Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Graham Swift and Ian McEwan are recognized as accomplished British fiction writers. They are indisputably acknowledged for their rigorous self-discipline, their sharp critical perception and highly sensitized creative ingenuity that attributes their written words an ability to transcend the immediate context and touch upon wide and varied dimensions of universality and multiplicity simultaneously. This thesis aims at analyzing the fictional corpus of these two writers with a central focus on how seduction, betrayal, and the consequent cultural transformations have been reflected and documented in their novels.

The cultural transformations, resulting from diverse modes of seductions and betrayals, have always been vividly reflected in almost all the forms of creative discourses, especially fiction. The ‘forbidden fruit’ episode in the Bible itself is the proof of seduction and betrayal being so primordial and omnipresent. Traditionally, the term seduction has negative connotations. Encyclopedia Britannica (Online) defines seduction from the legal point of view as the act of a man enticing (without the use of physical force) a previously chaste woman to consent to sexual intercourse. In broader traditional usage, the term refers to any act of persuasion, between heterosexual or homosexual individuals, that leads to sexual intercourse. From sociological point of view, seduction is considered as the process of deliberately enticing a person to engage in some sort of behavior, frequently sexual in nature.

In this thesis, the traditional meaning of seduction that was so far limited to the usurpation of a male or a female body has been altered and modified and is taken up in a broader sense and larger context. The issues of seductions illustrated in the present study do not fall in the purview of law and order hence they may not be considered as criminal offences—the possibilities of litigations and legalities notwithstanding. Sometimes the seducer gets the fruits of his endeavors; his act is reciprocated but it is not merely an act and its
gratifications. It has varied consequences. The seduced one is not only involved, at times, in the act of biological consummation-she is exploited and to her dismay, is used and abused. Very often, the seducer or the seduced is exploited for kindness, generosity or vulnerability. The seducing agents that are responsible for seductions are in abundance in the modern world of stress, strain and competition. They may be human (a male or a female), or non-human such as name, fame, money, greed, hatred, violence, photographs, madness, food, ornaments, inactivity, laziness, cruelty etc.

Whatever the consequences of seduction may be, as Thierry Lode, a French biologist, has proposed in *une histoire natureele de la sexualite*, it results from a sort of supernormal stimulus. The act of sexual excess, therefore, has been understood and interpreted in various ways by the sexologists, psychiatrists and social thinkers. Seduction, according to Elaine Sciolini, is an undercurrent in France, but it is much more subtle than simple flirtation or sexual desire. According to her, it is an all-encompassing word that can stand for persuasion, attraction, influence, and soft power ("Art of Seduction"). The postmodern theories implicate the drive for power, assertion and subjugation. Even rape, therefore, is explained as a pathological assertion of power over a victim and not as an act of sexual intercourse considered to be caused by unbridled sexual desire (*Encyc.Brit*, 2007). Thus, if studied in an unorthodox and a more democratic way, seduction denotes a changed meaning and a changed outlook. It stands for an inevitable part of the societal activity responsible for the cultural transformations; either enriching it with human values or degrading it with anti-social acts.

In the same way, betrayal traditionally meant the violation of trust between two lovers and abandonment of one of them by the other. However, as suggested by Rodger Jackson in *Humanitas*, betrayal has nowadays become more a philosopher’s problem than a ‘people’ problem. According to him, a man may come across self-betrayal when he is asked to perform a job, not of his own choice; and political betrayal when he is wrongfully arrested and convicted. The betrayer, if assessed on moral level, violates the norms of trust
and confidence and brings about a moral degradation of his own self. Ignorant of the fatal consequences of disloyalty, the betrayer goes on living a routine life but the ‘betrayed’ is devastated by the rejection, and responds with outrage and vengeance, or simply resorts to defensiveness and confusion. Judith Shklar in her book, The Ambiguities of Betrayal characterizes betrayal as an act of deliberate rejection of one who is actually fully convinced of the betrayer’s loyalty. In the same way, as Yehuda has properly suggested, all forms of betrayals can be grouped under a unifying analytical framework using loyalty, trust and moral boundaries as explanatory tools (Betrayal and Treason, 2001).

