realism, with the third section exposing literature as a lie. Similarly, he also shows how the lovers will live on forever in Briony's novel, just as the dancing figures do on the Grecian Urn that Keats wrote an Ode on (1820).

McEwan negotiates theoretical ideas through the framework of a contested empiricism. McEwan therefore uses both the indigenous British tradition of philosophy-rooted moral and cultural critique and the realist tradition in his fiction. As Waugh points out, "Postmodern theory, as a view from everywhere, has tended to ignore the specificity and particularity of expressions of the postmodern as they emerge from and are situated in indigenous and cultural traditions (ironically so, given its insistence on the local and the situated and the particularity of language games)" (Waugh, 2005, p. 69). The British and intellectual contexts of the novel have therefore been ignored by academic criticism, and this project has placed McEwan's novels within their context, having shown how the form of his novels defy easy categorisation.

The Modernism of *Atonement*

McEwan has written about his mother's vascular dementia. Perhaps, for this reason, in all of McEwan's novels there is an interest in neurological processes, memory and temporality. Indeed, in *Atonement*, we learn in the coda that Briony has this neurological disease and also in *Saturday* the protagonist's mother Lily has dementia. This brings up again the question of the fictive and the loss of touch with reality or a loss of reason or sense: "Here is the signature of so many neurodegenerative diseases – the swift transition from one mood to another, without awareness or memory, or understanding of how it seems to others" (p. 96). As Laura Marcus states, "McEwan brings to the fore a new interest among writers in neuroscience and the relations between mind and brain: the novel would appear to be committed to a new way of aligning narrative and mental processes and the forms of knowledge and enquiry associated with both literature and science" (Groes, 2009, p. 97).

McEwan emulates his modernist predecessors in *Saturday* by giving Perowne's memories of his family life intermingled with the present. This focus on memory and subjectivity not only shows how sensibility, memory and desire are a part of our subjectivity but also demonstrates an interest in modernist thematics. For example, the feelings that Perowne experiences at the

beginning of his Saturday are reminiscent of those experienced by Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs Dalloway*. Perowne:

> As he steps outside and turns from closing the door, he hears the squeal of seagulls come inland for the city's good pickings. The sun is low and only one half of the square – his half – is in full sunlight. He walks away from the square along blinding moist pavement, surprised by the freshness of the day. The air tastes almost clean. He has an impression of striding along a natural surface, along some coastal wilderness, on a smooth slab of basalt causeway he vaguely recalls from a childhood holiday. It must be the cry of the gulls bringing it back. He can remember the taste of spray off a turbulent blue-green sea, and as he reaches Warren Street he reminds himself that he mustn't forget the fishmonger's (p. 71).

Perowne's recollection of childhood gives an interval in which the present is "plunged" into the past. This reframes the opening of Woolf's novel when Clarissa also recalls her childhood: "She had burst open the French windows and plunged at Burton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave" (Woolf, 2008, p. 3). One should note Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs Dalloway* is at a window, positioning her as an observer of events, a recurring motif in McEwan's novels. Henry Perowne in *Saturday,* and Briony in *Atonement*, are both portrayed as watching events from their windows, and this evokes the words of Henry James that "[t]he house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million – number of possible windows not to be reckoned, rather" (James, 2003, Preface, p. 45). This would seem to suggest that McEwan is a modernist novelist, as this idea of multiple consciousnesses, looking through windows, is central to the modernist novel.

We see this same reshaping of modernism in *Atonement*. Robbie will often recall memories in the present, giving short lapses into the past (p. 205). In McEwan's novels we are therefore given the thought processes of the characters and how the present can evoke memories of the past. This shows a progression from the idea that time is linear, as in the realist novels. We are given a scientific view of time as being "variable" according to experience. An hour can seem like five minutes or a week. This is illustrated in the description of Robbie and Cecelia while making love: "They were beyond the present, outside time, with no memories and no future. There was nothing but obliterating sensation, thrilling and swelling" (p. 136). It would therefore seem that McEwan is suggesting that there is room for a marriage between sense and sensibility or literature and science, even though they have competing ideas about

the "truth." Both science and literature involve story telling and a self-conscious awareness of that storytelling.

In response to the surfeit of certainty that we experience at the end of *Atonement,* I would argue that McEwan suggests that it is acceptable not to be certain, but to have an inkling of "truth" or interpretive possibilities and to perceive on that basis. This idea is promoted by what Richard Dawkins, the British evolutionary biologist and champion of the public understanding of science, said in an interview:

> 'It would be entirely wrong to suggest that science is something that knows everything already. Science proceeds by having hunches, by making guesses, by having hypotheses, sometimes inspired by poetic thoughts, by aesthetic thoughts even, and then science goes about trying to demonstrate it experientially or observably. And that's the beauty of science – that it has this imaginative stage but then goes on to the proving stage, the demonstrating stage' (Brockman, 2005, p. xii).

Thus McEwan can be seen to illustrate that sense and sensibility are not mutually exclusive. I have therefore pointed out many contradictions at play in McEwan's scientific demonstration, with playfulness and aestheticization, that there simply cannot be any secure knowledge, in order to achieve a greater claim to knowingness. McEwan demonstrates that theory plays back and forth between science and fiction. Indeed, as Lyotard shows, even the latest sciences suggest radical indeterminacy, undecidability and uncertainty, as shown by scientific authorities such as Heisenberg, Gödel and Neils Bohr (Lyotard, 1984, p. 44).

In the first section of the novel, most of the chapters are told from the perspective of thirteen year old Briony Tallis. This brings to mind L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* (1953), with its child narrator, like Briony, witnessing a love affair between two people from different classes. It is from the nursery window that Briony witnesses the sexually charged scene, between Robbie and Cecelia, which adds to one of the main themes of the novel. Briony has already written a fiction, with her play *The Trials of Arabella*, and it is after seeing the fountain scene that she ponders how aesthetically problematic it is to represent:

> [S]he sensed she could write a scene like the one by the fountain and she could include a hidden observer like herself…She could write the scene three times over, from three points of view…None of these three was bad, nor were they particularly good. She need not judge. There did not have to be a moral. She need only show separate minds, as alive as her own, struggling with the idea that other minds were equally alive (p. 40).

We ironically have been reading what Briony has thought of writing; a series of scenes told from individual perspectives. We are given not only Briony's partial interpretation of the fountain scene, but also Cecelia and Robbie's perception of events by the third person omniscient narrator. This, along with the representation of other characters' thoughts such as those of Emily Tallis, even though only part of a subplot, illustrate the independent existence of different individuals, just as Briony realises and describes them as "separate minds."

Instead of having a third person omniscient narrator, modernist novels tend to be made up of a wide range of subjective, fragmentary perspectives. Individual perception seems to be paid particular attention to in McEwan's novels. In *Atonement,* for example, although a third person omniscient narrator is employed, it seems that individual perspectives of events dominate different chapters in the novel, except Chapter Five which combines the perspective of the deceitful Lola and Paul Marshall. The irony of this window scene is that Briony realises at this moment that each of us has our own consciousness and interpretation of events. Briony moves from a realist view of literature, as the day of the incident progresses to that of modernist alienation, in her realisation that multiple and conflicting points of view exist. Briony's surprising proto-modernist revelation cues the discordant separation with the main storyline of the novel; the narrative surprisingly and jarringly leaps forward in time: "Six decades later she would describe how, at the age of thirteen, she had written her way through a whole history of literature" (p. 41).

An analogy for the progression from the realist to modernist perspective is drawn with the progression from childhood to adulthood. Briony is growing up and McEwan presents this as a state in which you become aware that other people exist, with their own thoughts and feelings, a modernist awareness. Robbie notes that Briony switches from this awareness and is in a liminal state: "At this stage in her life Briony inhabited an ill-defined transitional space between the nursery and adult worlds which she crossed and recrossed unpredictably. In the present situation she was less dangerous as an indignant little girl" (p. 341). Given the different psychological perspectives and close focus on the drama of Briony's "crime" in the first section of the novel, the modernist elements of the novel are clearly discernable.

By showing that writing is represented as a form of telepathy, I have argued that McEwan suggests how storytelling is a solution to the problem of objectivity. By writing a story, a collective consciousness can be created; by allowing people to enter into another's consciousness and more or less accurate versions of the truth can be deduced. Briony

illustrates this process in her thoughts about storytelling: "By means of inking symbols onto a page, she was able to send thoughts and feelings from her mind to the reader's. It was a magical process, so commonplace that no one stopped to wonder at it" (p. 37). It is here that McEwan redeems sensibility and the arts, as being able to create a collective consciousness. Briony's reference to writing and reading as a "magical process" furthers the idea that there is value in sensibility and it is not sense over sensibility that McEwan promotes in *Atonement*.

There are problems in giving accounts, [McEwan] suggests: the reader must remember that he/she gains access to reality through texts that are not transparent windows, but particular shapings of events through language, narrative and genre; however, accounts can be given. In his contribution to a symposium on fiction published in the *New Review* in 1978, McEwan argues that "there can surely be no more mileage to be had from demonstrating yet again through self-enclosed 'fictions' that reality is words and words are lies. There is no need to be strangled by that particular loop – the artifice of fiction can be taken for granted." In his work there is an awareness of all the epistemological problems of providing accurate records of events, but also a reluctance to embody these on a textual level and a willingness to provide the reader with traditional, unproblematic narratives (Malcolm, 2002, p. 11-12).

In Chapter Six, Emily Tallis has withdrawn to her bedroom, feeling a migraine coming on and as the mother of the household deduces from her darkened bedroom what everyone in the house is doing. Emily guesses correctly when she hears feet on the stairs, that it is Briony, "by the muffled sound of them…they must be barefoot and therefore Briony's" (p. 66). This hypersensitivity to sounds and smells, from a darkened lonely room, portraying an individual interpretation of events seems to be a metaphor for modernism and its characteristic individual consciousness:

> Habitual fretting about her children, her husband, her sister, the help, had rubbed her senses raw; migraine, mother-love and, over the years, many hours of lying still in bed, had distilled from this sensitivity a sixth sense, a tentacular awareness that reached out from the dimness and moved through the house…a conversation that penetrated a wall, or, better, two walls, came stripped of all but its essential twists and nuances (p. 73).

It seems to me that this is a metaphor for the modernist consciousness because instead of having a direct stream of consciousness, it is mediated by the third person omniscient narrator. Here we see the subtle subversion of the modernist form with its faultless attention to individual subjectivity, with the third person omniscient narration (Cormack, 2009, p. 73).

Emily Tallis is also ironically reassured by the sound of Lola laughing with Paul Marshall in her room, given that he abuses Lola and later rapes her. Emily "beamed her raw attention into every recess of the house. There was nothing, and then, like a lamp turned on and off in total darkness, there was a little squeal of laughter abruptly smothered. Lola, then, in the nursery with Marshall" (p. 69). Emily here acts as a metaphor for the omniscient narrator, and the novel self-consciously questions the reliability of an omniscient narrator.

Parallels can also be traced between Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and *Atonement*.[20] For example, in *To the Lighthouse,* the light of the lighthouse is a metaphor for the mother figure Mrs Ramsay. Mrs Ramsay's eyes are described as "meeting her own eyes" when the light of the lighthouse meets hers and as "searching" as the light of a lighthouse does (Woolf, 1992, p. 70). Similarly, in *Atonement* Emily is said to have "beamed her raw attention into every corner of the house." The use of the word "beamed" draws a parallel with Mrs Ramsay being the "light" of the lighthouse (p. 73). Both mothers are also absent. In *Atonement* the middle section depicts WWII and the retreat of the British and the French at Dunkirk. The middle section in *To the Lighthouse* represents the passing of time and WWII with the empty house. McEwan however, actually depicts the shame and horror of war.

Therefore, the structure of *Atonement* closely resembles that of *To the Lighthouse* in that it is tripartite. In *Atonement,* the first section describes a day in the Tallis family country home; the second section involves the war and in the third and final section we see a return to the Tallis home in an attempt for closure. In *To the Lighthouse,* Lily starts painting a portrait of Mrs Ramsay and in *Atonement* Briony writes a play, both of which do not come to fruition until the third sections of the novels. Both of these novels explore the redemptive nature of art even though belated. Both Lily's and Briony's works are a form of catharsis for them. It is through Briony's writing that she achieves "atonement." McEwan shows the redeeming quality of literature, much like Woolf to be that of catharsis, as we see the novella consoles Briony, and allows her to atone for her "crime", illustrated by her telling Luc Cornet, a dying Frenchman, about Cecelia and Robbie's engagement (p. 305).

The young French soldier Luc Cornet is a patient taken from Andrews's memoir (Groes, 2009, p. 67). Although the soldier in Andrews's memoir is English, McEwan makes him

[20] Laura Marcus traces the similarities between Atonement and To the Lighthouse (Groes, 2009, p. 83).

French. Sister Drummond assigns Briony to talk to him because she learnt French at school. Briony only having a basic grasp of French translates the word nurse as "sister," which leads to the two having an intimate conversation about Cecelia and love. Briony quietly corrects Luc, who is delirious, that he is in a hospital in London and they have never met before. Luc however, believes that they know each other from his family's bakery. Luc also grips Briony's hand tightly, making it a more intimate exchange. He continues to hallucinate and believes they are a couple. Luc then asks Briony to loosen his bandages and when she does, she becomes aware that half of his face and head have been shot away. Briony empathizes with Luc and plays along because he is dying. Alden notes that the account given here is the same as Andrews's account of a patient named John, the only difference between the two accounts being that McEwan includes empathy not only on the part of Briony, but also Sister Drummond, who is more sympathetic in this instance. It is in this way that McEwan is able to create a realistic, not wholly inaccurate portrayal of history by using historical source material, but is also able to show the value of sensibility or empathy.

The scene reminds one of family life and love, which Briony has lost and Luc will shortly through death. Briony's interaction with Luc is the only personal interaction depicted in the hospital. McEwan, in an interview with John Sutherland, stated that he wanted the episode between Briony and Luc to not only be viewed as a death scene but also as a "love scene" (Sutherland, 2002). In this scene we therefore witness "some eruption of feeling from Briony" as McEwan stated, without a display of emotion from Briony her account of the love between Cecelia and Robbie would not be reliable (Sutherland, 2002). The message in all of McEwan's novels seems to me to be that in a harsh world, love is "the only stand against oblivion" (2001a, p. 372).

Intertextuality Bridges the Gap

Alistair Cormack notes that McEwan, in his fiction, refers to a pantheon of English novelists and that a certain set of values are invoked by his doing this (Cormack, 2009, p.70). Indeed, McEwan alludes to; inter alia, many English novelists, such as Jane Austen, L. P. Hartley, E. M. Forster, and Virginia Woolf. Cormack points out McEwan's allusion to F. R. Leavis, in *Atonement,* as being particularly relevant to the debate over novelistic discourse. This is evident in a passage in *Atonement*, when we again see the opposition of sense and sensibility, when Robbie is thinking about becoming a doctor:

> There was a story he was plotting with himself as the hero, and already its opening had caused a little shock among his friends…Despite his first, the study of English literature seemed in retrospect an absorbing parlour game, and reading books and having opinions about them, the desirable adjunct to a civilised existence. But it was not the core, whatever Dr Leavis said in his lectures. It was not the necessary priesthood, nor the most vital pursuit of an enquiring mind, nor the first and last defence against a barbarian horde…his practical nature and his frustrated scientific aspirations would find an outlet, he would have skill far more elaborate than the ones he had acquired in practical criticism, and above all he would have made his own decision (p. 91).

Here, we see that it is not only Briony who represents the dichotomy of sense and sensibility but also Robbie, who McEwan has stated: "has a relationship, a deep relationship with writing and storytelling" (Reynolds and Noakes, 2002, p. 19). The narration here is tripartite, with McEwan writing as Briony, who in turn channels the thoughts of Robbie, who himself is plotting a story, as her act of atonement. This appears to represent the height of the postmodern ideal of how we are all narrated in fiction and in life. This passage however, gives the distinct impression that there is truth or life external to these narratives. We see that Robbie is clearly for empiricism and states that literature is "not the core, whatever Dr Leavis said in his lectures." We therefore see Robbie criticising the imagination in this passage. It is however, ironic that he sees such little value in literature, and disagrees with Leavis' idea that literature is valuable in terms of investigating morality and reality, when it is in fact his "story" which has, as Cormack states: "[lead] him away from literature and into life" (Cormack, 2009, p. 80). The purpose of writing a novel, according to Leavis, is to mimetically represent individual moral conduct in a social setting (F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 1948, p.17-18, as cited by Cormack, 2009, p. 71). A mediocre novelist would therefore only be amorally interested in form or didactically interested in allegory and would be distinguishable by their obtrusive verisimilitude (Cormack, 2009, p. 71).

