Chapter V

CONCLUSION

The novels of Graham Swift and Ian McEwan are replete with a range of cultural arguments, styles, and attitudes. The novels considered for textual analysis magnificently portray, in a logical and explicit manner, the culturally transformed human life and the traumatic dilemmas felt by the people on different levels. The cultural transformations evident in the novels are obviously the byproducts or incidental outcomes of seductions and betrayals subtly operating and perpetually modifying the world of industrialism, consumerism, multiculturalism, quantum physics, and the virtual world of the internet and multimedia.

The chief aim in studying these two living writers of English was to assess their worth by examining the extent of their success in effectively portraying the world of man and his survival in seductive and betraying situations he is placed in. It has been quite gratifying to discover an honest documentation of human behavior and relationships in their novels, which at the end exhibit a grand illustration of cultural transformations. Seduction acts on different levels in different ways in the novels of Swift and McEwan. Sexual enticement, being one part of it, is of course, the very basis of all human instincts, whereas betrayal in their novels can be concluded as love without emotional awakening and personal involvement.

Since both Swift and McEwan’s novels belong to the period ranging from 1975 to the present, it will be too early to judge them and make any final statement about their achievements and the directions of their creative writing. There are, of course, certain points of similarities in terms of their perception of the cultural transformations in the recent context.

Both these writers fictionally portray the cultural mutations in the lives of the fictional characters and their attitudes toward religion, morality and enduring cultural values. The seducing elements in the global context are, as we know, quite different from the traditionally defined notions. These seducing
elements cannot be confined to sexual motives alone. In fact, in the recent context it can safely be pointed out that economic pressures, power politics, social status, designs of the dominants etc. also play the role of seducing agents. In this sense any dream or desire or an act of violation that deviates one from higher human values or from the path of justice, fairness and rightfulness can convincingly be considered as seduction leading to betrayal; betrayal of again the same aspects, the divine design of human dignity. The fictions of both the authors selected exemplify the act of seduction and betrayal and demonstrate the difference in the assimilation of the problem chosen here. They differ in the use of language, symbols, narrative techniques and handling of the love-hate relationships in their novels.

In the course of the detailed analytical study, it was discovered that their novelistic plots have interesting stories to tell - stories of children, elders, and institutionalized women, soldiers returning from war, comedians, politicians, marriages, separations, old age homes and gloomy places of exile. Both of them initially showed great interest in short story form but abandoned it later on. At present, both these Booker Prize winners are considered to be among the finest contemporary novelists of the English literary world.

Swift, in his eight novels, has discussed some of the major issues of life like birth, marriage, sex, death and everyday politics of relationship and friendship. These issues, however, are subtly related with the acts of moral deviations and cultural mutations. In their settings, language and characterizations, Swift’s novels manage to reveal extraordinary magnificence through apparently drab and ordinary situations. For instance, his protagonists are often ordinary men, middle-aged clerks, teachers or accountants but still, they are inquisitive enough to raise questions about the relationship between personal histories and world events.

Ian McEwan, on the other hand, equally forceful and meditative, has published ten novels most of which are controversial either for the seedy and spooky subject matter or the often, lascivious description of the perverse and gothic material. His first three novels deal with violence, murder, incest and
pedophilia. They disrupt the conventional moral perspectives of the readers. His later works show him giving up the ‘macabre’ tag and resorting to a mild expression of accumulated knowledge of human life. Seductions and betrayals, in some form or the other, continue to be one of the major concerns of his fiction.

The victims, strangely enough, seem to be seduced by the idea of their own destruction. In the process, they betray themselves by bringing about their own downfall and even dare to draw the readers into complicity with their crimes. They are vulnerable and susceptible to outside attacks and are reciprocally locked into incestuous climax or lost in the terrifying glory of their charismatic assassin. They even demand a child for the child, dismember a dead body, and conspire to euthanize each other, send innocents to prison, intrude in a surgeon’s residence or blame each other for their strange definitions of love.