The dangerous part of betrayal is its after effect as experienced by the ‘betrayed’ as a person, or a group. The betrayed one suffers from betrayal trauma due to extreme anger or post-traumatic stress disorders. For example, people all over the world are continuously engaged in imagining the repetition of the Holocaust as expressed collectively through films like 2012 while some are trying to unburden themselves by deliberately trying to forget the terrible past. Peter Johnson provides an excellent study of forgiveness in Frames of Deceit; he suggests using it as a way to avoid the prospective conflict of opinions and ideologies (73). Both Shklar and Johnson are of the opinion that betrayal can be best understood through a careful reading of literature (Jackson 74). That is exactly what this thesis aims at.

The following chapters deal with the analysis of various seducing agents, the conspicuous acts of seductions and betrayals and their repercussions in the form of the changed scenario. For the purpose of analysis, the acts of seductions and betrayals have been used as explanatory tools, which eventually lead to the picturesque exhibition of the cultural transformations. The second and the third chapter study in detail the literary projections of seductions and betrayals in the novels of Swift and McEwan respectively. The focus, however, remains on the cultural transformations either caused by the act of seduction or betrayal or leading to facilitating the act of seduction and betrayal. In either of the cases, a comprehensive perception of culture remains imperative.
By culture, we mean everything starting from the birth of an individual to his or her death. It includes the progress and present status of music, painting, sculpture, theatre, cinema, folklore, customs and traditions, myths and rituals, love, hatred, name and fame, childhood and old age, community, color, race, language, gender and literary creations, which are related to each other by the established social laws based upon morality, ethics and religion. The fourth chapter of this thesis illustrates the meaning of culture, its wide range, and the cultural transformations resulting from innumerable acts of seduction and betrayal. It includes numerous cultural objects and cultural forces through which the transformation becomes evident such as ideas, beliefs, religions, spirituality, normative rules, rituals, symbols, organizations, customs, laws, media, songs, stories, literatures, films, theatre activities, musical performances, technological innovations, protests, employment, riots, resistance, sex, permissible behavior and pop-folk-elitist and corporate culture.

This chapter endeavors to discover, by investigating through the microscopic lens of seduction and betrayal, the objects and forces of cultural transformations as echoed in their novels. In order to analyze the texts of Swift and McEwan, most of which deal with the socio-political history of England, it is essential to comprehend the spirit of the elite and popular culture of the country. The elements of cultural change and the important socio-political events that took place during the twentieth century have played very important role in shaping the structures of the literary creations. Fictional works, though not exactly a factual record of historical events, go on capturing the essence of the contemporary socio-political and religious developments. Edmund White stresses upon the historical aspects of a novelistic creation. He puts it correctly in the TLS:

> Each period has its own character, and no sentiment is natural, uninflected by the prevailing social forces. Many books of fiction, even most books, are historical novels, whether we call them that or not. (3)

The two world wars as a means of transformations have played major role in shaping the personality of British people. Though H.G.Wells had called
the 1914-18 war as the ‘war to end all wars’ (Fraser 1), it could not happen so. Since Britain’s military deaths in the First World War were more than twice that of the Second World War (Strachan 1), the scars and lacerations always remained fresh, which later on were delivered through the literary words. The latter half of the twentieth century England witnessed major developments such as population growth, changing lifestyles, excessive demand for cars and houses (urban sprawl), advances in life saving drugs, immigration, legalization of abortion and homosexuality, nationalization (pre-1979) and denationalization (post-1979), growth in consumerism, increased foreign travel, post-modernism, and cultural materialism (Black 1). This period witnessed many positive deviations in English life like the foundation of Open University, implementation of three-day week policy, poll tax, privatization of industries, and the advancement in Quantum physics and Cybernetics. The reflections of these vicissitudes are noticeable in simultaneously produced literary works.

Carrying forward the legacy of serious intelligence of Freud, Marx, Darwin and Nietzsche, writers like Ezra Pound and James Joyce translated the advances of visual arts into literature. The techniques used by these writers like stream of consciousness and allusiveness was further transferred to the post-modern elements like the idea of disintegration and instability or textual uncertainly.