It is important firstly to point out that there are two philosophical positions in the art that Leavis suggests is 'great' (Cormack, 2009, p. 71). The first is that of humanism, which states that we as human beings have the same nature, the same concerns in life, for example the search for love and meaning, and that this nature or essence will remain unchanging for all people at all times (Williams, 1976, p. 150). The other philosophical position is that of empiricism, the belief that only sensory data can determine the truth (Williams, 1976, p. 116). Both of these philosophical positions imply a critique of abstraction, explaining Leavis' dislike of the 'aesthetic.' Leavis therefore endorses "common sense" in order to represent reality and to determine practical morality. Leavis also has distaste for abstraction in

criticism and this is evident in his refusal to use critical vocabulary. Therefore, the mimetic assumption underlying realist texts is that the world can be truthfully represented in language (Wolfreys, Robbins & Womack, 2002, p. 85). Therefore, it would appear that while Robbie, as a fictional character, disagrees with Leavis, McEwan uses him ironically to promote Leavisite aesthetics (Cormack, 2009, p. 80). The juxtaposition of sense and sensibility is therefore evident in *Atonement* with Robbie choosing empiricism and sense over sensibility and literature. McEwan shows an interest in the representation of reality and a personal investment in the investigation of right moral conduct. In the end, it is articulated that storytelling is a way of making sense of the world and McEwan does not favour sense over sensibility.

Robbie denounces literature as being a "frivolous" pursuit, much like the character of Henry Perowne in *Saturday*. Curries states that Perowne is unaware of "his own intertextual relations to *The Odyssey*, *Ulysses* and *Mrs Dalloway*" (Currie, 2007, p. 132). Perowne, ironically, like Robbie, does not realise how much he himself relies on storytelling (as will be proved in the following chapter), *"Saturday* enacts a split between the text's 'knowledge' that it is a repetition of a fictional predecessor [*Mrs Dalloway*], and the novel's character's unawareness of this fact. Living their lives as if for the first time, they are nonetheless caught in the literary webs of echoes, allusion, reference" (Marcus, 2009, p. 85). Similarly, not only does Robbie create stories in his head about his future, but he also writes several different drafts of a letter to Cecelia, which can be likened to the drafts Briony writes of her novel. Robbie accidentally asks Briony, much like *The Go Between,* to deliver "the obscene draft" to Cecelia. Robbie accounts for his writing "the obscene draft" as being due to his recently having read D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928).

By including intertextual references, McEwan opens up a dialogue between *Atonement* and other literary works. McEwan engages with a number of modernist writers. The reader thus bears witness to this dialogue and makes their own contributions. Briony not only mentions having read Woolf twice, but Woolf has also been shown to have influenced not only Briony's style of writing but also McEwan's. It is in Briony's novella that she explicitly refers to Woolf's *The Waves* and marks the change from a realist to a modernist perspective of literature: "Despite her journal sketches she no longer believed in characters – quaint thought, perceptions, sensations that interested her" (p. 281-282).

Several times in the novel we are told of "transformation." Cecelia refers to herself as being "transformed" after having gone to Cambridge (p. 103). When Robbie becomes aware of his feelings for Cecelia, in the first section of the novel, he is "in no doubt that a great change was coming over him" (p. 80). Their childhood relationship also undergoes "a marked transformation," after Cecelia and Robbie realise they are in love (p. 135). "Transformation" can be associated with sensibility as it is a change or sensation that a character perceives or feels due to emotions or experiences. In all of these cases, love is the catalyst for transformation in the characters and McEwan shows how sensibility can be valuable. This is especially the case in *Saturday,* which has been explored in the following chapter. The "transformation" the characters undergo is likened by McEwan to the transformation in literature from realist to modernist perspectives of the world, all to do with the imagination, proving literature or sentimentality to be valuable: "Briony thought that a great transformation was being worked in human nature itself, and only fiction, could capture the essence of the change" (p. 281-282). In this quote, we are given the word "transformed" perhaps alluding to *The Metamorphosis* (1912).

In *Saturday,* McEwan again pays homage to the modernist representation of consciousness. Perowne, ironically, realises that there is a gap between the signifier and signified, but does not recognise the break between reality and his experience of it because of the fragmentation of reality by the use of language to represent it. For example, Perowne is aware of Kafka's third person omniscient narrator, and refers to Grete's "unthinking cruelty". Perowne also tries to equate his work as a surgeon to that of the creative members of his family, comparing surgery to music, the narrator on the other hand seems to mock this idea: "To see the world in a grain of sand. So it is, Perowne tries to convince himself, with clipping and aneurysm: absorbing variation on an unchanging theme" (p. 27). This reminds the reader that Perowne's consciousness is being narrated as if a direct view of his mind were available, but at the same time there is a running commentary on his thoughts. A hiatus is therefore clearly evident between the author, narrator and protagonist of *Saturday* and this adds to the post 9/11 atmosphere of fear and doubt.

McEwan, not only directly, cites a reference to Franz Kafka (1883-1924), in *Saturday*, when John Grammaticus gives Daisy a copy of the author's modernist story *The Metamorphosis* (1912), and in turn makes her father Perowne read it, but also by constructing parallels between *Saturday* and the *Metamorphosis*:

> Perowne, by nature ill-disposed towards a tale of impossible transformation, conceded that by the end he was intrigued…He liked the unthinkable cruelty of that sister on the final page, riding the tram with her parents to the last stop, stretching her young limbs, ready to begin a sensual life. A transformation he could believe in (p. 133).

The classic Ovidian thematics of transformation are evoked by *Saturday*, in the way in which a parallel between it and *The Metamorphosis* is created (Groes, 2009, p. 103). Both novels start with their protagonists waking and moving towards a window. McEwan however, inverts Kafka's postmodernism for that of realism. For example, Gregor's arms and legs change into those of an unwieldy insect in *The Metamorphosis*, while Perowne's arms and legs feel better than usual in *Saturday*. Perowne also feels entirely conscious and rational when he wakes, even euphoric, Gregor however feels irrational and depressed. *The Metamorphosis* also ends on a sad note, with Gregor being ousted by his family, while at the end of *Saturday* the family is reunited and they have a new appreciation of each other. I would argue that McEwan's novel, instead of focussing on the negative and alienating aspects of modernity, focuses on how love and the family can redeem the modern. Kafka, on the other hand, traces Gregor's descent into animal consciousness, with his impersonal and bureaucratic approach to modernity. Therefore, in *Saturday*, McEwan reaffirms the modernist thematics, but suggests that there is a way out of them and modernity does not only have to be alienating but with love and homeliness, happiness can be achieved both politically and publicly. It would seem however, that by inverting Kafka's text, McEwan is critical of the more radical experiments of postmodernism.

McEwan goes along with the modernist "inward turn," with his numerous intertextual references, showing that there has been a centuries-long tradition of writing that came before him and that he also recognises the inability of language, as an oppositional symbol system, to accurately portray reality, that there is an unbridgeable gap between the signifier and signified: "I value the implied meaning, the spring, in the space between them... I prefer a work of fiction to be self-contained, supported by its own internal struts and beams, resembling the world, but somehow immune from it" (www.contemporarywriters.com). In terms of these ideas, McEwan may be described as a "modernist" who recognises the Truth value of individual perception and rejects objective generalisations and totalitarian value judgements.

In the second section of *Atonement*, we see an extension of McEwan's critique of narratives, with the portrayal of the World War II episode in Dunkirk. Here, McEwan possibly uses

fiction to debunk some of the myths of war and thus sees value in sensibility. Literature is shown to be a valuable key to unlocking the past; for exploring history and politics. It is in this section that we again see Robbie choose empiricism over literature:

> They would be forming up in the road outside and marching to the beach. Squaring off to the right. Order would prevail. No one at Cambridge taught the benefits of good marching order. They revered the free, unruly spirits. The poets. But what did the poets know about survival? About surviving as a body of men. No breaking of ranks, no rushing the boats, no first come first served, no devil take the hindmost (p. 264).

Here the critique of storytelling is extended from the author to the public arena. This passage indicts Briony and McEwan – "But what did the poets know about survival?" – but also indicts British culture and its controlling myths. The self-accusing authors can never truly represent the reality of war, unless through accidental random detail or "the pointillist approach to verisimilitude," as Briony calls it, which seems convincing, if contrived and overdetermined (p. 359). In this episode, the myth of the "Dunkirk spirit" is demolished, focussing rather on the horror of the retreat. The antagonism and violence between the different services and classes is portrayed, with an airman being attacked (p. 251). This stark representation of the retreat demythologises the notion that a cohesive "spirit" existed between British soldiers. Sarcasm is employed in order to convey the belief that there is no representation of war that comes close to the reality, even if demythologising and random. We thus see in Robbie's second meditation that the value of literature is demeaned and empiricism is promoted, especially with the use of short, incomplete sentences, which serve to ridicule literature's attempt to represent facts by describing life in great detail.

These ideas however, clearly go against my earlier statements that McEwan may be regarded as a postmodern writer. John Barth's parodic mechanism of absorption and rejection offers a way out of this intellectual stalemate (Onega, 1996, p. 37). My contention is that just as Fowles conducts (as Onega states) a multilayered absorption and parodic recasting of the literary tradition he stems from, so too does McEwan and his fiction is yet another example of, "an homage and a kind of thumbed nose to a very old tradition" (Onega, 1996, 38).

In the following quotation of Briony's, the notion that is put forward by *Atonement* about the status of literature is conveyed:

> The Marshalls have been active about the courts since the late forties, defending their good names with a most expensive ferocity. They could ruin a publishing house with ease from their current accounts. One might almost think they had something to hide. Think, yes, but not write. The obvious suggestions have been made – displace, transmute, dissemble. Bring down the fogs of the imagination! What are novelists for? (p. 370).

Here, Briony not only explains why she has to wait for her death before her novel can be published, but she also answers the question of what novelists are for " – displace, transmute, dissemble. Bring down the fogs of the imagination!" (p. 370). Novelists are indicted here as liars, whether they are realists, modernists or self-conscious postmodernists. The ending of *Atonement* does not, therefore, suggest that the real can be captured in fiction but rather suggests that the real and the fictive are two separate entities and that they should never be mixed up, as Briony does. The undeniable death of the lovers suggests that objective truth exists. This confident certainty therefore rules out the postmodernism of the novel, because in order for it to be postmodern there would have to be a suggestion of ontological uncertainty. *Atonement,* therefore, presents the world of the real and that of literature to be highly distinct, with Briony's confession not being able to bring back Cecelia and Robbie to life, the unavoidable truth prevails as it does with her "crime".

Literature can go beyond history

McEwan has stated that the novel is less about the "crime" and more about "the process of atonement" that Briony undergoes through writing (Reynolds & Noakes, 2002, p. 20). McEwan therefore shows an interest in the ethics of writing, and realises that fiction can comfort and distort and produce unethical action. He does however, convey that there is an objective reality and therefore rejects the moral indeterminacy of postmodern fiction. This seems to suggest that literature can capture reality and more or less accurate versions of events are always in the process of being created. It is only in literature that reality can be suspended and the lovers survive. Similarly, it is only in art that neat conclusions can be drawn, with Briony's play finally being performed at the end of the novel. McEwan shows how fiction allows the creative author to go beyond history, the power of which is shown in Briony's being able to atone for her crime by allowing Robbie and Cecelia to be together. She does this by being able to go back in time and through imaginative empathy illustrate thoughts and events she did not experience. McEwan therefore presents a novel which is both historically based in reality and fictional.

Although there are postmodern characteristics to the novel, such as the self-conscious "writing about writing" and "theorising about theory", which are not distinctly postmodern features, it becomes clear that McEwan rejects the moral indeterminacy of postmodernism and sees the text as valuable to exploring life, a humanist preoccupation. McEwan himself states: "the process of writing a novel is educative in two senses; as the work unfolds, it teaches you its own rules, it tells how it should be written; at the same time it is an act of discovery, in a harsh world, of the precise extent of human worth" (www.contemporarywriters.com).

Atonement therefore rejects the relativism and moral indeterminacy of postmodern poetics, and illustrates this by juxtaposing postmodernism with the tradition of classic realism and modernism. This move away from postmodern poetics has also been described in a review of McEwan's piece of fiction *Solar,* in *The Economist*:

> In his mid-50s Ian McEwan made a conscious move to distance himself from his fellow British novelists, Martin Amis, Julian Barnes and Salman Rushdie, with a series of "state of the nation" novels that self-consciously brought together current affairs, science, morality and sex. The first, "Saturday", dwelt on the war with Iraq; in his new novel "Solar", the focus is global warming (*The Economist,* 2010, p. 82).

McEwan's interest in the "state of the nation" in his novels points them away from postmodernism. Although Cormack states that it is the tradition of English empiricism that McEwan advocates over postmodernism, I would argue instead that realist conventions are subverted by the recurring idea of fragmentation in his work, and that it is modernism's rationalism he suggests a return to.

Can we classify *Atonement* as belonging to a particular literary tradition? It would appear that McEwan makes and breaks his own rules. He incorporates historical source material in *Atonement* along with a postmodern metanarrative. He seems to use, assert and subvert different literary movements in his novels. Does it matter if he appeals to a number of competing literary traditions, alluding to different writers? Are the intertextual allusions to specific authors significant and if so how can an author properly acknowledge this debt? Although fiction is not held to the same standards of objective truth and history, McEwan proves it to have value. By clearly pointing out the difference between fiction and history, McEwan rejects postmodernism's wiping out of the difference between history and fiction. McEwan explores the debate about narrative truth, not only in the content of his novels but

also in their form. He shows how fiction can not only capture history but in its difference to historical narratives it can expand our understanding of history. While at first it would appear that McEwan's stance is ambiguous with regard to these questions, with *Atonement's* empiricist and postmodern characteristics, it offers a passionate argument for the value of literature and sensibility for exploring and understanding history. McEwan will be shown in the following chapter to further illustrate the value of sensibility to be imaginative empathy.

Ultimately, McEwan's writing is ambiguous, the self-conscious ending of *Atonement* clashing with the earlier sections of the novel. Just as Briony's understanding of fiction changes, so too is the novel's relationship to the illusion in reality "transformed" throughout the novel. The ending of the novel emphasizes family and love and Briony's novel acts as "a stand against oblivion and despair" (p. 372). It therefore will be concluded that it is not sense over sensibility that McEwan endorses but rather that he sees the value of sensibility whether it takes the form of love, imagination or art. Indeed, rather than participating in the more radical experiments of his literary contemporaries, as Dominic Head states, McEwan shows that "narrative empathy" is necessarily an "ethics of fiction." As McEwan himself has made clear in interview, he rejects the moral indeterminacy of postmodern aesthetics (Head, 2007, p. 174). The classification of McEwan as a writer is therefore problematic. While McEwan at first appears to be a postmodern writer with his jarring metafictional endings, his echoes of Woolf and other modernist writers suggest a closer alliance with modernist texts. McEwan however, unlike Woolf sees literature as needing a "backbone" with plot and characterization. He suggests this, while employing Woolf's techniques. His interest in historical events also suggests an awareness of an objective reality. It is thus concluded that McEwan passes through the past literary movements parodying them, while recognising historical fact. McEwan is a polygot writer who confounds classification.