If Swift’s mild community is compared with McEwan’s serious population, a difference in their nature dawns upon our minds. Swift’s mystery is never obviously spelt; it is always hidden in the reader’s curious mind. Swift’s male protagonists neither think in a linear motion nor are they anxious to carve their three dimensional image on the map of the world. They are easily rejected but hope that someone would speak about teaching personal histories in the public classes and stand for them. They get easily lost in the ancestral glory and try to find meanings in the written and anecdotal evidences; some are busy in sketching pseudo-figures of the moon-men and exhibiting loyalties towards ‘murderous’ females. They are also busy in observing post-death rituals and the whispers of the dark nights about the light of the day—a self-evident reflection on the culture of their times.

Swift’s female characters are either institutionalized or lacking in the elements of protest, counter-culture and radical feminism. Irene tolerates rape and abstains from sex in later life. Marian succumbs to Prentis’ sex escapades and whims. Merry withstands a rustic abortion and later on steals a baby from a hospital. Sophie behaves like a prostitute and enjoys sex talks with multiple
partners. Anna leaves Greece and walks wounded; Sylvia gives up singing and Ruth says goodbye to a flourishing theatre career and Katherine exchanges herself for the manuscript. Anny tolerates her negligence; Sarah kills her husband for the want of love; Helen lives the life of a war refugee and Paula Campbell is worried about her future, about tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.

McEwan’s male protagonists are a bit different from that of Swift’s. Jack buries his mother in the cellar and gets involved in incest. Colin sacrifices his life for Mary whereas Robert, a sexual sado-masochist and Stephen are in constant search of the lost bliss. Charles retreats to his childhood and Leonard is sandwiched between his American bosses and a German beauty. Bernard witnesses the falling wall and Jeremy visits the Auswitch death Camp. Jed Parry, a victim of de clerambault’s syndrome, disturbs a peaceful married life and Edward, lost in dreams, is unable to control his ejaculation.

Most of McEwan’s women are home-loving mothers and some of them love for love’s sake. Julie rejects Derek and keeps her family intact. Mary undergoes the spell of a drug. Caroline walks limping due to her broken back. Julie leaves for retreat in Chilterns; Maria stays in West Germany and kills her husband. June saves herself from the Nazi dogs; Clarissa suffers a mental slow down and recovers in the course of time. Mrs. Garmony saves her husband’s reputation; Molley dies with many friends around. Cecilia weeps throughout her life; Briony wants to atone for a casually spoken lie. Daisy strips off and reads Auden for Baxter and Florence detests the semen and runs away from her husband on the first night of their married life.

Both Swift and McEwan, either in the seducer’s company or in the betrayer’s maze, exhibit an unusual package of European lifestyle. What they unknowingly highlight is a typical haven of two different people’s test-land. They demonstrate a marked change and assert the positive implications of the rapidly moving world. The view is normal, sometimes illusory and dismal, but the camera of the universe clicks and the real becomes imprinted on the photo reel like a simulacrum of the culturally transformed world.
Keeping in mind the socio-political changes and the cultural upheavals due to scientific advancement, one easily agrees that what both Swift and McEwan are hinting at is nothing but an organic whole, a meaningful visible object, and a compound of separate and small entities. They both easily agree to the forceful assertion that a novel is about a man alive and better than any historian, tells the story of what man makes of man.

Seduction and betrayal, being conventionally new ways of looking at man’s life, required some more freedom of interpretation and application for the complete understanding of its after effects. In the last three decades of the twentieth century the cultural variation has been vigorously fictionalized by a bright generation of non-metropolitan writers scattered across the English speaking world, most of whom are outsiders like Peter Carey (Australia); Timothy Mo (Hong Kong), Vikram Seth (India), Kazuo Ishiguro (Japan), Hanif Kureishi (Pakistan) and Michael Ondaatje (Sri Lanka). Inside Britain, it is unarguably Graham Swift and Ian McEwan accompanied by Julian Barnes, Martin Amis, Alan Holinghurst, Angela Carter, James Kelman, Caryl Philips, Zadie Smith, Jim Crace and a group of new writers who are ready to accept the challenge of taking English novel to the maximum height of a cultural document.