England’s contribution to both British and world culture, particularly the role of English language, tells the story of its strong cultural influence on the rest of the world. Though English is the only language used in England for general office business, certain minority groups also speak Scots and Scottish-Gaelic, Welsh, Irish, Cornish and Caribbean English. In its survey of cultural life in English literature, Encyclopedia Britannica (online) (2007) takes an overview of the role of English language and its inextricable link with the culture: ‘In its literature, England arguably has attained its most influential cultural expression. For more than a millennium, each stage in the development of the English language has produced its masterworks and has exhibited the contemporary cultural scenario at each stage.’
England boasts of having established all kinds of socio-cultural institutions, monuments, museums, foundations and societies. Wide audiences all over the world enjoy English music, plays, films and English literature. England has always remained one of the foremost contributors to world theatre. It is evident in the worldwide response to the plays of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Bernard Shaw and many of the modern playwrights. British music, especially Rock along with Rhythm and Blues, Rock and Roll, the Beatles, the Rolling stones and the Kinks, has been very influential and popular in the twentieth century. The techno music is the advanced stage of the international popularity of Elton John and the Spice Girls. The twentieth Century English painters and sculptors like R. B. Kitaj and Antony Gormley respectively have continued with the themes and images of classical antiquity and have emerged as great artists to illuminate the landscape of the English mind (Kemp, Encyc.Brit).

English daily life in the history pages is found markedly different in urban and rural areas. The traditional English cuisine including beef, lamb, pork, chicken and fish served with potato is a common English dish accepted so easily by the immigrants. The ancient class system is slowly declining and even less advantaged and non-aristocratic individuals are rising to positions of prominence in commerce, government and education.

The English extended families have been converted to nuclear families in the twentieth century. The wars opened the doors of progress for women; they got an opportunity to come out of closet and seek jobs. The emancipation of women-universal suffrage, sex pills, legal abortions, easy divorce laws and permissible behavior to live as gays and lesbians have changed the social scene in England and other European nations as well.

These changes have been widely reflected in the writings of Swift and McEwan and their contemporary novelists. Hence, in order to ascertain the antique character of the act of seduction and betrayal, it would be worthwhile to retrace the literary creations of the past and discover the prevalent seduction, betrayal and the resultant cultural transformations. Such kind of a study would
definitely add more to the assessment of the novelistic output of Swift and McEwan.

It would be noteworthy to find out the events of seductions, betrayals and the consequent cultural changes in the literary works of the past. Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* supplies the typical vocabulary from the vernacular of his period. The philosophical concern that he elaborates belongs mostly to his idea of the life style of fourteenth century. These tales portray the pilgrims as seduced by the idea of story telling as a means of amusement and merrymaking and while doing so unintentionally intrude into the private lives of others. Chaucer represented the wide sweep of English life by gathering a motley company together. The tales has given us a picture of contemporary English life. Boccaccio’s tales, though apparently of somewhat lighter vein, are primarily based upon situations of seductions and betrayals. Langland’s *Piers Plowman* is an early expression of the religious and political dissent that would characterize English culture and literature of the contemporary period. ([Encyc.Brit, 2007](http://www.encyclopedia.com/economics/encyclopedia-of-economics/1928.00000.html)).

Famous ‘sexual’ seducers from history and literature include Cleopatra VII, Queen of Egypt (69 B.C. – 30 B.C.), Giacomo Casanova (1725-1798), a Venetian adventurer and author, and the fictional character Don Juan, immortalized by Tirso de Molina. Cleopatra’s famous victims, as seen in Shakespeare’s plays, were Caesar and Antony; whereas Casanova was a famous womanizer who had two hundred plus lovers. Don Juan is said to have been a great seducer and an unrepentant womanizer, who has left behind a trail of broken hearts, angry husbands and outraged fathers.

The literature produced during the Elizabethan era is the best example of the description of the affinity of the beautiful, material prosperity and upward progress of the European Renaissance. Drama flourished to the maximum during this period, thanks to the acute observation, entertaining plots, and sensible characterization of William Shakespeare. We come across abundant seductions and betrayals and resultant transformations in the literary works of this period, particularly in the plays of Shakespeare, Marlowe and Ben Jonson.
The age of Elizabeth is generally regarded as the greatest period of dramatic activity in the history of English literature. The noticeable cultural transformations witnessed during this age are due to the tremendous impetus received from the Renaissance and Reformation and from the exploration of new land. The intellectual progress and the extraordinary enthusiasm seen during this period stand for the extraordinary seduction of people by the unexplored, unseen and alien elements.