Chapter 4: McEwan's Humanism of the Other: Morality in *Saturday*

Henry Perowne in *Saturday* (2005)[21] deals with his moral obligations to his patients and moral questions are posed. McEwan has revealed that it is "an involvement in a long-term investigation of human nature," that he is concerned with in all of his novels (Weich, 2004, p. 2). The epigraph of *Saturday* is taken from Saul Bellow's novel *Herzog* (1964), and points to the major theme of McEwan's novel: "What it means to be a man. In a city. In a century. In transition. In a mass." In McEwan's novel he answers this question, conveying that while contemporary living has become fraught with "savagery" and "barbarism," the individual can still be valued if each of us recognises that we are "a child of the mass" and that each of us should act as "a brother to all the rest" (Foley, 2009, p. 242). Thus, McEwan demonstrates a concern with what Levinas would call a "Humanism of the other," in *Saturday* (Levinas, 2006). By the end of the novel the protagonist Henry Perowne begins to comprehend the importance of imaginative empathy, and considers the humanism of the criminal Baxter.

Ziauddin Sardar, a commissioner from the *Equality and Human Rights Commission,* accused McEwan's *Saturday* of being Orientalist, advancing Orientalist propaganda to the West. Sardar conflated McEwan with the protagonist of *Saturday* and stated that he was another pro-Bush or Western culture writer, along with Martin Amis, and Salman Rushdie (Lloyd, 2002). Although McEwan did not respond to this accusation he did publish a statement on his website, that explained that it was Islamic fundamentalism and jihadists that he had spoken out against, not Islam: "It is merely to invoke a common humanity which I hope would be shared by all religions as well as all non-believers" (McEwan, 2009b). McEwan also delivered a lecture "End of World Blues," which pointed out the dangers of religious fundamentalism. As Peter Childs states, McEwan examines "the ways in which the liberal Western citizen can engage with the contemporary world" (Childs, 2006, p. 146).

The message that *Saturday* conveys is that to live in bad-faith or totally isolated from the world either globally or personally is not only dangerous and irresponsible but also impossible. It is hard to stay isolated and one has abrupt awakenings to reality with the events of 9/11, the Iraq war and violent city crime on a more personal level. If a particular set of morals were acknowledged by the characters, they would be immersing themselves in another type of self-deception, by aligning with a particular moral community. McEwan's novels inspire a thorough and painstaking re-examination of the nature and worth of the human,

[21] All further references to McEwan's novel *Saturday* (2005) will be made by page number only.

engaging in the debate of humanism and anti-humanism. This is an important aspect of McEwan's fiction which has not been explored elsewhere.

In *Saturday* McEwan employs intertextual references to a number of canonical modernist writers, such as; Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925); James Joyce's Ulysses (1922); and T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland* (1922), to name but a few. This is in direct contrast to the allusion to the Victorian cultural critic and poet Matthew Arnold (1822-1888). I have not exhaustively discussed the intertextual references in McEwan's novels and have only mentioned a handful. *Saturday* follows its protagonist in his mundane tasks and his thoughts on age and death. McEwan emulates the modernist representation of consciousness in *Saturday*, by constructing parallels between James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and his novel *Saturday*. In *Saturday*, Perowne meditates on the technical achievement and wondrous aesthetic of his kettle, while he makes coffee (p. 69). Similarly in Joyce, there is reference to a teapot (Joyce, 1992, p. 75). The minutiae of everyday living are portrayed in both of these novels, with both protagonists going to the bathroom in the morning (Joyce, 1992, p. 84), (McEwan, 2005, p. 57). Stephen Dedalus also feels shame and guilt about not praying at his mother's deathbed (p. 11), just as Perowne has shame and guilt about his mother's dementia.[22]

The novels address political and social issues of the macrocosm by focussing on the ordinary individual experiences of their protagonists. In the background there are global issues such as the anti-Iraq war protests which occurred on the 15th February 2003 (which was the largest protest in the British Isles to date), and on a more personal level, Perowne's car accident which leads to his family being held hostage. The novel depicts how the mundane can be sent into crisis with a single moment of insanity and violence. By creating a micro-world, that consists of Perowne's city London and his interaction with it, McEwan investigates pertinent questions that we as a modern society face.

The exploration of the interaction between the private and wider socio-political context, is also similar to that in the work of Woolf. *Saturday* has the style and tone of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), which is a modernist novel, in which a WWI veteran commits suicide. In both novels a symbol of modernity disrupts the protagonists' day. In *Mrs Dalloway* a car backfires which caused a "violent explosion that made Mrs Dalloway jump" (Woolf, 1989, p. 14). *Saturday* similarly draws our attention to modern technology, with Perowne's "silver Mercedes S500

[22] The similarities between his novel *Saturday* and the influence of modernist texts, such as those mentioned above, have been traced by Sebastian Groes (2009).

with cream upholstery" (p. 75), and how we can be awakened out of our modern cocoons and "padded privacy" (p. 121), abruptly to life, when Perowne's car collides with Baxter's, which itself leads to terrible events. Our attention is therefore drawn to the violence of modern living. By depicting the twentieth century machinery, even personifying it at times (for example he describes Perowne's car as a "machine [that] breathes an animal warmth of its own" (p. 75), McEwan evokes the modernist thematics literally and figuratively.

This possibly shows McEwan's desire to return to the modernist mode of writing. Both novels capture the consciousness of their protagonists as they move through a city and offer "a day-in-the-life" narrative of their protagonists. McEwan however, uses Bellow's more conventional tactic for narration, of having a third person omniscient narrator. The narrator narrates present events and by using a free indirect style, McEwan conveys that which the narrator cannot, instead of Woolf's stream-of-consciousness.

Perowne not only lives in the same square that Woolf once did, but he also travels along the same route that Mrs Dalloway did. The building in which Henry Perowne lives, Fitzrovia, is in fact based on the building in which McEwan himself lived. It is here that a modernist view of London especially comes out, this may be postmodern pastiche however, as it seems McEwan is deliberately, self-consciously referencing *Mrs Dalloway*. McEwan thus collapses the boundaries between genres and literary eras or styles.

In *Mrs Dalloway*, the novel opens with an aeroplane advertising toffee, writing the brand in the sky (Woolf, 1989, p. 19-21). *Saturday* also opens with an aeroplane; McEwan's aeroplane however, goes down in flames. The aeroplane, although a sign of scientific progress, puts Perowne in mind of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the twin towers, and he wonders if this is another attack by Al-Qaeda. The novel is, therefore, an ironic reminder that despite the achievements of modernists in the twentieth century, these achievements can also be turned against the West and be used to harm them and threaten Western civilization (p. 17). Instead of providing a clear cut message about the state of the world at the beginning of the twenty first century, McEwan presents an uncertain world, by illustrating how the public and the private have become separated and by discussing the "morality" of the War in Iraq and in turn the relationship between the sciences and the arts. McEwan is concerned with humanist issues of morality, both personal and social or political.

While Mrs Dalloway finds no fish at the Fishmonger (Woolf, 1989, p. 12), Perowne finds an abundance of fish (p. 127). It would seem that McEwan suggests that although there is plenty, or "an abundance," for the privileged elite, and they can enjoy luxury, this will not always be the case, because the sea is "emptying" (p. 127). This reasserts the thematic of apocalypse, with the image of all of the fish disappearing and the earth being used up, reminding us that we are in dark and anxious times. It would appear that McEwan's novels ultimately confuse boundaries between 'realist', 'modernist' and 'postmodern' writing, while simultaneously expressing the particularities of time and history.

McEwan and His Fictional Protagonist

The protagonist of *Saturday* can be said to embody all of McEwan's New Humanist beliefs. McEwan is a self-confessed New Humanist, and a member of the British Humanist Association, which endorses a rationalist perspective of life and values "human rights, democracy, equality and mutual respect," and desires "an open and inclusive society with freedom of belief and speech."[23] Humanism is described as "a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free equity." This form of humanism has its roots in the Enlightenment, in Kant's defence of the moral law. Something that calls itself "New Humanism" however, is now beginning to announce itself in Britain. This humanism is self-consciously "new," like New Labour; it has its own journal, the *New Humanist*, and its own sages, the most prominent of whom is Richard Dawkins, author of *The Selfish Gene* and vice-president of the British Humanist Association. The new humanism spends little time exalting man as an ideal. It says nothing, or next to nothing, about faith, hope, and charity; is scathing about patriotism; and is dismissive of those rearguard actions in defence of the family, public spirit, and sexual restraint. The British Humanist Association advocates "secularism…and for an end to the privileged position of religion in law, education, broadcasting and wherever else it occurs."

At the start of *Saturday* Henry Perowne comes across as self-absorbed and disengaged from the troubles of contemporary existence. For example, at the beginning of the novel, Perowne's biological and rationalist description of the people, as he observes them from his bedroom window, demonstrates his lack of concern for others:

[23] The BHA has its own website, from which these quotations have been taken. The site lists other humanist members such as the writer Salman Rushdie, scientists such as Bernard Crick and Richard Dawkins and liberal political philosophers Anthony Flew and Brian Barry.

> he not only watches them, but watches over them supervising their progress with the remote possessiveness of a god. In the lifeless cold, they pass through the night, hot little biological engines with bipedal skills suited to any terrain, endowed with innumerable branching neural networks, sunk deep in a knob of bone casing, buried fibres, warm filaments with their invisible glow of consciousness – these engines devise their own tracks (p. 13).

Here, Perowne describes humans as "biological engines", taking their humanity away and revealing his cold detachment from humanity, almost describing them as ants. There are times in the novel when Perowne does ponder "the state of the world" (p. 80). The free will of people is illustrated here, although Perowne watches them as "a god" from his window they can "devise their own tracks" and this points to McEwan's New Humanist belief in the "irreducible freedom" of human beings. As Andrew Foley states, "In all these regards, McEwan's protagonist in *Saturday*, Henry Perowne, seems to share his creator's position very closely, to the point of virtually acting as a mouthpiece for the author's views" (p. Foley, 2009, p. 254).

Peter Childs (2006, p. 151) states, McEwan examines how the individual is supposed to respond to one's "involvement in the world," without having to sacrifice their independence, or as Andrew Foley puts it; "how to balance personal freedom and 'personal responsibility'; how to manage one's private life in the context of urgent 'global issues'" (Foley, 2009, p. 243). We are shown that although living in self-deception may be easier, there are consequences for it:

> if the present dispensation is wiped out now, the future will look back on us as gods, certainly in this city, lucky gods blessed by supermarket cornucopias, torrents of accessible information, warm clothes that weigh nothing, extended life-spans, wondrous machines (p. 77).

In both of the above passages, Perowne refers to himself as a "god" either observing the passers-by from his window or as one of the modern Western citizens who lives in the amazing technical age. This is an indication that his rationalist worldview might be privileged as we read on in the novel, perhaps implying that those who have supernatural worldviews are backwards. As Richard Bradford states:

> Again we encounter the McEwan leitmotif, commendably refashioned, of the world as comprised of strata, levels of existence and experience which if kept apart will guarantee that the worst aspects of life can remain separate from the rational, the predictable and the routine. At some point in all of his novels these

> strata are caused to intersect. Even in his most recent and relatively conventional novel, *Saturday* (2005) the plot, indeed the entire texture of the novel, is shaped by an accident (Bradford, 2007, p. 22).

On his way to his weekly squash game, with his friend and colleague Strauss, Perowne has a car accident, colliding with the red BMW of Baxter, a man suffering from an incurable genetic disorder. In order to escape being hurt by Baxter and his two thugs, Perowne diverts their aggression by correctly diagnosing Baxter's condition (p. 94). It is Perowne's meticulous ability to diagnose symptoms that allows him to identify Baxter's horrific brain disorder, but to Baxter it must have seemed that Perowne himself was a visionary. We therefore see the juxtaposition of sense and sensibility in these two characters, with Perowne representing rationalism and Baxter irrationalism.

It is Perowne's behaviour after the car crash that leads to tragic consequences for his family. Baxter is so humiliated by Perowne diagnosing him in front of his gang members that he decides to combine sexual violence with sadism, in order to seek revenge on Perowne. Although Perowne's use of his neurological knowledge to diagnose Baxter's neural disease helps him get away from the thugs, it however was an insensitive thing to do (p. 259). It does not seem to be in Perowne's repertoire of skills to imaginatively empathise with others, as we see by his lack of passion for fiction, being called an "irredeemable materialist" by his poet daughter Daisy (p. 134). Even his son, who is a musician and therefore a representative of the arts and humanities, predicts that his father's diagnosis of Baxter's condition in front of his friends, will have severely humiliated him (p. 98). In *Saturday* as in other novels of McEwan's, there are precursors of what is going to happen, one of them being Perowne's spotting of a red BMW, which seems to be following him after his accident (p. 140).

Perowne's persona is initially that of a carefree, upper-middle class, white male who is emotionally disengaged from the troubles of the world. Perowne's detachment is especially shown in his well-heeled status, driving a "silver Mercedes S500 with cream upholstery…Shamelessly, he always enjoys the city from inside his car where the air is filtered and hi-fi music confers pathos on the humblest details" (p. 75-76). Here we see the height of Perowne's self-deception, and only his being jolted by a car "crash" (p. 105), will demolish his complacency and make him remember his place in the world, in Perowne's case his "well-being appears to need spectral entities to oppose it" (p. 78). It is only when the outside world moves in to disrupt his life that he is forced to confront the problems of contemporary existence. Peter Childs points out that Perowne in *Saturday* is living a fiction,

in that he considers himself apart from the violence on the street and receives a rude awakening from this fiction (Childs, 2006, p. 147).

Perowne however, ironically realises how we as human beings choose to live in a state of self-deception, so that we don't have to act morally. This is evident when Perowne is shopping for fish for a stew and remembers reading that fish feel pain:

> This is the growing complication of the modern condition, the expanding circle of moral sympathy. Not only distant peoples are our brothers and sisters, but foxes too, and laboratory mice, and now the fish…The trick, as always, the key to human success and domination, is to be selective in your mercies. For all the discerning talk, it's the close at hand, the visible that exerts the overpowering force. And what you don't see…That's why in gentle Marylebone the world seems so entirely at peace" (p. 127).

The progress achieved in modern life, with the "beautiful supramachinery" and "digitalised entertainment" (p. 78), has also led to the spread of awareness about the world's problems and Perowne muses over this tension, recognising that everyone has a right to be self-deceived about these problems and their responsibilities:

> to enjoy an hour's recreation without this invasion, this infection from the public domain…He has a right now and then – everyone has it – not to be disturbed by world events, or even street events…It seems to Perowne that to forget, to obliterate a whole universe of public phenomena in order to concentrate is a fundamental liberty. Freedom of thought (p. 108).

According to Perowne you can choose what to keep in your consciousness, "to be selective in your mercies" (p. 127). McEwan also seems to promote the idea that modern media have desensitized us from our connection to our community and have coloured our experiences. Even Perowne, when he crashes his car into Baxter's BMW, processes what has happened as if it were news broadcast: "This, as people like to say is urban drama. A century of movies and half a century of television have rendered the matter insincere. It is pure artifice" (p. 86). McEwan therefore suggests that the narratives and discourses conveyed by the media mediate our interpretation of our relationship, individually, to the outside world. Perowne himself is obsessed with watching round the clock news broadcasts, which, while it is an indication of a yearning for connection, also deepens the divide between him and his community.

The novel however, like many others of McEwan's, shows us that as people we cannot forever block out the suffering of our poorer neighbours, with the self-deception, of the like, that Perowne employs. For example, at the beginning of the novel Perowne realises that his

family needs to be protected from the criminality of the outside world, when he notices all of the security devices at his front door (p. 36-37). Here we are given the first hint that one cannot remain self-deceived indefinitely, as one receives abrupt awakenings to reality and the city's poor. As Sebastian Groes states, the city connects the public and the private and indeed leads to Perowne and Baxter meeting (Groes, 2009, p.112). This idea is emphasised by McEwan personifying the security devices in Perowne's home, as "they suddenly loom", and by Perowne ironically humming the old Second World War tune, "We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when" (p 37).

McEwan, it will therefore be argued, illustrates that it is impossible to "obliterate…the public domain," but also that it is dangerous to do so (p. 108). The attack on their family reminds the Perownes that happiness is transient and can easily be taken away. This is a consequence of the confrontation with Baxter, although Perowne already seems to be questioning his involvement in the world with the anit-Iraq War Protests.