The detailed analyses of the novels of Swift and McEwan from the seduction and betrayal point of view compose a comprehensive picture of cultural mutation. All the three major characters in The Sweet Shop Owner find themselves betrayed by family as a unit and betrayed by their fate. Irene betrays herself by keeping quiet on her rape issue and eventually betrays Chapman, by never making herself exclusively and entirely available. Chapman endures this, and while doing so betrays himself. Dorothea betrays herself and the family and endures the agonies guiltlessly for she represents the modern, motherless child of England.

The novel creates a bleak picture of life bereft of happiness in a joint family of only three members. The ‘Blitz’ of the Second World War seems to be still tormenting, even after a half century, Chapman’s heart, Irene’s adopted
f rigidity and Dory’s runaway programmes. The novel vividly depicts the
uncomfortable English family head, adjusting himself with a flawed marriage,
post-war consumerism and the plight of a common person to live happily
despite agonizing and embarrassing relations.

‘Shuttlecock’ has a twofold meaning- as a memoir by a world war
veteran, Prentis and as the title of the novel by Graham Swift. Going back from
1977 to the World Wars has been made easier and believable, thanks to Swift’s
first person narration. Secrecy of rape is Irene’s problem whereas Prentis is
seduced by the thought of revealing the secrecy and filling the gaps. Both the
body of Marian and the memoir of Prentis function like a ‘text’ – text of a
social system and a literary tradition. Prentis is seduced by the postmodern idea
of filling the gaps, by re-reading the memoir and finding out the indeterminate
meanings. He tries to turn Marian into a whore and at the same time is in
search of the missing files of his father’s record in the department of archives.
Prentis, as a husband, seduces Marian and tries to attain enlightenment through
sexual acrobatics. For him, fantasizing her as a woman with blouse bursting tits
and getting a turn on as described in the pornographic books is a routine
practice he has developed in the course of time.

Just like Dory, Prentis also feels insecure in his father’s shadowy
presence in the background. His insecurity becomes evident in resisting the
entry of the ‘Bionic Man’ in the house. The extreme curiosity of Prentis to
know what actually happened in his father’s story of the heroic escape, seduces
him and eventually Prentice and Quinn betray each other, like McEwan’s two
euthanasia-loving friends in Amsterdam.

The war in the form of Blitz, evacuated residencies, concentration
camps and French retreat is itself a great political betrayal. Nevertheless, it is
always in the background. Prentis could only read and re-read the text and
betray his father by showing lack of faith in his descriptions. Prentis (Sr.) is
seduced by the idea of hiding the past stories behind the veil-by keeping silent-
betrays his own sense of bravery and his son for his own uneasiness. Though
the novel reads passages about the French story of saving and survival, it also
comments on the ecological factors and the urban sprawl in the European Continent.

The fear of unemployment and job security, which is one of the issues in Shuttlecock, lands safely once again in Waterland, in the form of Tom Crick as a history teacher and Lewis Scott as his employer. Crick is seduced by the sense of confession; to confess and gather moral support becomes the motto of his life. In the process of seducing Price, one of his best students, Crick narrates his family history. The history within history constructs a vivid image of the bygone era – an era of land reclamation in England, Atkinson’s brewery and the coronation ale.

Waterland, among other things, is a suggestive exploration of narrative as not only a way of working through traumatic experiences but also a culturally, psychologically and ethically defined human act. Cricks have ‘storytelling’ in their blood and every generation has transmitted the act of storytelling to the next generation through this metafiction. Tom is seduced by the knack of storytelling of his mother, Helen Atkinson and father Henry Crick. Henry used to tell him the cosmological story of origins, and of the suspended stars. His mother’s stories were different in form and context, and since she was a bookish Atkinson girl, her stories represented the transmission of culture in a written form whereas Henry’s transmission was oral.