Perowne's insensitive interaction with his patients, "not always listening to them" (p. 20), conveys his lack of concern for those around him. Perowne realises that Baxter is suffering from Huntington's disease, an incurable degenerative brain disease, leading to an excruciating death. However, Perowne conveys no sympathy for Baxter: "There is no way out for him. No one can help. But Perowne knows himself to be incapable of pity. Clinical experience wrung that from him years ago" (p. 98). On his initial meeting his materialist, impersonal description of Baxter's situation is quite shocking, reducing Baxter's future suffering and degeneration down to a genetic default:

> There is much in human affairs that can be accounted for at the level of the complex molecule. Who could ever reckon up the damage done to love and friendship and all hopes of happiness by a surfeit or depletion of this or that neurotransmitter? And who will ever find a morality, an ethics down among the enzymes and amino acids when the general taste is for looking in the other direction? (p. 91-92).

The debate between sense and sensibility is dramatized here, when Perowne attributes Baxter's mood swings, violence and lack of morality to his "genetic inheritance," instead of a lack of "faith" or religion. Perowne, therefore like Joe Rose, as argued in chapter 1, favours sense over sensibility.

In *Saturday,* McEwan is interested in a person's sense or "consciousness" and by extension moral "conscience." As Andrew Foley points out these words significantly occur on both the first and last pages of the novel (Foley, 2009, p. 244). Here, Perowne considers the wonder of human consciousness:

> the wonder will remain, that mere wet stuff can make this bright inward cinema of thought, of sight and sound and touch bound into a vivid illusion of an instantaneous present, with a self, another brightly wrought illusion, hovering like a ghost at its centre. Could it ever be explained, how matter becomes conscious? (p. 254-255).

Perowne has experienced the fragility of consciousness in his personal life, having met his wife because she had a brain tumour (p. 40). His mother is also suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Despite this he maintains a very impersonal materialist view of the world when it comes to his patients. Perowne's empathy for his mother however, is a redemptive aspect of his character (p. 153).

In *Saturday* McEwan seems to suggest that "authenticity" is the fundamental goal of human life. In existentialist terms, "authenticity" suggests we should have the freedom to choose how to act, and our actions should not be dictated by our genes or an essential "essence" (Sartre, 2003, p. 60). One cannot blame one's background for choices made. Authenticity therefore involves being the author of your own life, and choosing one's own values. It also involves happiness, and is shown to be a fluid state of being which is fragile. This is evident in the lovemaking of Perowne and his wife at the start and close of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, life is blissful and their lovemaking reflects this, being lazy, indulgent and affectionate (p. 51). At the end of the novel however, after their family has been held hostage, their lovemaking is "quick and greedy, urgent rather than joyous," as if "they can't quite trust their luck, they want all they can get in a short time" (p. 270).

It is only in surgery that Perowne feels the most authentic or "himself"; he feels "calm, and spacious, fully qualified to exist. It's a feeling of clarified emptiness, of deep, muted joy" (p. 258). Perowne feels "fully qualified to exist" in surgery because this is how he gives back to society, by operating on the sick and healing their consciousness, and is reminded of his mother, "Order and cleanliness were the outward expression of an unspoken ideal of love…it was because of [Lilian] that Henry feels at home in an operating theatre" (p. 155). Perowne realises that even the happiness he experiences as a surgeon, with his "benevolent

dissociation" (p. 258), is ephemeral, and will come to an end because of aging, "the time will come when he does less operating, and more administration – another kind of life" (p. 276).

Alternative Ideologies

McEwan has theoretically illustrated anthropological, racial and historical ideas about mankind, their cultural worldviews and national or religious character and the universe, in his novel *Saturday*. Rational worldviews, as portrayed by McEwan, take issue with other ideologies or belief systems such as Islamic fundamentalism, which counter his arguments. Islam on one level postulates that you must fulfil a specific role in society which is contingent, because it is a cosmic fact that that is what you must be (Cox & Marks, 2006, p. 21). In this case alternative ways of "being" are impossible and these roles in society must not be questioned because they are cosmic facts. McEwan, like Sartre and Levinas, rejects the possibility of knowing external ontology and restricts his notion of reality to self-perception:

> What I believe but cannot prove is that no part of my consciousness will survive my death. I exclude the fact that I will linger, fadingly, in the thoughts of others, or that aspects of my consciousness will survive in writing, or in the positioning of a planted tree or a dent in my old car. I expect that many contributors to *Edge* will take this premise as a given: true but not significant. However, it divides the world crucially, and much damage has been done to thought as well as to persons by those who are certain that there is a life-elsewhere. That this span is brief, that consciousness is an accidental gift of blind-processes, makes our existence all the more precious and our responsibilities for it all the more profound (Brockman, 2005, p. 36).

This idea is particularly conveyed through the character of Henry Perowne who sees life as totally arbitrary and coincidental. Perowne believes in evolution (p. 55-56), and sees future possibilities as being "equally real," for example he refers to Schrödinger's Cat (p. 18-19). This is a key area where we see that Perowne's manner of thinking is totally opposed to the immutable ideologies that characterize religions such as Islamic fundamentalism:

> The random ordering of the world, the unimaginable odds – against any particular condition, still please[d] him. Even as a child…he never believed in fate or providence, or the future being made by someone in the sky. Instead, at every instant, a trillion trillion possible futures; the pickiness of pure chance and physical laws seemed like freedom from the scheming of a gloomy god (p. 128).

McEwan as a New Humanist "denigrates God and sees the belief in God as human weakness, advocating rationalism" (Brockman, 2006, p. 36). Perowne therefore seems to act as a

mouthpiece for McEwan's beliefs, not only finding Islam "distasteful" (p. 124), but any religion. McEwan presents Islamic fundamentalism as an ideological adversary of liberalism and in turn the polar opposite of McEwan's humanism as "Radical Islam hates your freedom" (p. 191).

Perowne illustrates a similar belief to that of Sartre's that religion involves self-deception:

> a simple anthropic principle is involved. The primitive thinking of the supernaturally inclined amounts to what his psychiatric colleagues call a problem, or an idea, of reference. An excess of the subjective, an ordering of the world in line with your needs, an inability to contemplate your own unimportance. In Henry's view such reasoning belongs on a spectrum at whose far end, rearing like an abandoned temple, lies psychosis (p. 17).

Here the simile that McEwan uses is important because it refers to a "temple," the place of worship for Hindus, some Christian sects, Jews and Muslims, making it clear that it is religious belief or sensibility that McEwan is comparing to "psychosis."

Indeed, Joe in *Enduring Love* reflects negatively on ontological beliefs, referring to them as a form of "anosognosia": "How restful it must once have been…to be prosperous and believe that an all-knowing supernatural force had allotted people to their stations in life. And not see how the belief served your own prosperity – a form of anosognosia, a useful psychiatric term for a lack of awareness of one's own condition" (p. 74). Just as Jed Parry, a Christian is portrayed as having a mental illness, and is depicted in a negative light, so are other religious individuals, "Beware the utopianists, zealous men certain of the path to the ideal social order. Here they are again, totalitarians in different form, still scattered and weak, but growing, and angry, and thirsty for another mass killing" (p. 276-277).

The novel does not only explore happiness on a personal level, but also on a global level, represented in Perowne's relationship with his city. John McLeod wrote that *Saturday* is "a novel about living in London in the aftermath of September 11 and the new forms of consciousness which have been created in the new world order" (McLeod, 2005, p. 45). This is indeed the case in *Saturday,* where we see how Perowne's consciousness has been altered after the dreaded event. This is illustrated at the beginning of the novel when, on the Saturday in question, Perowne wakes early only to see a burning aeroplane fall from the sky and Perowne immediately thinks of September 11, and believes it to be a terrorist attack. The plane however, turns out to be a stricken Russian cargo plane:

> It's already almost eighteen months since half the planet watched again the unseen captives driven through the sky to the slaughter, at which time there gathered round the innocent silhouette of any jet plane a novel association. Everyone agrees, airliners look different in the sky these days, predatory or doomed (p. 16).

The events of 9/11 therefore awaken Perowne, along with the world, to the fact that global affairs can have a potentially direct and devastating effect on their lives. McEwan's use of barbaric diction such as "slaughter", "predatory" and "doomed" conjure certain images of the perpetrators, and since they have been identified as Islamic militants, a whole group of people is in danger of being stereotyped.

McEwan and Orientalism

Some of Edward W. Said's ideas are useful here. Said's groundbreaking *Orientalism* (1978) suggests a specific way of understanding "the Orient", through the discourses and images of "the Other" generated in Western texts about the Orient (Said, Preface 1978, p. xi). The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony," (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 5).[24] Hegemony exists in the European identity being founded on the idea that the Oriental people are "backwards" and therefore inferior to the European (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 7).[25] It is Eurocentric theoretical frameworks that reiterate this binary. Words have a history of usage which can evoke past responses. Historically, sweeping statements about the Orient are embodied in texts, and literature reaches into civil society. McEwan has been accused of misinterpretting what Said would call "the Orient", and reaffirming the binary of "the Other". McEwan portrays warring identities, but will be shown later to suggest that we rise above our prejudices and consider a humanism of the other. According to Said Humanism is the only defence we have against the disfigurement of history due to inhumanity and injustice (Said, Preface, 2003, p. xxii).

There is a tendency to distort culture to suit agendas, and conflate Islam with terrorism. Orientalism was used to justify empire (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 3). "Too often literature and culture are presumed to be politically, even historically innocent, it has regularly seemed otherwise to me, and certainly my study of Orientalism has convinced me…that society and literary culture can only be understood and studied together" (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 27).

[24] The Occident refers to Britain, France and America. Said specifically explores the Anglo-French-American experience or view of the Arabs and Islam (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 17).
[25] Hegemony is when one culture is more predominant or influential in a free society, than others (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 1).

Said critically emphasises that we have agency and an ability to change history; it can be "unmade and re-written. Information about the Orient is "tinged," "impressed" and "violated" by Orientalism:

> For it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality: [that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second.]" (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 11).

Orientalism is reductionist, in suggesting an essential Western and Eastern essence, without room for historical change. The binary between East and West should not be seen as stable. Said, like McEwan, describes human identity as being fluid, a construct which relies on the existence of an opposite: "Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of "other" is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest, involving individuals and institutions in all societies" (Afterward to *Orientalism*, 1995, p. 332). Identities are therefore forged around contests which often involve political issues such as orthodoxy, the legitimizing of violence, education, immigration and personal conduct laws, and foreign policy, which often lead to enemies. Orientalism may thus be seen as a representation of the power dynamic between the East and West: "what we must respect and try to grasp is the sheer knitted-together strength of Oriental discourse, its very close ties to the enabling socio-economic and political institutions, and its redoubtable durability" (Said, "Introduction", 1978, p. 6). Orientalism therefore led to a partial and biased view of the East, in order for the West to maintain its dominance and identity by setting up a binary between the Occident and Orient. According to Said "the Middle East is now so identified with Great Power politics, oil economics, and the simple-minded dichotomy of freedom – loving, democratic Israel and evil, totalitarian, and terrorist Arabs, the chances of anything like a clear view of what one talks about in talking about the near east are depressingly small" (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 27).

Events such as 9/11 resulted in a deepening of identity and "us" versus "them" mentality between East and West: "No one will have failed to note how "East" has always signified danger and threat during this period, even as it has meant the traditional Orient as well as Russia" (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 26). The "Orientalists" that Said refers to are discursive authorities on "Oriental" people, who he states created the ludicrous idea of the "Arab mind," associating Islam with terror, referring to the "Arab threat" and "Muslim menace" (Said,

Introduction 2003, p. 2). According to Said the word "terrorist" cannot be used without evoking all of the prejudiced meanings that word took after 9/11. Said states that "the Orient" is discursively produced for example with the choice of pronoun "we" "the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely there, just as the Occident itself is not just there either" (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 4). Said describes the demonization of Islam, an enemy which to many people had been unknown until the events on 9/11, and how the label "terrorist" was used in order to keep people vigilant and angry: "media images command too much attention and can be exploited at times of crisis and insecurity of the kind that the post 9/11 period has produced" (Said, Preface, 2003, p. xx).

We particularly see this illustrated in the thinking of Henry Perowne, with his negative and pejorative portrayal of Oriental peoples as a threat to our freedom:

> [T]hey want the perfect society on earth, which is Islam. They belong in a doomed tradition about which Perowne takes the conventional view – the pursuit of utopia ends up licensing every form of excess, all ruthless means of its realisation. If everyone is sure to end up happy for ever, what crime can it be to slaughter a million or two now? (p. 34).

It would therefore appear that Perowne, like the media, produces a simplistic view of the world. We are living in the electronic age world which is immediately accessible and obscured by Western interests. "One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media's resources have forced information into more and more standardized moulds" (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 26). The demonization of the Orient during the nineteenth century has therefore been continued with the standardization and cultural stereotyping of the Orient. Said refers to "the omnipresent C.N.N.s and Foxs of this world, plus myriad numbers of evangelical and right-wing radio hosts, plus innumerable tabloids and even middle-brow journalists, all of them re-cycling the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalizations so as to stir up "America" [or the West] against the foreign devil" (Said, p. xv). The Orient is an important part of European culture, it is a discourse made up of its own vocabulary, imagery, doctrines that are still put through the media today, "there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest *mission civilizatrice*" (Said, Preface, 2003, p. xvi).

Said describes the problem of fundamentalism as being the fact that it entails certain fundamental beliefs that cannot be questioned, because they are ahistorical and should be accepted on faith. McEwan, who questions these fundamentals, is seen as being dangerous for tampering with them, by those who hold fundamental beliefs (Said, Afterward 1995, p. 333). Authors such as McEwan seem to be criticizing fundamental belief that has no room for compromise, and for this reason may be seen to be Orientalist.

Surprisingly however, Said like Sartre and McEwan sees people as accepting of fundamental beliefs because reality is hard to accept, being unknown, so self-deception or fundamental belief makes existence less worrying:

> no one finds it easy to live uncomplainingly and fearlessly with the thesis that human reality is constantly being made and unmade, and that anything like a stable essence is constantly under threat. Patriotism, extreme xenophobic nationalism, and downright unpleasant chauvinism are common responses to this fear. We all need some foundation on which to stand; the question is how extreme and unchangeable is our formulation of what this foundation is…in the case of an essential Islam or Orient, these images are no more than images, and are upheld as such both by the community of the Muslim faithful and (the correspondence is significant) by the community of Orientalists (Said, 1995 Afterword, p. 333).

In this passage Said also suggests that we need to be careful of "how extreme and unchangeable" our foundational beliefs are, because fundamentalism is essentialism.

In *Saturday*, the incident between Baxter and Perowne can be seen as an allegory for the impending war, and how if not contained by the state, one's freedom can be threatened by outside forces. Baxter acts as a metonym for the Orient; this representation is "unnatural". This possibly allows the discourse of the Orient to be continued. McEwan at first appears to portray Oriental despotism and sadism in *Saturday*. Baxter acts as a unanimous consensus that the Arab does not exist politically, only as a terrorist or Oriental, who needs to be controlled, taking away their free will, much the same as Baxter is punished. By operating on Baxter, Perowne gives him life, but also ensures that Baxter will live out the torturous last stages of his disease (p. 278).

Peter Kemp describes Perowne as being "guardedly optimistic, liberal, questioning" as McEwan implies that we should live (Kemp, 2005, p. 6). He suggests that McEwan conveys the idea that liberal democracy seems to be the only political system that can be used to successfully govern people from widely divergent cultures and creeds. However:

> A number of problems continue to concern liberal theorists. These include the illiberal practices of religious fundamentalism from whatever source, particularly when this expresses itself in violent aggression against what is perceived as it adversaries; economic disparities between countries, which in the case of poorer nations often results in a set of non-ideal conditions for the realisation of citizen's rights; the morally and physically deleterious effects of environmental despoliation; and the destructiveness of rapacious multinational capitalism, where this has managed to elude the normal checks and balances of a conventional internal economic system (Foley, 2009, p. 238).

The dilemma thus arises of how to deal with countries that have not yet embraced democracy. This is not a new concern and this question has been dealt with as far back as with Levinas' "Humanism of the Other." Although universal human rights have been seen to be a desirable goal by Humanists, New Humanism fails to respect non-democratic countries' sovereignty and traditions.