The opening scene about the stars and the sluice is a significant act of storytelling. Tom recalls a night when his father, the lock keeper living in lock keeper’s cottage, tells him and his brother, Dick, a story about the seducing stars. The fairy tale words of Henry, an act of distributing knowledge about the world, function as a fairy tale advice to the forthcoming generations. Swift’s Waterland, written in the form of a fictional autobiography, intertwines personal and public history and questions the interrelated notions of self and stories like Dickens’s Great Expectations and Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!. These questionings of narrative within its narrative make Waterland a self-reflexive text.
Swift narrates the story of Harry’s wasted loyalty, familial disruptions and his over ambitious, seductive behavior through two alternating points of view in *Out of the World*. Harry, as a response to his transformation from a war baby to a messenger of harmony, moves on and on, leaving behind his small family and the memory that he was born in the first year of the First World War. However, he could never forget the two World Wars. Like Prentice in *Shuttlecock*, he is seduced by the thought of knowing the truth of Robert’s Victoria Cross who, betrayed and shocked by his wife’s affair, had waited for the bomb to explode and die. Surprisingly, his life is saved; he loses his one arm and gains a permanent fame for his bravery in the war. Afterwards, when the moon walkers wave with joy on the moon’s surface, Robert considers it his own achievement whereas Harry falters while praising the Americans openly.

The metaphor of pictures or snapshots functions as a pseudo-truth (Simulacra) of the reality. Here Harry’s photographic activities on the war field covering Nazi destruction and Nazi war trials remain the sole agent of seduction. He betrays his father by showing distrust in him. As a protest, he does not join the British Munitions Corporation and prefers to work as a peacetime photographer to cover the story of the pre-historic monuments of England.

The IRA bomb attack that eventually killed Robert marks the turning point in the novel. Harry’s photography finally betrays him and Sophie, betrayed by her father’s behavior, plans to go away with her husband. The novel has numerous instances of seductions and betrayals during the novelistic present ranging from 1937 to 1982. The novel registers aftershocks only and avoids direct descriptions of the bombardment on the Warfield. Culturally, the novel blames the idea of bravery and awards like CV, the idea of estrangement and the idea of mindless copulations with anybody available at the time of artificial mental arousal. Sophie’s seduction by the American glamour and her disillusionment later on, like Winston Churchill, who had said indignantly that they were caught in between two superpowers, proves meaningful. Harry represents the peace loving England, for even after watching his father’s
suddenly dismembered body, he does not plan to take revenge. The novel successfully portrays the changes in England from 1709 to 1982.

Once again, the world wars dominate the private life of Colonel Unwin; he kills himself. His wife Sylvia’s affair is the result of her responding to the carnal demands of Sam. *Ever After* (1992) covers nearly two centuries and the history of two different families. The notes of Matthew Pearce functions as an elementary agent of seduction. Bill Unwin betrays his own intelligence, his power of judgment, skills of analysis and plays foul with his own scholarship and life. The novel is actually a harsh comment on the present scenario of research as something done in a fragmentary fashion.

In the midst of the threat of nuclear fission and fusion and the fraught relations with the near ones, clearly come up as the only horrible landscape painted in the post-colonial wilderness. As Matthew’s search for the ‘new world’ begins, his old world- his wife, children and father-in-law- take every important step to disturb and divert him from his mission. The clock, a monumental piece, serves as a wedding gift and boasts of a maxim-‘love conquers all.’ For Matthew, or even Bill, love proves to be a defeating, discouraging and a betraying factor.

Swift travels in a backward, anti-clockwise direction to map the mid-Victorian progress and achievements in the field of science and technology. He contextualizes ‘His-story’ with real historical events and personages like Brunel, Lyell and Charles Darwin. Mathew’s seduction for finding out geological evidence for calculating the age of the earth and the fossil-remains of the ancient civilization assert him as a modern rational man, a harbinger of truth with an honest doubt.

The established class of Lords never allows revolution as a process of change, so the study of evolution becomes meaningless. Elizabeth’s divorce and remarriage with James Neale is the gift of the facility provided by new laws and Katherine’s bargaining for the diaries exemplifies academic materialism of the twentieth century.
**Last Orders**, obliquely though not directly, hints at the post-war civilian life of war veterans like Ray, Jack, Lenny and Vince and the intergenerational conflict- the problems they face while dealing with the modern generation. These war people keep talking about their war heroics and when they are treated like animals, they get disturbed and feel a void in their personality. They wander, drink, and sometimes even behave like mad men. Nobody realizes their betrayal by the society and the post-traumatic problems faced by them. In this regard, it would be appropriate to term them as institutionalized minority habituated to get lost in the distant dreams of the past glory.

Afterwards, they simply remain the members of the society– like Ray as the lucky gambler, Jack as the ‘Smithfield’ butcher, Vince as the old car seller and Lenny as the boxer. Only Vic the undertaker remains the undertaker since he is outside the war and his profession needs no special favor. All of them are seduced so easily that they never realize that something strange has been happening with them. Jack seduced by Vince’s adoption betrays his own daughter, the disabled June. His wife is seduced by the promise of the fulfillment of his last wish- chucking his ash at the Margate Pier. Jack’s friends are equally seduced by the resolution of keeping the promise. However, Vince denies joining his family profession and betrays Jack.

Seductions and betrayals continue prevailing in this novel. Vince also betrays Sally, for he denies her and marries Mandy. This betrayal proves to be horrible on his part. Fate acts against him and avenges his misdeeds by making him send his daughter Katherine to Hussein as a part of professional bargain. Carol betrays Ray, divorces and leaves for Australia with Barry stokes – the ultimate result of Ray’s seduction, his affair with her sister Daisy. Finally, though the friends properly immerse the ash at the destined spot, it is Jack’s wife Amy who wins the game. She remains the lifelong caretaker of their disabled grown up daughter, June and establishes an example of loyalty and service.

**The Light of Day** is a story of seductions and betrayals and creates a confusing picture of a mature, ex-policeman’s ordeal. The novel set in south
London is concerned with adultery, renunciation and redemption. It glorifies Sarah’s spiritually mysterious nature even after she kills her husband; her possessive nature wins over her one time careless attitude and her benevolent motherhood.

George’s office in Wimbledon stands for the lush green and healthy British mind and Bob’s grave reminds one of the age-old relics at Stonehenge or the Egyptian Pyramids. George the seducer converses with the dead Bob and tries to preserve the chastity of his beautiful wife by falling in love with her and promising to wait for her until her jail term is over. Sarah is in search of at least a single sign that would indicate that she is still loved by Bob. Not being able to find any love sign, she murders him. Seduced by the extremity of love and intensity of passion, she reacts strongly and stabs him. This incident transforms both Sarah and George. He becomes a regular visitor to the grave and she becomes a martyr in living.

Swift’s one night narration is revealed in *Tomorrow* (2007). The protagonist is seduced by the memory of her past life and her childhood days. She muses on war, on DNA and the year 1945 when science had invented something mysterious and unbelievable. It is actually a mother’s struggle in the modern society, in the so-called modern country like England, to come to terms with the issue of childlessness. The novel indirectly hints at cultural forces like gender politics and male domination in the world of men.

Ian McEwan’s first novel *The Cement Garden* is a ‘macabre’ story of a children’s family who love growing up fast but in reality, regress as the days go by. They are four children and they are seduced by the idea of independence and the security to be enjoyed in the state of aloofness. All the children, Julie, Jack, Sue and Tom feel lonely, isolated, alienated and betrayed after they lose both the parents. Golding’s Jack from *Lord of the Flies* is borrowed directly by McEwan to face the same trials and tribulations once again.

In *The Comfort of Strangers*, the readers are compulsorily made to play the unwilling role of voyeurs of abnormality. McEwan highlights two critical cases of two more or less similarly abnormal, distorted and injured families.
The two couples do much more than what is actually shown in the written form. Colin and Mary’s trip to Venice is actually an effort to break away from the routine, stressful life. They are unmarried, ‘live-in’ companions but they love each other and so want to extend the boundaries of their mutual attraction. If Venice seduces them, it equally betrays them, too.