The city is the site where the public and private come together, as Theo's song suggests "My city square". London is therefore the central arena in which McEwan explores cultural issues in society today, "the city, grand achievement of all the living and all the dead who've ever lived here, is fine too, and robust" (p. 77). This quote echoes the same idea, as promoted, in Jame's Joyce's short story "The Dead" (1914), which also refers to the city being made up of the dead (Joyce, 1996, p. 256). Perowne ends the novel by thinking to himself "faintly, falling: this day's over" (p. 279) and echoing Joyce's short story in which the protagonist "heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling" (Joyce, 1996, p. 256). McEwan also reproduces Joyce's tradition, by including Saul Bellow's retort: *Herzog* (1964), to Joyce's *Ulysses*, in the epigraph to *Saturday*. As Sebastian Groes states, "This direct quotation acknowledges that the socio-cultural context is largely defined and shaped by American power – a major concern within *Saturday* – while also recognising an important formal influence upon the representation" (Groes, 2009, p. 105).

McEwan is concerned with constructing and describing the nature of the context and its historical circumstances, in order to investigate different worldviews. McEwan's writing is influenced by the politics of his context, but he acknowledges the dominant culture, derived from patriarchal authorities and canonical texts, from which his writing is derived. By acknowledging his context, McEwan is redeemed from being Orientalist. Thus there is a simultaneous acknowledgement of his context and history, but also points of departure. One of the main concerns of McEwan's novel *Saturday* is that the West seemed to shelve the

problem of Islamic fundamentalism and its threat to Western freedom, before 9/11. At the end of the twentieth century, it seemed that the West was perfectly happy with a secular community, until the 9/11 terrorist attacks. One consequence was the "War on Terror" and McEwan's novel *Saturday* explores the traumatizing events leading up to the war. It is important to remember however, that McEwan's novel *Saturday* does in fact anticipate the terrorist attacks on London on the 7th July 2005, so perhaps his evocation of anxiety in the reader is not incorrect (p. 81).

Perowne however, settles back into his complacency seeing 9/11 as an exception or "an aberration":

> that the world would surely calm down and soon be otherwise, that solutions were possible, that reason, being a powerful tool, was irresistible, the only way out; or that like any other crisis, this one would fade soon…There are always crises, and Islamic terrorism will settle into place, alongside recent wars, climate change, the politics of international trade, land and fresh water shortages, hunger, poverty and the rest (p. 32 & p. 77).

This passage also clearly indicates Perowne's advocacy of "reason" as he sees it as "a powerful tool," and "irresistible." He sees sense as being the rightful solution to such problems as Islamic fundamentalism, which Perowne believes will "fade." He believes that Islamic fundamentalism cannot be maintained because to Perowne it is an illogical belief system and its followers will be awakened out of their "self-deception." The fact that McEwan has also paired the words "Islamic terrorism" together could illustrate Orientalist and prejudiced views. McEwan creates critical distance between himself and Perowne however, but in illustrating Orientalism is in danger of perpetuating its flawed beliefs. As Daisy states by lashing out against the East they will "make more enemies in Arab countries and radicalise Islam" (p. 190).

Similarly, Perowne also believes that the totalitarian Chinese Communist Party cannot forever remain in power because:

> China is simply too populous, Perowne often thinks to himself when he comes this way and sees the [Falun Gong] protest, [outside the Chinese embassy] to maintain itself in paranoia for much longer. Its economy is growing too fast, the modern world's too connected for the Party to keep control. Now you see mainland Chinese in Harrods soaking up the luxury goods. Soon it will be ideas, something will have to give. And here's the Chinese state, meanwhile, giving philosophical materialism a bad name" (p. 123).

Although the Chinese Communist party is in power, to Perowne they cannot forever stay that way, because the Chinese people will become aware of the contradictory and hypocritical nature of its government because it is "too connected for the Party to keep control." Perowne believes the Chinese people will become exposed to new ideas through their consumerism and will be awakened to reality, use their reason and overturn the Party. With his advocacy of rationalism, Perowne unjustly imposes it on others.

Postmodernism's loss of faith in metanarratives and universals, such as "thou shalt not kill," suggests a collapse of ethics. Lyotard in his *Au juste: Conversations (Just Gaming)* (1979) and *Le Différend (The Differend)* (1983), uses the term "language games", to denote not only the multiplicity of meaning, but also the many contexts in which meanings are produced. Due to the moral indeterminacy of postmodernsim, Lyotard developed a universal postmodern theory of justice, paradoxically given its denial of theory. An immoral act occurs when the language rules from one language game are enforced on another. Being moral, according to Lyotard, therefore entails not imposing essentialist meanings on others; one must observe the "differend" (Lyotard, 1988, p. 9).

McEwan rejects the moral indeterminacy of postmodernism, with its portrayal of history as being weightless. Perowne however, sees the mindset of the East as being flawed, as Said states, enlightenment and democracy are not Easter eggs waiting to be found:

> There has been so massively and calculatedly aggressive an attack on the contemporary societies of the Arab and Muslim for their backwardness, lack of democracy, and abrogation of women's rights that we simply forget that such notions as modernity, enlightenment and democracy are by no means simple and agreed-upon concepts that one either does or does not find, like Easter eggs in the living-room (Said, Preface, 2003, p. xvi).

It is therefore rationalism or sense that Perowne promotes and believes is a kind of insurance against totalitarian ideologies such as Communism or religious fundamentalism. Perowne, recognising that not everyone's reason is equal, relies on consumerism and materialism to influence people away from totalitarianism:

> Such prosperity, whole emporia dedicated to cheeses, ribbons, Shaker furniture, is protection of a sort. This commercial wellbeing is robust and will defend itself to the last. It isn't rationalism that will overcome the religious zealots, but ordinary shopping and all that it entails – jobs for a start, and peace, and some commitment to realisable pleasures, the promise of appetites sated in this world, not the next. Rather shop than pray (p. 126).

Perowne's portrayal of Islam is biased as there are many religious states which generate coherent social systems, including Islamic countries, which are well ordered and acknowledge the rights of the individual. The portrayal of all religion as dangerous is therefore essentialist and:

> The real threat however, emanates from the religious fundamentalism of radical Islam and its fanatical desire to spread its utopianist ideas throughout the world. This fervent sense of a divinely sanctioned mission – in short, a jihad or holy war – has been directed most pointedly against the liberal countries of the West, and, in the absence of conventional military force, has increasingly taken the form of a systematic campaign of terror. Nowhere was this more appallingly manifested than in the events of September 11, 2001, in New York City (Foley, 2009, p. 239).

The squash game that Perowne plays with his friend Jay Strauss can be seen as an allegory for the Iraq situation. There is a point in the game when Perowne and Strauss cannot agree: they have collided, replaying the car crash, and Perowne believes he should be awarded the point because he feels he hit a winner, while Strauss believes he could have hit it back. Perowne thinks to himself: "how can they possibly resolve this, with no referee, no common power?" (p. 115). This is also the exact problem with the Iraq crisis, there is "no common power" globally, or what Habermas would call a supranational government, to impartially mediate the matter (Habermas, 1999). Although The United Nations is supposed to have this function globally, the decision that the United Sates should not go to war was ignored, proving that even a supranational government can be undermined by a global hegemon. McEwan illustrates that there is no "referee" in life to decide matters, and how global hegemony can influence us. McEwan argues that this does not always have to overwhelm us however, as cynicism is a way of resisting the opposition.

McEwan seems to do away with all of the traditional props of morality. He presents that there is no God, and everything in the universe is random, with no commands or rewards for virtue. McEwan presents characters that are purely motivated by self-interest and seems to portray that there is no objective morality. The car accident at the beginning of the novel makes Perowne realise that violence is not endemic or only found in a particular region among a particular group of people, which is why there is a need for society to be governed by an institution which will in turn use violence to keep the peace, both within smaller communities and internationally. This issue is also explored by McEwan, when Perowne refers to the early social contract theories of Thomas Hobbes in the *Leviathan* (1651):

> Among the game theorists and radical criminologists, the stock of Thomas Hobbes keeps on rising. Holding the unruly, the thugs, in check is the famous 'common power' to keep all men in awe – a governing body, an arm of the state, freely granted a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence (p. 88).

If left to our own devices according to Hobbes, in the *Leviathan*, living in what he called "the state of nature," there would be "continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes, 1960, p. 82).

Hobbes states that this is the case because of every human being having equal needs, but there being a scarcity of resources to fulfil those needs. Along with the fact that no person is more deserving than the next and that altruism in the world is limited. What results is a "me first" society in which, as Hobbes puts it, we are in a "constant state of war, of one with all" (Hobbes, 1960, p. 82). Behind the terrorist attacks might be resentment of the prosperity of the West. Hobbes therefore suggests that people form communities with a governing body that will offer them a better life by protecting them with the use of counter-violence. By being released from "the continual fear of violent death", we are freed to be altruistic. It is only when someone, like Baxter, breaks the rules that we no longer have an obligation to him. By violating the rules with respect to Perowne, Baxter released him from his obligation of reciprocity and opened himself up to retaliation. Similarly, sympathy is not given to terrorists, because of their own lack of this kind of morality, as Zoe Heller states the terrorist should not be included in the "circle of moral sympathy" because jihadists "wish you dead" (Heller, 2005, p. 4).

Although Perowne is tempted after his being beaten by Baxter's thugs to agree with Hobbe's social contract theory, later in the novel, while contemplating whether the West should invade Iraq, in order to stop the violence occurring in the country and in turn terrorist attacks on the West, Perowne wonders whether the State has become too powerful and that the individual's wishes no longer matter and that he himself and his ideas have become dominated:

> He's a double citizen, watching *Leviathan* grow stronger while he creeps under its shadow for protection…He's lost the habits of scepticism, he's become dim with the contradictory opinion, he isn't thinking clearly, and just as bad, he senses he isn't thinking independently (p. 180-181).

The fact that McEwan refers to Saul Bellow's *Herzog* at the beginning of the novel, points to McEwan thinking of Hobbes' theory, because the protagonist of *Herzog* is working on a dissertation entitled "The State of Nature in 17th and 18th Century English and French Political

Philosophy" (Bellow, 1964, p. 64), and shows disdain for materialistic people such as his brother, "Shura was your true disciple of Thomas Hobbes. Universal concerns were idiocy. Ask nothing better than to prosper in the belly of Leviathan and set a hedonistic example to the community" (Bellow, 1964, p. 78). Perowne conveys this same scepticism towards Hobbes' theory (Foley, 2009, p. 261). *Saturday* presents a highly individual situation, in which the state has failed to protect one of its societal members. Hobbes suggests that humans are moral because it is in their best interest to be so (Gaulthier, 1969). What the novel suggests however, is that one cannot act merely in self-interest, because sooner or later, individuals will have to be dealt with, as according to Hobbes violence is not endemic. The *Leviathan* therefore does not take into consideration the importance of empathy between individuals (Gaulthier, 1969).

Perowne therefore realises that while the protection of the state is necessary, it also involves people in society having to give up some of their freedom. For this reason, Hobbes' theories have come to be seen as illiberal, which goes against McEwan's humanist belief in the irreducible freedom of the individual as a New Humanist. Therefore McEwan shows how an individual encounter can reflect the broader social and global confrontations.

The question that arises is if the West was ever free? By referring to Hobbes however, McEwan does redeem himself, as this allusion points out the problem of the state having too much power, and how the Nationalist hegemonic vision offers false homogeneity, "particularly when the state takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs, then the making of the alternate realities of art, including the novel of memory become politicised" (Rushdie, 1992, p. 14). This helps McEwan counter the hegemonic function of literature that Edward Said mentions.

While endorsing reason or sense in determining morality, McEwan cleverly depicts how Perowne's reason works for him (with the moral dilemma of Iraq), and should by extension be employed by the reader. McEwan at the time expressed his ambivalence towards the war and on the website openDemocracy.net (2003) rationally explores the arguments for and against the war, level-headedly exposing illogical arguments of both positions (Foley, 2009, p.254). Perowne is also ambivalent about the war, he experiences it "as a form of vertigo, of dizzy indecision" (p. 141). What makes Perowne lean towards the pro-war camp is the fact that he once operated on an Iraqi professor of archaeology, Miri Taleb, who experienced the terror of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship first hand, and enlightened Perowne that "it's only

terror that holds the nation together, the whole system runs on fear, and no one knows how to stop it. Now the Americans are coming, perhaps for bad reasons. But Saddam and the Ba'athists will go" (p. 64). Perowne recognises that, "how open societies deal with the new world situation will determine how open they remain," as Jay Strauss points out to him (p. 100). Therefore Perowne understands the reasons for going to war, having listened to the Professor's stories of torture. He sees "the humanitarian reasons for war" (p. 69).

McEwan does differentiate between individual Muslims, showing that not all of them are enraged by modernity. Educated Arabs saw the war as justified and McEwan represents this in the Iraqi professor. McEwan produces a model of the Iraqi man or Oriental man however, he never represents himself, his emotions and history are mediated by McEwan. He seems to suggest an antipathy to religion such as Islam and alerts the West to the threat of the enraged, orthodox and violent Islamic world. McEwan's novels are designed for the metropolitan, western audience. "Interest in Islam has come from a fear of a militarily formidable competitor to modernity," by suggesting that the West is going to war to impose political order, and are interventionist so that they can trade profitably, resembles the colonial ideological fiction that the West will bring "civilization" to the East, which also implies that the values and ideologies of the West are superior (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 11).

The day on which the novel is based being the day when the biggest protest to date took place in London, the anti-Iraq war protests, gives the novel historical authenticity. As Andrew Foley points out, there is an allusion in the novel when Perowne spots a pub called the "Jeremy Bentham" (p. 92), just before his altercation with Baxter and his friends. This is significant because Perowne shares the same utilitarian belief, of Jeremy Bentham, of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," in his "Introduction to the Principles of Morals and legislation" (1789). Bentham believed the "principle of utility" should be applied to the law and guide individual moral decisions. The law should promote the general welfare of all of its citizens. An action would therefore be prohibited by law if it caused harm to others. John Stuart Mill formulated the utilitarian theory most aptly, in his essay *On Liberty* (1859):

> The sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant . . . Over himself, over his own body and mind the individual is sovereign (Mill, 1986, p. 13).

The allusion calls into question Perowne's belief that the West is correct in declaring war on Iraq because although lives will be lost, the freedom of the majority will be achieved. The infiltration of violence into the Perowne household suggests that this idea is not as specious as it originally appears however, as we are presented with a highly individual situation. The traumatic hostage situation shakes Perowne out of his complacency and makes him realise that he cannot block out the outside world, forever.

The Iraq war is thus presented as a moral dilemma in the novel, and McEwan logically portrays both sides of the fence, represented by: Perowne's American anaesthetist colleague Jay Strauss, who is for the war, believing Iraq needs to be "liberated and democratised" (p. 100); and Perowne's daughter Daisy who is anti-Iraq-war, seeing it as "completely barbaric" (p. 185). We see McEwan advocate Perowne's reasoning as he turns out to be the hero at the end of the novel and is in between the left-wing liberalism of his daughter Daisy and the right-wing liberalism of Jay Strauss. Perowne sees the downside of war, that al-Qaeda might seek "revenge on the soft cities of the West" (p. 73), and that, "there are people around the planet, well-connected and organised, who would like to kill him and his family and friends to make a point" (p. 81). Perowne however, sees the positivism of the marchers of "the biggest display of public protests ever seen" (p. 69), as morally repugnant, ironically so given their feeling they have "an exclusive hold on moral discernment" (p. 73). Perowne expresses the foolishness of the marchers in feeling happy about their cause:

> All this happiness on display is suspect. Everyone is thrilled to be together out on the streets – people are hugging themselves, it seems, as well as each other. If they think – and they could be right – that continued torture and summary executions, ethnic cleansing and occasional genocide are preferable to an invasion, they should be sombre in their view (p. 69-70).

Perowne also realises however, that: "if he hadn't met and admired the professor, he might have thought differently, less ambivalently, about the coming war" (p. 73). Perowne therefore acknowledges that "opinions are a roll of the dice" (p. 73). He thus suggests that reason should be employed along with cynicism, because there can be no certainties and is sombre about what democracy really entails.

It appears to me however, that McEwan is hostile to those who follow a religious faith. Although McEwan portrays that we are in a plural, multicultural, hybrid society, it would seem that he suggests that the West needs to band together in order to suppress the threat of the East. The image of the crowd moving towards the square in order to protest the pending

Iraq War is paradoxical, as the crowd by nature is diverse and heterogeneous but united with a common aim: namely of preventing the invasion of Iraq, and proves that a hybrid nation can live in solidarity. It would appear that McEwan is suggesting in his novel that if nothing is done about the East, the freedom to come together and protest will be taken away, along with other freedoms, suggesting a coming together against the other. It is differentiation between different cultures and religions that can lead to trouble, as the West's definition of its people is becoming narrower and more chauvinistic, showing excessive or prejudiced support for one's cause or group.

The Value of Literature

We see Perowne morally develop as the novel progresses however, and part of his transformation is due to his engagement with cultural and political debates in the post-9/11 atmosphere. It is during his son Theo's performance of his song "My City Square" that Perowne realises that it is music, poetry and the novel that can bridge the gap between the public and the private, by stimulating the imagination. Perowne realises that the arts can inspire one and unite communities, with the common aim of happiness, the liberal humanist fantasy. It is only "poverty of spirit and meanness of mind," as the surgeon Peter Medawar, who became an incisive social commentator, said, that leads to one not being inspired by the arts, and to live in self-deception (p. 77). This idea resonates in Theo's song:

> Baby, you can choose despair,
> Or you can be happy if you dare.
> So let me take you there,
> My city square, city square (p. 170).

Saturday however, offers a warning that to deceive oneself, while achieving momentary happiness, does not mean that the threats both globally and locally will disappear.

Perowne believes that while the classic realists such as Tolstoy and Flaubert are admirable, their verisimilitude is "apt and convincing enough, but surely not so very difficult to marshal if you were halfway observant and had the patience to write them all down. These books were the products of steady workmanlike accumulation" (p. 67). Although Perowne seems to see no value in literature at all, his view of good literature not being according to aesthetics or "workmanlike accumulation", can be likened to Leavis' view of good literature (discussed in the previous chapter) as being that which explores human life and its challenges. Leavis' idea is that literature is valuable in terms of investigating morality and reality, McEwan uses Perowne like Robbie, ironically, to promote Leavisite aesthetics (Cormack, 2009, p. 80).

Perowne's lack of enthusiasm for fiction, shows not only Leavisite ideals, but also, ironically brings into question the worth of *Saturday,* which itself is a work of fiction, including meticulously observed detail.

McEwan self-consciously and ironically questions the value of literature and his own novel, with Perowne's view of literature as being indulgent. By self-consciously bringing his novel's legitimacy into question, McEwan is not discrediting his own profession but rather uses characters that are antitheses to him in order to re-examine the worth of art. Perowne's lack of appreciation for literature is the novel's self-defining of its limitations. McEwan again ironically and self-consciously brings his own fiction into question with not only Perowne's dislike of realism but also his disdain for magical realism, which does not even represent "a recognisable reality" (p. 67), McEwan himself having written a magical realist story.

McEwan even refers to one of his own earlier works *The Child in Time* (1987), which particularly irritates Perowne as Richard Bradford points out (Bradford, 2007, p. 24). This piece of literature is annoying to Perowne because it includes a "visionary" who "saw through a pub window his parents as they had been some weeks after his conception, discussing the possibility of aborting him" (p. 67). While Perowne prefers the realists, he is scathing about the "so-called magic realists," who twist and experiment with reality in their representations and refers to them as "sophisticated fairy stories" (p. 67). Perowne cannot abide magical realism, calling himself a "professional reductionist" (p. 272).

Perowne, like Joe Rose, in *Enduring Love,* emphasises sense over sensibility, with his materialist, rationalist outlook on life (see Chapter 1). Ironically, Perowne does not realise that magical realist texts can explain the world to him with the use of metaphor. Perowne does not take pleasure in reading because he does not want "to have the world reinvented; he wants it explained…The times are strange enough. Why make things up?" (p. 66). He therefore does not see the value in being "a spectator of other lives, of imaginary lives" (p. 66). "This reading list persuaded Perowne that the supernatural was the recourse of an insufficient imagination, a dereliction of duty, a childish evasion of the difficulties and wonders of the real, of the demanding re-enactment of the plausible" (p. 67-68).

Said believes texts contribute to politics, his aim being "to reveal the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his work is a contribution" (Said, Introduction 2003, p. 24). Rushdie states that "description itself is a

political act" (Rushdie, 1992, p. 14). When different parties have competing views of the nature of reality, war ensues, therefore "redescribing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it" (Rushdie, 1992, p. 14). This is where it would seem McEwan offers the value of literature, as it can prevent the state from gaining too much control over its people: "particularly when the state takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs, then the making of the alternative realities of art, including the novel of memory, becomes politicized" (Rushdie, 1992, p. 14). I believe McEwan, like Rushdie sees writing as a political act and therefore worthwhile, "Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory. And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of the truth" (Rushdie, 1992, p. 14). McEwan I would argue sees literature as self-validating.

McEwan and Matthew Arnold

McEwan's reference to Matthew Arnold, the Victorian cultural critic, is significant because he wrote the famous collection of essays called *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), in which he denounces the puritanical Victorian concept of culture, as being narrow-minded, with its unquestioning acceptance of received wisdom. The purpose of *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) as Arnold argues in the preface:

> is to [rather] recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits (Arnold, 1869, p. 6).

Here Arnold suggests that culture can enable one to be a rational agent, thinking critically and independently with "right reason" in order to live an authentic life as "our best self" (Arnold, 1869, p. 6).

Arnold believed that the only way that society could achieve "light" was if it was governed by the state (Arnold, 1963, p. 82). McEwan however, is sceptical of the state being in power, because even those in power are fallible, for example, when Perowne meets Tony Blair at a cocktail party, Blair mistakes him for an artist (p. 144). This emphasises that we should question all authority so that we can live authentic lives. McEwan depicts resistance to the state, but at the same time seems to put down individual self-righteousness.

According to Arnold there are two types of people that inhabit culture. The first kind of person is described as not being fully cultured as being someone who sees culture as being solely scientific and prefers to view the world empirically. Arnold calls this group of people "Philistine", due to their desire "to see things as they are" (Arnold, 1963, p. 110). "Philistines" are usually middle class, rational and materialist people, who see the universe as being able to be dismantled, analysed and explained. The character of Henry Perowne is a prime example of a "Philistine", as he is an "uncultured and tedious medic" (p. 195) who does not seem to have an imagination:

> [Perowne] can't feel his way past the iron weight of the actual to see beyond the boredom of a traffic tailback, or the delay to which he is contributing, or the drab commercial hopes of a parade of shops he's been stuck beside for fifteen minutes. He doesn't have the lyric gift to see beyond it – he's a realist, and can never escape (p. 168).

Daisy believes that there is still hope for Perowne to develop an imagination: "she thinks he's a coarse irredeemable materialist. She thinks he lacks an imagination. Perhaps it is so, but she hasn't quite given up on him yet" (p. 134).

Arnold however, also describes another type of person as being "properly" cultured, a person who desires "sweetness" and "light"; someone who desires to be a moral person but at the same time seeks a "harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature" (Arnold, 1963, p. 48). This "properly" cultured person while being rational and questioning of all authority, also has an open mind to literature and beauty.

It is not clear however, if McEwan is endorsing Arnold's idea of a "properly" cultured person, because Perowne's musician son, Theo, who could be seen as the embodiment of the "properly" cultured person is not perfect. Theo is against the war in Iraq, but is too lazy and self-consumed to participate in the protest march, and his being against the war is shown to be due to his naivety in life, his attitude being compared to his youthful purity (p. 151). Therefore although McEwan mocks Perowne's philistinism, he also points out the absurdity of Theo's unwavering beliefs about the War in Iraq being unjustified. Theo is further made fun of as a character by his belief in conspiracy theories: "[Theo's] world-view accommodates a hunch that somehow everything is connected, interestingly connected, and that certain authorities, notably the US government, with privileged access to extraterrestrial intelligence, is excluding the rest of the world from such wondrous knowledge" (p. 30).

Daisy a poet who also represents sensibility and the arts is seen as right-minded and stubborn, who will not listen to the views of others and seems too certain about her conviction that declaring war on Iraq is wrong (p.134). Similarly, her grandfather John Grammaticus although also a famous poet, is not presented as having a clear view of life, being an alcoholic and being immensely jealous of his granddaughter's success (p. 138). It is therefore unclear if McEwan is endorsing the characters that represent sensibility or those that represent sense and rationalism, as his portrayal of both is ironic. Instead it would seem that we should have a healthy balance between the two and approach everything with cynicism.

Perowne's Transformation

While Perowne believes "this notion of Daisy's, that people can't 'live' without stories, is simply not true. He is living proof" (p. 68). Perowne does not even realise the role that narrative plays in his own life; he narrates the whole day: the plane crash; the accident with Baxter; playing squash with Jay Strauss, and his family being held hostage by Baxter. Perowne even narrates what he thinks will happen with his pregnant daughter Daisy in the future. Perowne ironically is also influenced by literature in his own life, but doesn't seem to realise it. Perowne refers to Shakespeare (p. 125), and Blake (p. 27). Despite this self-consciousness and the message that we are all narrated, *Saturday* rather than being a postmodern text seems to suggest that the transcendental function of literature is still there, bridging the gap between individual and universe, allowing cosmic integration.

The climax of *Saturday* involves Baxter returning for revenge that evening and forcing Rosalind, Perowne's wife to let them in as he holds her at knifepoint (p. 205). Seeing Perowne's beautiful daughter, Baxter forces Daisy to undress, with rape in mind. As Daisy undresses however, it becomes clear that she is three months pregnant, much to everyone's surprise. Wanting to prolong the family's mental torture, Baxter commands Daisy to read one of her poems, once he notices her proof copy of her poems on the coffee table. Daisy instead recites a poem she learnt during her childhood, a poem by Matthew Arnold, *Dover Beach.*

Ironically, unbeknownst to Daisy, her choice of poem particularly relates to Baxter's having Huntington's disease, the poem being about longing and doubt. Not only does Baxter long for a different future, "longing for a better kind of life" (p. 147), but also is full of doubt about what can be done about his tragic situation. Baxter while trying to exact his revenge on Perowne, for humiliating him, ironically becomes personally moved by the poem. Baxter then lets Daisy go and is filled with hope that there may be a cure, urging Perowne to show

him the fictitious data that Perowne claims to have upstairs. It is at this point in the novel that Perowne is able to put himself in Baxter's shoes and hear the poem that Daisy recites as Baxter would hear it. It is this moment, at which Perowne imaginatively empathises with Baxter that enables him to later operate on Baxter, after he and his son have pushed him down the stairs and he cracks his skull open. The surgery requires a highly skilled surgeon and only Perowne can save his life, which he does. Perowne feels "responsible" for the course of events and wants "forgiveness" rather than "revenge" as his wife Rosalind suggests (p. 278).

Baxter wishes to be happy and have a better life, by knowing the best that has been thought in the world and the poem reminds him of this and alters his mood, he becomes transformed from "lord of terror to amazed admirer" (p. 223). The use of the word "lord" and "terror" being placed next to each other, to describe the mad Baxter, perhaps conveys McEwan's view of religion and sentimentality. Baxter longs to leave the "anarchy" of the streets and to give his "consciousness free play and [enlarge] its range" (Arnold, 1869, p. 151-152). Baxter's having Huntington's disease only strengthens his desire to be better, one of the key themes of "Dover Beach."

McEwan therefore possibly suggests that sensibility and the arts are not completely without merit, as he demonstrates how literature or what Arnold calls "culture" can inspire people, who all have the desire to live authentic lives and to do better (Arnold, 1869, p. 97). It is my contention that McEwan, like Arnold, believes in universal human attributes such as culture, which connect us all and allow for the "the best that has been known and thought in the world" to be shared by those on the streets and those engaging with larger political issues. It most importantly allows for moral conduct by inspiring imaginative empathy.

The Value of Love

McEwan portrays an uncertain world, filled with longing and doubt; Perowne feeling that the future has become "harder to read, a horizon indistinct with possibilities" (p. 276). He, like Arnold in his poem "Dover Beach" however, suggests that the only defence against the uncertainty of the times we live in is love. It is Perowne's family that compensates for the violence and uncertainty of life, just as Arnold states in his poem:

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! for the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,

> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain,
> And we are here as on a darkling plain,
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Perowne imaginatively empathises with Baxter, even though he threatened the safety of Perowne's family. It is at this point that Perowne realises that poetry and narratives, can serve a practical purpose, apart from being hard to understand:

> Daisy recited a poem that cast a spell on one man. Perhaps any poem would have done the trick and thrown the switch on a sudden mood change. Still, Baxter fell for the magic, he was transfixed by it, and he was reminded how much he wanted to live. No one can forgive him the use of the knife. But Baxter heard what Henry never has, and probably never will, despite all Daisy's efforts to educate him. Some nineteenth century poet…touched off in Baxter a yearning he could barely begin to define. That hunger is his claim on life on a mental existence, and…it won't last much longer, because the door of his consciousness is beginning to close (p. 278-279).

Perowne's view of poetry, therefore, dramatically changes from the beginning of the novel, when he views it as being otiose, esoteric and abstruse.

Perowne recognises that poetry distorts reality, and this is why as a scientific rationalist, it is not to his liking, "art's essential but – he had to suppose – forgivable dishonesty" (p. 139). Perowne's view of poetry changes from seeing it as an "old-fashioned skill like drystone walling" (p. 129) however, when he sees Baxter be "touched" by Matthew Arnold's poem and he has an epiphany that poetry can have a significant effect on reality, and that "its noticing and judging" can be valuable, encouraging reason. The allusion to Matthew Arnold is also significant because of Arnold's idea of great poetry being that which "can therefore do us most good" (Bryson, 1967, p. 669). Arnold's view of poetry is not as Perowne sees it as an archaic pastime with no practical use or a moralistic map but rather an art form that can inspire one to live an authentic life.

Perowne is rich both materially and emotionally in terms of the uncomplicated, close, loving nuclear family he has. Perowne realises this when he sees Baxter fall down the stairs, "with an expression, not so much of terror, as dismay," which leads to Perowne imaginatively empathising with Baxter and seeing the expression as:

> a sorrowful accusation of betrayal. He, Henry Perowne possesses so much – the work, money, status, the home, above all, the family… and he has done nothing, given nothing to Baxter who has so little that is not wrecked by his defective gene, and who is soon to have even less (p. 227-228).

This moral sympathy that Perowne has for Baxter allows him to operate on him and to encourage his family to drop all charges against him: "they'll all be diminished by whipping a man on his way to hell" (p. 278). Perowne's father in law also shows sympathy for Baxter, despite his having broken his nose (p. 229). McEwan therefore suggests that we should see the similarities that we have with others, as human beings, such as the brevity of life, because it allows us to imaginatively empathise with others and view them as brothers:

> after a certain age, when the remaining years first take on their finite aspect, and you begin to feel yourself the first chill, you watch a dying man with a closer, more brotherly interest (p. 278).

Richard Rorty states that morality is:

> the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, custom and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation – the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of "us" (Rorty, 1989, p. 192).

This is in line with McEwan's humanist belief that there is a set of basic needs and desires that are common to all humanity, and it would seem that *Saturday* promotes Rorty's idea of morality, encouraging differences to be set aside and empathy between individuals. McEwan therefore seems to suggest a combination of "sense" and "sensibility."

McEwan suggested in an article in *The Guardian* newspaper, that if the terrorists involved in 9/11 had empathized with their victims, they would not have been able to carry out the attack:

> If the hijackers had been able to imagine themselves into the thoughts and feelings of the passengers, they would have been unable to proceed. It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality (*The Guardian,* 2001b, p. 2 as cited by Foley, 2009, p. 262).

"Sensibility", the imagination, emotion or the arts, is thus redeemed by McEwan, by his illustrating that it is necessary for imaginative empathy, along with reason.