McEwan’s deliberate creation of black Venetian setting and the mentally ill couple reflect the characteristic world citizen’s role in playing hosts to the world tourists. The novel’s cultural depiction sometimes looks alien and strange, but once the host’s past is revealed, an answer to all the confusing doubts comes straight way from the irrational brain of Robert and the helpless heart of Caroline. They seduce Colin and Mary, which in turn brings a renewed sexual urge in them. However, the limit of perversion and sado-masochistic violence is crossed beyond human limit. Caroline, in contrast with Mary’s feminist theatre activities, behaves like a radical thinker and supports Robert in killing a youth, whereas the true feminist Mary keeps weeping and lamenting the death of her lover!

Charles, in *The Child in Time*, seduces the woman Prime Minister and later on betrays her, by leaving abruptly for the forest. The government machinery betrays the public by manipulating the valuable reports. Julie, Stephen’s wife, who deserts him and betrays his only idea of support, seems to be exemplifying a woman living in the present. When their new baby arrives in the hospital and in the world of man, the natural order is followed and the world becomes once again alive, vibrant and energetic. The novel, with its complex plans, records the transformation of Charles’ adulthood, Prime Minister’s tender feelings, Stephen’s loss and gain and Thelma’s quantum mechanics of feminine submission.

Similarly, Leonard Marnham in *The Innocent* is so mesmerized by Maria’s beauty that he gives priority to his seduction and becomes oblivious of all his worldly duties. He even murders Maria’s husband, Otto- an innocent from his ‘spying’ point of view. Protesting peacefully against the restrictions not to get involved in the civilian’s company, Leonard joins hands with Maria,
thereby bringing about the predestined unification of West and East Germany far before the actual fall of the Wall in 1989. The international problem of the cold war and the enmity with Russia looks like an insignificant point as compared to his sexual interlocking with Maria. He is easily seduced to find himself a virgin and her, a lucky girl.

World War II is on the verge of its end when Bernard and June in *Black Dogs* meet for the first time in the Senate house. Slowly, the science graduate Bernard, after studying the snails for a short period turns to the full time profession of a politician. June, when on her honeymoon trip, is confronted with two fearful black dogs trained by Nazi Gestapo for raping women. She detests Bernard for he should have been with her, instead of being with the useless caterpillars. Only this much and nothing else infuriates her. She feels betrayed and dejected; she leaves him. The feeling of betrayal originated in her mind is the proof of a wife’s demand of her total security from her husband, which he either neglects casually or is not fully aware of.

Written in a memoir form, the novel exhibits both June and Bernard as old and monument like. Concentration camp, a reminder of the merciless deaths, is a bad word, but it helps in seducing Jennie and Jeremy. Later on, they marry, but the memory of the bygone genocide still visits them repeatedly. Bernard and June’s Marxism is easily forgotten by their friends; the dogs take it away from her. His communism lasts longer comparatively. Though a labour M.P., he tactfully joins different parties and jubilations that he considers a part of contemporary lifestyle. Though fascism ended, neo-fascism emerged all over the world and the intensity of dog bites seems to be much reduced as compared to the love bites of *Sympetrum Sanguineum*.

Swift’s stint with Chapman’s *angina pectoris* and Prentis’ *catatonia* could be compared with McEwan’s sexually ill and deviated characters like Parry and Charles, who suffer from a neurotic disorder – a state in which they once again desire to become a spiritual lover or a small child. Otto’s drunkenness and June’s illusionary fear is further transmitted to Jed Parry’s pathological erotic fixation – *de clerambault’s syndrome*. One starts feeling
like living in a world of educated, apparently executive looking people but inwardly inhabited by sick persons. Both McEwan and Swift, succeed in narrating the pathologically disordered and biologically sick characters of the society. The novels portray a paralysis of mind and mental disorder of the society- left in disorder and chaos due to blitz and the cold war.

**Enduring Love** revolves round Jed Parry and his hyperactive- religious belief. His obsession with Joe is beyond his wife’s understanding; it is the most defective and destructive means of seduction, which very easily reduces the intensity of the tragic death of Dr. Logan during the ballooning accident. Society loses its peace when someone like Jed Parry starts chasing a man, to the limit of annoyance and supreme irritation. The narrative, which has an additional ‘Appendix’ as part of the text, allows the reader to imagine independently and support Joe’s idea of seeking help from the law and psychiatrists. The novel documents the culturally unacceptable idea of love between the same sexes and successfully shifts the attention of the readers from an abnormality of human mind to a biological sickness.

Finally, when the unwelcome seducer is taken into custody, the chain of suspicion and doubt in the minds of Joe and Clarissa ends. Through Jed’s unattained love, McEwan defines the purity of love that can only be preserved if only males and females honestly love each other. The novel legally, and with evidences from science, closes doors for manmade fantasies and perversions. **Amsterdam** and **Atonement** also continues and extends McEwan’s thematic concerns with varied seductions and betrayals.

Man made ideal worlds later on introduce defeatism in the lives of Londoners and they, as betrayed souls, live like common men- the exception being the triangular ‘mesmerizing’ part of Cecilia’s slender body and the murmurings of two hot, breathing souls and their thirsty lips. **Atonement** seduces reader’s sense of defining genres and betrays the very rhythm of alliteration and assonance. What comes out of those sixty long years is a fairy tale that consists of fairy like innocent characters. The novel depicts a self-pitying character like Emily Tallis, a philanderer like Jack, beautifully carved
and statuesque women and Cecilia’s tiresome little prima-donna sister Briony. Finally, the much-loved atonement is achieved when the play Arabella is successfully performed by Briony’s descendents on her 77th birthday. Arabella and the Atonement leave behind the ‘Hemorrhagic Septicemia’ of the Second World War and the anticipation too, that there may be a war soon!

McEwan’s transformation from a purveyor of nasty tales to a novelist unsurpassed for his responsive and responsible humanity is recorded in On Chesil Beach. Leaving behind his ‘macabre’ stuff, McEwan, fascinated by the unfamiliar life of husband and wife, creates a sexually disturbed couple. Florence and Edward are very much the children of late 1950s. They are seduced by the so-called blissful life after marriage. Unfortunately, the lifelong domestic joy, which they were dreaming of on their honeymoon night, transforms into a great confusion and a nightmarish sexual disaster that destroys the marriage takes place even before it starts.

Hyper-adherence to social constructs and mental journeys to the troubled past define Florence as a frigid woman. Her frigidity, for McEwan, is the symbol of her elite class and the after effect of 1960’s sexual freedom. Edward’s premature ejaculation shows his inner urge anxious to express itself. The novel talks about a ‘small’ subject of sex in marriage in a ‘great’ fashion and repents the reciprocal betrayal of the couple seduced by the free flowing sperms of Edward and the unreleased eggs of maturity in Florence.

The fictional works of both Swift and McEwan take a serpentine walk of seductions and betrayals. Their novels which move forward in future, halt for a moment at the fictional present and move back to the remote past, surveying, within the large space of setting, atmosphere, tone, background and narrative deconstruction, the changing lifestyle over two or three centuries. The texts, as analyzed in detail, paint vivid pictures of continual cultural transformations.

Though both Swift and McEwan aim at the same target of depicting changing life styles and cultural variations, they differ in their treatment of narrative techniques, thematic structures, characterization and plot construction. Swift authenticates the reality of the story by using mostly the
first person narratives. It certainly helps in better understanding of the characters. Swift’s readers generally do not need to look for the additional appendices attached or certain truth declaring information as is the case with McEwan’s writing. McEwan depicts the actual war while Swift shows its after effects. Swift tries to find extraordinary in ordinary while McEwan directly deals with the inherent traits of extraordinary human beings.

All the tentative resolutions, however, do not minimize the possibilities of the multiplicity of meanings nor do they reduce these texts to the status of the thesis-novels. As we see, the novels of both the authors selected here are characterized by the accuracy of cultural situations. The options exercised by the characters, directly or indirectly, betray the cultural situations that condition them to act the way they do. These characters, it should be noted, remain the men or women of flesh and blood, highly sensitive to the cultural ambience. These novels, it can finally be stated, despite their cultural preoccupations, remain a work of art.

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