Perowne's initial disturbing lack of awareness of other people around him, as Childs puts it, can also be seen as "a metonym for the material West's indifference to world affairs," and Perowne's development of empathy at the end of his "Saturday" can be seen as hope that the Western world is able to awaken to the cares of those around them (Childs, 2006, p. 146). Therefore, with the character of Henry Perowne, McEwan exposes the mindset of a conservative middle-class Britain as a fabric of complacencies (Foley, 2009, p. 257). The novel shows how modern living, with many atrocities being portrayed in the news, has made people insensitive to the troubles of others, just as Perowne's being a surgeon, wore away "his sensitivities" (p. 85).

McEwan however, shows that we are all connected, with the use of dramatic irony when Perowne alludes to Arnold without being aware of it. For example, Perowne refers to London as a "coral reef", which is an allusion to Arnold's poems "Written in Butler's Sermons" (1849) and "To Marguerite – Continued" (1852), both of which make reference to coral islands (Groes, 2009, p. 109). Arnold uses the image of the coral reefs as arms linking the islands, in order to convey the idea that no man is an island, we are all connected to each other, even though modernity can make us believe we are separate from each other: "like sister islands, seen/Linking their coral arms under the sea" (Arnold, 1965, p. 52).

By alluding to Arnold McEwan draws attention to the fact that there is a dark side to London, because Arnold referred to: "London, with its inutterable external hideousness, and with its internal canker of *publicè egestas, privatum opulentia,* to use the words which Sallust put in Cato's mouth about Rome, – unequalled in the world! (Arnold, 1963, p. 59, as cited by Sebastian Groes, 2009, p. 109). Here Arnold speaks of "public poverty" and "private opulence" by the terms "*publicè egestas, privatum opulentia."* This suggests that McEwan is pointing to the problem of separation between the public and private realms in his novel; asking "And now what days are these?" (p. 4), as Arnold did in his poem "To a Friend" (1848): "Who prop, thou ask'st in these bad days, my mind?" (Arnold, 1965, p. 105). Although Arnold speaks of London as being on a par with the Roman Empire, he ironically while praising it, suggests that it will also perish as Rome did.

McEwan therefore suggests the idea that by using intertextual referencing the gap between the author and reality can be bridged, and the best that has been thought can be shared. Perowne's philistinism is therefore challenged in the novel, as "All he feels now is fear. He's weak and ignorant, scared of the way consequences of an action leap away from your control

and breed new events, new consequences, until you're led to a place you never dreamed of and would never choose" (p. 277). McEwan therefore returns to the atmosphere of uncertainty, following the events of 9/11.

It would be a misreading to say that McEwan's text is complicit with neo-colonialism, even though his novels explore past historical binary dialectics such as the Occident and the Orient and their association with sense and sensibility. McEwan however, shows that the chasm between East and West is bridgeable; difference between the two cultures exists, but this difference does not have to lead to adversary or hostility, if a humanism of the other is considered and literature is one of the tools that can be used to bring people together. I have reinvestigated some the assumptions behind McEwan's representation between the East and West; sensibility and sense. By repeating the binary, McEwan draws attention to established belief and calls it into question current beliefs, which contribute to the renewed hostility and violence between the East and West. McEwan explores this problem, and suggests the need to rethink the relationship between East and West. McEwan therefore, like Arnold, suggests that the arts or sensibility, or what Arnold refers to as "culture" has its place in society and has the practical use of discussing politics and inspiring imaginative empathy so that it can serve as a guide for moral conduct.

McEwan while emphasising rationalism does recognise that literature is important, by referring to Arnold, who in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1869), states that the main function of literary criticism is: "the disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world" (Bryson, 1967, p. 372). Arnold sees the sole purpose of literary criticism as being to spread the "best" ideas, and without literary imaginativeness we therefore would not be able to empathise with others and explore which ideologies are useful to society. The "best ideas" however, may be biased if they are defined by a global hegemon and McEwan suggests cynicism as the anecdote.

The point that McEwan is making, so avidly, is that we as human beings are interdependent, and human life cannot be limited to a specific formula or discarded as irrelevant. It would appear that orthodoxy and dogma have come to rule the world instead of reasoning through the problems of the world. People from different cultures need to work together, in order to understand one another and live together in harmony. McEwan therefore claims that every society is linked to each other; we are not isolated, every global occurrence affects us locally.

We see that McEwan's fiction embodies a mainstream intellectual tradition, addressing ethics and suggesting that human rights should be protected by social contracts, and emphasising that being reasonable involves premises being verified, with evidence that is universalizable, and not only belonging to a particular cultural group. The accusation that McEwan is "Orientalist" is misplaced, conflating McEwan with his fictional protagonist. Perowne being able to operate on Baxter suggests that we can live in a moral society if one uses one's reason in order to imaginatively empathise with others and rationally determine the moral thing to do. By the end of the novel, Perowne acknowledges that there is some value in sensibility, as he realises that love is all we really have in a world of uncertainty, as "he fits himself around" the "beloved form" of his wife (p. 279). McEwan therefore sees the value of both sense and sensibility, with the moral of *Saturday* encouraging a humanism of the other. McEwan again promotes the idea that it is love that can reconcile humanity with an unstable universe, bringing together the public and the private.

Said offers a dogged defence of the humanist project and sees scholars and intellectuals as being morally responsible for correcting, complicating or dismantling reductive version of different cultures, so that a pluri-cultural society can exist, including Islam and the West. Instead of focussing on ideological fiction and metaphysical beliefs Said states that the focus should be on concrete history. Said therefore sees the scholar's role as being "to widen the field of discussion, not to set limits in accord with the prevailing authority" (Said, Preface, 2003, p. xvii). It is the aim of literature to be non-coercive, rational, emancipate and enlighten, according to Said, and this is what makes it so valuable (Said, Preface, 2003, p. xi). McEwan portrays that sensibility or the arts are valuable for providing a platform for alternative views to be expressed. We need to keep a tab of how our beliefs are the result of history to date and McEwan suggests we maintain a critical consciousness. McEwan suggests that an alternative to Orientalism is a humanism of the other.

McEwan, at first glance, shows that the gap between self and world cannot be bridged because the only knowable world is the character's subjectivity, he however shows that the perception of the individual is important, by employing classic realism, creating a world in a text and denying the possibility of individual authorship with intertextual references, McEwan paradoxically solves the problem of solipsistic closure: the oppositional placement of the self and the other is cancelled out. This allows for the imaginative book to have value as it creates an all-enveloping textual world which allows for not only shared authorship but also a shared

subjectivity. By the end of the novel Perowne begins to comprehend the importance of imaginative empathy and conquers the hegemonic function of literature.

We therefore see McEwan revisiting the same themes in his novels, suggesting, I would argue, that beautiful literature is a means which can inspire us to learn "the truth", although that version of the truth is limited by its context. McEwan rejects the concept of individual authorship, evoking a composite of individual voices of previous texts. McEwan suggests that each writer creates his precursors. In this way the gap between the self and world is bridged, by using previous writers and their work as representatives of the world, having written everything that is thinkable. This illustrates again McEwan's endorsement of sense when faced with a dilemma. McEwan therefore believes that an informed and well reasoned decision should be made, and literature is one of the vehicles through which this can be done, as W. H. Auden claims, "great art is clear thinking about mixed feelings" (As cited by Foley, 2009, p 254).

McEwan presents that many humans are mentally impaired, such as Jed in *Enduring Love* and Baxter in *Saturday*, to such an extent that they cannot live peacefully in society. While it is shown that they are capable of suffering and living simple human lives, they are depicted as being incapable of predicting the consequences of their actions. McEwan presents the idea that because these characters are irrational, they cannot be moral and are dangerous because they cannot predict that their actions will hurt others. With Perowne operating on Baxter at the end of *Saturday* however, McEwan suggests that we have a duty to mentally impaired people, as casting people outside of the realm of moral consideration leads to disaster. By the end of the novel, Perowne realises that his positivist view of life is reductionist and impersonal, not taking into account individual circumstances and he begins to feel sympathy for Baxter. McEwan therefore promotes sense and sensibility; this is evident even in his promotion of reason in being used to imaginatively empathise with others, which to him is the "essence" of morality (*The Guardian,* 2001b, p. 2).

Conclusion: Sense and Sensibility: Striking a Balance

The object of my research was to examine McEwan's treatment, in his novels, of the interplay between "rational" and "irrational" worldviews. The "gaze" that fixes and analyses its subjects in a rationalist way, is archetypal of McEwan's writing. Joe Rose, in *Enduring Love* (1997), describes the smiles and greetings of people, at Heathrow airport (p. 73-74), in the same coldly rationalist and scientific way that Henry Perowne, in *Saturday* (2005), describes the people in his neighbourhood (p. 13). Similar character types such as the scientific rationalist, the lover and mystic, have been shown to be present in most of McEwan's writing, evident in the characters of Henry and Baxter, in *Saturday*; Briony and Robbie, in *Atonement*; and Joe and Jed in *Enduring Love,* in order to explore their opposing worldviews. As a body of work, McEwan's fiction has therefore been portrayed as concerned with different ways of viewing the world and as providing an extended philosophical and social comment.

This study has argued that McEwan portrays the misguidedness of characters that base their beliefs on their emotions or imagination, as they are deceiving themselves. We as human beings while free are confined to certain choices; we are both free and not free because of our situation, which is an uncomfortable position, which most of us deal with, with "self-deception". While McEwan does explore his characters' "structure of feeling" I have shown how he portrays the concepts of self and world in his literary art form. I maintain that the novel emphasizes that it is love and family that we should look to, to help us face the anxieties of life. McEwan emphasises that it is human warmth and companionship that is the only redeeming quality of a society, motivated by self-interest. As was maintained in this study, he argues in his novels *Enduring Love*, *Amsterdam*, *Atonement* and *Saturday* that humans are unreliable and are blinded by their emotions. Consequently, cynicism needs to be employed in order to determine the truth.

Following the taxonomy of traditional literary criticism it is difficult to place McEwan's works. I have argued that there is a tension in McEwan's texts, a paradox in the seemingly oppositional form and content of the novels. While there are postmodern elements to *Enduring Love*, they come up as subtopics in the novel rather than the whole thrust of the novel. Often McEwan's novels draw attention to their fictionality, thwarting the audience's ability to suspend disbelief. His novels are profoundly engaged with narrative and consciousness. McEwan continues to show an interest in neuroscience in his novels, this is especially the case in *Saturday*. With his modernist emulation McEwan aligns the mind or mental processes with narration and thus opposes it with the brain or science. The characters

in McEwan's novels have been shown to constantly make up stories; the metafictional elements of the novels stress the limits of these stories. Thus the metafictional structure of the novels continues the novels' concern with epistemological questions in the content of the novels. Stories are shown to be limited, distorted and partial retellings of events, due to human desire or fault.

This is in direct contrast with the realistic representation given by McEwan, with naturalistic language, portraying actual historical events in real geographical locations. For McEwan the shift from the ordinary to the unnerving sensational climaxes in his novels is smoothly achieved with fearful verisimilitude. Bradford describes McEwan's fiction as: "Often, [including] an accumulation of detail and descriptive registers – not an overaccumulation but an accretion that is deceptively routine – will create for the reader a sense of the very ordinary and familiar as possessed of something potentially discomforting" (Bradford, 2007, p. 18). The indifferent tone of the third-person narrator is maintained without being gratuitous and facts are recorded with an eerie fatalism. In *Saturday* we are given Perowne's stream of thoughts and an indication of what the other characters may be thinking, how they are feeling and what in truth may prompt them to act as they do, rather than being realist neo-photographic documentation of what happened.

Fragmentation is initially represented in the narratives in plot events, and adds to the idea of disjuncture in both thematic and structural dimensions. Random violence and the misfortunes of contemporary life are portrayed in McEwan's novels. In *Saturday,* there is everything from terrorist attacks, to a car accident, and finally hostage situation. Similarly, as we have seen in *Atonement*, Robbie and Cecelia's lives are disrupted by a false accusation over a rape, war and finally death. Even in *Enduring Love,* we witness a ballooning accident, stalking and another hostage situation. McEwan presents how seemingly harmonious circumstances can quickly disintegrate. We witness the random violence of a socially and politically divisive contemporary world, in McEwan's novels, in which he is preoccupied with socially aberrant behaviour. McEwan therefore uses realist narrative techniques to convey ideology which undercuts the realist mode. All of these characteristics act to heighten the sensational occurrences in his novels, and provide a more jarring divide between depiction and reality.

McEwan illustrates the relationship between the public and private, and how individual experiences can be in agreement or at odds with the macrocosm's history. He shows an interest in conveying a complex historical reality, for example by exploring 9/11 in *Saturday*

(2003), and The Second World War in *Atonement* (2001). This depiction of the public and private can also be linked to the problematic of storytelling. How events are documented and how individual experiences are made sense of when different versions of events exist and the problems of memory and the need for narratives to make sense of these experiences are fore grounded in McEwan's novels. He explores the pros and cons of each in his writing while engaging with specific canonical texts. For this reason critics have therefore seen his novels as contributing to postmodernism, in that they problematize history, contain metafictional self-referentiality and expose the powerful discourses at play in the novels. For example, *Atonement's* "posthumous ironies" expose it as a work of fiction. Not only is *Atonement* a work of fiction based on reality, but it is also a work of fiction by its protagonist, in order for her to atone for her crime.

Briony's novella acts as a bridge between the historical period and the contemporary narrative. McEwan foregrounds reading and writing as magical acts of creation. The past can be accessed through texts and subjective interpretations can be made, with the postmodern message that history is a discursive construct. Briony interprets history and rewrites it obscuring what really happened. The novel however, also stresses the historical continuities between the account of Lucilla Andrews's, of being a nurse during World War II, in her *No Time for Romance* (1977), and McEwan's fiction. McEwan can thus be said to hold up a mirror of history, emphasising its divergences and artifice. McEwan shows how history has a direct baring on the present political context and despite mimetic problems of representing the past, it is necessary to solve the problems of the present. I have therefore stated that McEwan rejects postmodern relativism in his novel *Saturday*, and that he desires a new type of historical fiction after postmodernism. I believe his novels suggest that fiction can go beyond what history can do. In this way, postmodernism has pervaded our culture, with the question being asked, if truth is dead, why bother trying to work for it? It is evident to me that McEwan, like Rorty, rather advocates the goal of "continuing conversation rather than discovering truth" (Rorty, 1979, p. 373).

There is an eternal frustration implied in the moral relativism of postmodernism and the idea that there is no truth. If we cannot trust the words that other people have written, as postmodernism suggests, communication would be impossible and in turn without communication a global community would be impossible. The novels in this study present socio-political and cultural problems, which have been attempted to be solved. Joe in *Enduring Love* questions if he was responsible for Logan's death in the balloon accident. In

an interview, McEwan explains why he chose to bring the characters together in the novel with a balloon accident: "What immediately struck me was the dilemma of knowing that if you all hang on, you can bring this balloon down to earth. But as soon as anyone breaks rank, then madness follows. The issue is selfishness. And that seems to me to be the underlying basic moral factor about ourselves" (Garner, 'Salon interview', 1998, as cited by Childs, 2006).

Rachels defines morality as: "At the very least, the effort to guide one's conduct by reason – that is, to do what there are the best reasons for doing – while giving equal weight to the interests of each individual who will be affected by what one does" (Rachels, 2003, p. 14). I have argued that, like Rachels, McEwan has presented morality as involving being flexible and willing to "listen to reason," even if this requires the redefinition of an earlier belief, and being willing to alter one's actions accordingly. Joe Rose in *Enduring Love* states: "A good society is one that makes sense of being good" (McEwan, 2005, p. 15). McEwan thus rejects the moral indeterminacy of postmodern aesthetics and suggests we can support our judgements with good reasons. It is shown to be nonsense that moral judgements can be nothing more than "mere opinions."

The idea that ethics cannot be proved however is still a worry. When proof is demanded, the observations and experiments in science are conjured. Morality lacks the proof of science, making it less compelling, because there is no objective paradigm in which to measure it. With morality however, the imagination and rational reasoning, providing explanations, analysing arguments and considering the other side are involved. The fact that morality involves a different system does not make it deficient. Thus, McEwan shows sense and sensibility to be equally as valid. Although proof about morality is impossible, it can also be argued that the same can be said for science. For example, there are important subjects that physicists cannot agree on; proving that there are no proofs in physics only probabilities. This is not to say that there are no matters on which physicists cannot agree, but similarly there are smaller issues on which all reasonable people can agree.

It would appear that McEwan presents the idea, several times, in his different novels that science and the humanities are actually related and are in fact equal. His novels explore the opposition of science and art; knowledge and non-knowledge. We thus see problems created with this dichotomy, with the social sciences, the dichotomy declaring its knowledge incomplete and fragmentary. As Heckman states: "If the dichotomy between the rational and

the irrational is accepted in the social sciences, then these sciences will remain inferior to the natural sciences and excluded from the realm of the scientific and the rational" (Heckman, 1990, p. 111). McEwan has been shown to suggest that science and art are related in that they both start with an imaginative process and involve narration, although science then goes on to be empirically proved and fiction does not.

McEwan presents science as not just a matter of knowing things but as a way to investigate the deeper questions of who we are and how we know what we know, but statistical probabilities are not the same as truths. I therefore argue that the schism between art and science is deeply regrettable to McEwan. Another question brought up in this study and provides grounds for further research is the underlying gender politics of scientific knowledge. McEwan in his latest fiction portrays the dominance of male scientific discourse. The fact that, as a general rule, the characters that represent rationalism are always male brings into question the role of gender within McEwan's novels. The character of Michael Beard, a physicist, in McEwan's novel *Solar* (2009), expresses the same Enlightenment association of men with sense and women with sensibility, when discussing why there are so few women in science, at a press conference about global warming (McEwan, 2009, p.133-134).

McEwan presents that although morality does not seem to have an objective basis, beyond our subjective feelings and cultural norms; morality is a set of rules that allow for the mutual benefit of members of society, agreed upon by reason. Certain freedoms are given up by the individual for certain benefits. When the law is unjust however, and valid reasons proving that the social contract is not being honoured, individuals can protest, as we see they do in *Saturday* during the Iraq-war protest. Rachels however states that:

> There is a difference between (a) judging a cultural practice to be deficient, and (b) thinking that we should announce the fact, conduct a campaign, apply diplomatic pressure, or send in the army. The first is just a matter of trying to see the world clearly, from a moral point of view. The second is another matter altogether. Sometimes it may be right to "do something about it," but often it will not be (Rachels, 2003, p. 29).

Saturday encourages cynicism against the state's discourse in the media, but also against individual certainty and conviction. There will always be people who refuse to listen to reason, as it can require us to do things that we don't want to do. Human hubris cannot be justified; our lives are of no greater importance than any other living thing in the universe.

Although our lives are important to us, and although we have desires, needs, plans, hopes and dreams, they are irrelevant in the greater scheme of things. According to Kant morality is a system of rules that one must follow regardless of one's wants or desires (Kant, 1985, p. 30). Kant therefore stated that if one accepts reasons for one side of an argument, you must also accept those reasons in the other case.

McEwan however, presents that we as human beings are fallible, although reason is necessary to be moral, we can also be wrong about what reason commends, and in turn what is good or bad. Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish sociologist, expresses this idea in *An American Dilemma* (1944):

> There must be still other countless errors of the same sort that no living man can yet detect, because of the fog within which our type of Western culture envelopes us. Cultural influences have set up the assumptions about the mind, the body, and the universe with which we begin; pose the questions we ask, influence the facts we seek; determine the interpretations we give these facts; and direct our reaction to these interpretations and conclusions.

McEwan, similarly, depicts how no facts are free from human prejudice and the only way to be moral is through impartiality, which involves believing that each individual's interests are equally as important. He depicts in the novels studied in this dissertation that our feelings are not conducive to accurate readings of reality and may in fact be the result of cultural conditioning. The relativism of morality according to culture, serves as a reminder that our beliefs are not based on an absolute rational standard. It is important therefore to keep an open mind or as I have argued McEwan endorses cynicism. Despite our sentiment surrounding the decision, of what our desires or opinions might be, the ethically right thing to do will be independent of this and will therefore become objective. McEwan illustrates how actions should be judged to be right or wrong according to their consequences. Therefore, in order to discover the truth we need to consider the arguments of the opposing side and in some cases it is necessary to discard our feelings for more plausible rational theory. Instead of insisting on the postmodern random moral indifference of material being, I have argued that McEwan endorses rationalism, as the best way, to determine morality. As a result of deliberation of consequences we can determine what we morally *ought* to do. As Peter Childs states:

> *Enduring Love* illustrates how reason can only work with its own perspective on events, testing its conclusions against available evidence. If reason is based on incorrect information, it can lead to terrible consequences in a world that requires

> action as well as contemplation. That choice cannot always be based on certainty is the problem faced by the men holding down the balloon in Chapter 1. If they all hang on, they may keep the balloon from floating away, but if one of them lets go, all those who retain their grip on the ropes will be dragged skywards. To be certain of the right course of action, requires knowledge of the beliefs and behaviours of others (Childs, 2006, p. 109).

While certain customs may be abhorrent to one culture, they may be perfectly acceptable to another. Thus a sophisticated understanding that different cultures have different moral codes is needed in order to be moral. Morality in McEwan's novels is not portrayed as being relative to one's culture; the characters that commit unethical acts are shown to be objectively "wrong". I have argued in Chapter three, of this dissertation, that McEwan seems to present the idea, in his novels, that there is an objective reality, for example in *Atonement*, he presents the undeniable reality of Cecelia and Robbie's death, and the harsh realities of the Dunkirk episode.

There is no objective reality of what is morally "right" or "wrong", according to postmodern poetics, but McEwan rejects this idea, implying that there is a universal truth to ethics. He has been shown to chart, in a considered and meditative manner, the fluctuations and failings of characters' faith, we see this in his negative diseased portrayal of characters, such as Jed and Baxter, who hold religious beliefs based on sensibility. Although I have illustrated how McEwan's *Saturday* could be seen to be Orientalist, with reference to Said's groundbreaking *Orientalism*, because Henry Perowne sees Islamic fundamentalism as an external threat to the freedom of the West, it has been stated it is incorrect to conflate McEwan with his fictional protagonist.

Henry Perowne the central protagonist in *Saturday* grows, as a character, after experiencing a whirlwind of a Saturday. He is not as complacent or as disengaged, from the world and its woes, as he was at the start of his Saturday. *Saturday's* overall message that empathy between individuals is important and that literature allows for this ultimately redeems McEwan. McEwan has choreographed the novel so that the reader is prompted to interpret the events as allegorical, enactments of the larger political position of the world. He presents that non-essentialist learning about the other (those who are different from us) is necessary for a moral world. The novel ends on an optimistic note, with Perowne, a secular man, displaying a humanism of the other, and his children representing a new pragmatic generation. The novel is not despairing or nihilistic, even though it presents that a

multiplicity of faiths and cultures can create problems in society. McEwan not only promotes empathy between individuals, but he also promotes that in the end love is all we have.

Perowne's doubtful reflections, at the end of the novel, like that of Arnold's *Dover Beach*, are also of love. Perowne "fits himself around" the "beloved form" of his wife (p. 279). McEwan thus presents that in a world of uncertainty, love is the only defence. Childs states, "The ability to be moved by the world and by others, whether real or imagined is perhaps the dominant subject of McEwan's most recent fiction…" (Childs, 2006, p. 149). Although Daisy sees Perowne as "a coarse, irredeemable materialist," (p. 134) and that he lacks an imagination, it is Perowne's imaginative identification with Baxter that allows him to operate on him and save his life. The imagination or sensibility has been shown to be important in order to empathise with others, an activity which literature in particular facilitates and is valuable for. He portrays love and the family unit at the end of *Enduring Love*, *Atonement* and *Saturday*. McEwan has thus been shown not to privilege a particular world view, but rather create different meanings in order to question received values.

As has been previously stated, many of McEwan's novels have a modernist circular structure, with their beginnings and endings having similar settings. *Saturday* starts and ends with Perowne making love to his wife; *Enduring Love* goes back to its pastoral setting and *Atonement* starts and ends at the Tallis household, giving the impression that no progress has been made and that we are all stuck in the vicious circles of our own perception. In all of these novels however, their conclusions involve the coming together of family and love, proving that it is not sense over sensibility that McEwan endorses, but rather sees love as the only redeeming factor in a world of uncertainty as "a stand against oblivion" (McEwan, 2001a, p. 272). McEwan advocates that, as the modernists believed, there is a "redemptive" nature of art and that it can act as a form of catharsis for the losses and ills wrought by history. Even though McEwan acknowledges that it remains a work of fiction, he still sees it as valuable for its consolatory function. Thus, McEwan does not put forward sense over sensibility and ultimately is a polygot writer who switches styles throughout the novels.

The nature of the relationship between science and art, mind and emotion, rational and irrational, remains one of McEwan's enduring themes, as this dissertation has shown. The problem arises with the opposition of emotions (sensibility) on the one hand and reasons (sense) on the other, which each play a role in morality and are not mutually exclusive as "The Man of Reason" suggests. Any argument that would exclude sentimentality or emotion

would therefore be fallible. As David Hume, in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1740), states if we examine any evil action, for example "wilful murder", we will find that the universe does not have a corresponding objective truth that it is wrong:

> Take any action allow'd to be vicious: Wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call vice…You can never find it, till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, toward this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not reason (Hume, 1987, p. 468-469).

McEwan shows humanity as making two fundamental mistakes when thinking about morality. The first is that they believe that there are objective moral facts in the universe or they believe in contrast that our values are nothing more than the expression of subjective feeling. It is here that McEwan, I have argued, states that it is reason along with our sentimentality that makes the difference. He therefore presents as Rachels writes: "Moral truths are truths of reason; that is, a moral judgement is true if it is backed by better reasons that the alternatives" (Rachels, 2003, p. 41). Truth about ethics can be arrived at supported by reason: the morally right action in any situation is that which has the weight of reason on its side. Although McEwan portrays the randomness of the universe, Perowne and Briony are both able to act sympathetically to a stranger.

McEwan explores novelistic discourse in his recent literature. Although the particular novels being studied in this research diverge structurally from the realist and modernist conventions, they do not philosophically. The novels in this study involve a skirmish between different ideologies and modes of representation; the novels' verisimilitude, and allusions to a pantheon of canonical English writers, conflicts with their jarring postmodern conclusions. McEwan repeats the imitation of reality enshrined in Western rhetorical traditions and undercuts this realism with an anti-imitation message. This dissertation has examined this uncomfortable combination of styles; the tradition of English fiction and postmodernism has been explored through a consideration of sense and sensibility. An analysis of some of McEwan's fiction has been conducted, examining how he combines these dissonant discourses. McEwan has thus been shown to overlay the traditional realist form with modernism and postmodernism. Finally, it has been concluded that McEwan passes through these contradictory novelistic discourses, opposing English empiricism and rationalism with postmodernism and possibly comes out on the side of modernism, rejecting the moral indeterminacy of postmodern poetics. By foregrounding its own fabrication, a novel can

highlight how different forms of knowledge come into being and McEwan's novels have been shown to do just this. In terms of the over-arching theme of "sense over sensibility", of this dissertation, it becomes clear that McEwan does see the value of sensibility and does not only endorse sense.

Intertextual references to modernist writers such as Joyce and Woolf have been explored, depicting McEwan's emulation and subversion of a number of theories. By doing this, McEwan creates a collective consciousness by alluding to other writers and sets up a medium through which plural definitions of truth can be explored and discussed. Although McEwan portrays the modernist novel as a denial of character and plot, he alludes to Woolf whose novels display "the dissolution and the recreation of character in the novel, and the separation between, and interrelationship of individual consciousness" (Marcus, 2009, ch 6). McEwan uses a plethora of intertextual references, in order to bridge the gap between the public and the private by creating a space where a collective consciousness can be created, and the best that has ever been thought can be shared. McEwan pays homage to the modernist concern with subjectivity and suggests literature is a vehicle through which a collective consciousness can be created and as Arnold states in his "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1865), that the sole function of literary criticism was to spread ideas: "the disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world" (Bryson, 1967, p. 372).

I have argued however, that more than recreating previous forms, McEwan seems to be in dialogue with those texts. He not only draws out the flaws in those texts, by illustrating postmodern poetics, but he also, in my opinion, seems to improve upon their arguments, while acknowledging his context. As Rorty states: "Recently [however] literary historians have argued that Renaissance literature neither encodes and privileges authorial meaning to be passively received by readers, nor merely reflects a larger 'world picture,' but instead creates and enacts meanings while often questioning interpretative conventions and received values" (Cunnar, 1989 p. 78).

McEwan importantly makes reference to Matthew Arnold, with his poem "Dover Beach" (Foley, 2009, p. 220-222). The poem is one of Arnold's most well-known mid-nineteenth-century poems of reflection and doubt, but more importantly this allusion is significant because Arnold wrote a Book called "Culture and Anarchy" (1867-68) in which he argued for the centrality of art and literature to life. Perowne who until this point in the novel, having an extremely materialist view of life, has been unable to see the value of literature, but seeing its

profound effect on Baxter makes him able to appreciate the worth of literature and its imagined worlds (McEwan, 2005). Henry manages to bridge the gap with the external world, when he learns the value of love for the other, and comes to realise that art – the human representation of reality, even though it is a construction, can capture truths that science cannot. McEwan therefore appears to endorse sense and sensibility. In terms of recording public and private life, and exploring the wider concerns of the world, Ian McEwan shows that the literary imagination has a valuable contribution to make.

It has also been argued that McEwan sees the postmodern motto that "telling stories as telling lies" has been taken as far as it can and that he sees the need to return to the more traditional novel, while still acknowledging the postmodern ideal. There are points at which the possibilities of literature become exhausted and the pendulum must necessarily swing back to previous forms. After reading McEwan's novels, it would appear to me that McEwan desires narrative transcendence, in which truth may be attained, and like modernism sees fiction as the only source of truth in a chaotic world. Nonetheless, McEwan at the same time realises the impossibility of writing because everything has been written, and language is differential by nature, only imperfectly conveying meaning. McEwan's characters illustrate this tension between the inescapability of self-perception and the impossibility of representation. McEwan, therefore, suggests that there is a transcendental quality to writing, while paradoxically denying the dualistic metaphysics on which it was traditionally based. In other words, he shows how meaning can still be conferred on human existence through the rewriting of human books.

McEwan's novels, I argue, show that society is bifurcated by the different ways of viewing the world, and that storytelling is a way of making sense of the world, and encouraging altruism. His novels have been shown to depict an interest in history, while exploring forms of realism, and include postmodern metafictional twists. I have concluded that rather than inhabiting the realist novel, McEwan's novels complexly combine elements of uncertainty, along with the modernist stream of consciousness, resulting in a polygot compilation on McEwan's part. McEwan manages to straddle different movements in his writing, in order to represent the complexity of the world we live in today. His novels reveal his own tensions in arriving at a philosophy about life. Although I have argued that McEwan puts forward sense over sensibility, for example, with the rational character of Joe Rose being right, about everything, at the end of *Enduring Love,* and Briony's mixing of fiction and fantasy leading to disastrous consequences, for Robbie and Cecelia, in *Atonement*, he also has been shown to

suggest that there is value in literature, as we see with Briony's being able to atone for her "crime" by writing her novella. McEwan therefore suggests that literature needs remaking to suit our own desires and needs. His experimentation and acknowledgement of the limits of fiction has lead to a greater understanding of the value of literature and its supplying of a space for freedom of expression and its contribution to politics. *Saturday* has been shown to prove the novel or sensibility as valuable because it is an imaginary platform in which politics, society and morality can be discussed. I have argued that McEwan does portray value in the imagination. The same can be said for literature which he shows is valuable for allowing imaginative empathy and capturing history. Through a close analysis of McEwan's texts I have discovered that McEwan does not favour sense over sensibility, in his novels, but acknowledges the importance of "sensibility" or the imagination in, not only, bringing about new scientific advances, but also in allowing one to imaginatively empathise with others. McEwan has therefore been shown to encourage a healthy balance between sense and sensibility.

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