Shakespeare could portray the transformations successfully for his seduction by female characters like Cordelia, Ophelia, Cleopatra and Desdemona and male characters like King Lear, Hamlet, Antony, Othello and Iago. Though Shakespeare keeps his seducers always on alert, the devilish human beings and their fates nevertheless successfully betray them. The antagonists, the protagonists and their friends in particular talk about one thing and stand metaphorically for some other object or event. Elizabethan and Jacobean plays are full of ambitious seductions and genuine political betrayals.

Macbeth is the best example of such kind of a dramatic tale that originates from the seductive passion of the protagonist for the crown. Most of his seductive strength and the ability to betray come from his wife; she even partakes in the most heinous act of the King’s murder. Like Eve in the Bible, she exploits the hidden urge in her husband to excel and makes him ready to go forward without giving him time and space for regrets and repentance. Macbeth’s over-ambitious persona guided by Lady Macbeth is unable to differentiate between fair and foul. The three witches do the rest of the work by gleefully singing the sermons of success and alluring the loosely built mindset of Macbeth. The prophetic declaration of the witches about his rising graph from Thane of Glamis to Thane of Cawdor and later on to ‘a king hereafter’ literally maddens him to the extent of craziness. Naturally, for a warrior like him, he goes on betraying one after the other and finally kills King Duncan.

The transformed fighter in Macbeth experiences his moral degradation at the end. Lady Macbeth, who acts as a powerful and mesmerizing element of seduction and the most fearful element of cruelty in this life-altering episode,
succeeds in infusing her spirit into him and inciting his manhood with the eloquence of her tongue. This play openly shows the betrayal of trust and loyalty and brings on surface the hidden element of human lust for power. The life of Hamlet is also full of many unfortunate incidences of seductions and betrayals that describe him as a handsome prince who is deficient of the power of decision-making. Feeling betrayed by his mother’s marriage, his uncle’s behavior, and the approach of the people around, he finally succumbs to the verdict of the destiny.

Antony, Shakespeare’s another historical character, blinded by the hypnotic appearance of the beautiful and gorgeous Cleopatra betrays his own family and the people to whom he had promised to look after. A valiant soldier like Antony is ruined by the love of Cleopatra and is made false to his responsibility. Cleopatra’s love is not like the love of Beatrice that prompted Dante to create *Divine Comedy*, or like the love of Elizabeth Barret that made Robert Browning an optimistic thinker. Iago, though considered a man of evil plots never seems to be lured by the idea of having sex with Desdemona. On the contrary, he seduces Othello’s ears and proves responsible to bring out the tragic end to the love affair.

Every reading of Shakespearean play affirms and denotes the presence of ‘seduced by-old-age whims’ King Lear’s betraying innocent Cordelias and young Hamlets seduced by the sense of indecision, betraying their selves by delaying the revenge. The theme of Seduction and betrayal is also traceable in the plays of Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson. Marlowe’s *Dr.Faustus* is the best example of the power motive and Jonson’s melodrama, *The Volpone* exhibits the after effects of absolute greed and betrayals in the guise of conspiracies.

King James’ version of the Bible (1611), which is full of religious imagery and vigorous language, tells the stories of spiritual seductions and ‘degenerating’ betrayals. It also helped in spreading literacy among Englishmen and served as a tool of enriching England culturally, socially and spiritually. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is the perfect example of Seduction and
betrayal and the changed life of Adam and Eve, later on the earth. Eve enticed Adam into an act of disobedience. It was instantaneously followed by their expulsion from the Heaven. It was in fact Satan the betrayer who had converted the innocent Adam and Eve into a knowledgeable man and woman. God felt betrayed to find out his own adorable creations disobeying him. They were easily duped and made to turn away from an unashamed luxury and joyance in Heaven to a shameful afterlife of guilt and contrition to be spent ruefully in Hell in the hope of regaining Paradise. Milton’s visionary epics proved to be the best examples of portrayals of seductive Eve and Satan the betrayer. The metamorphosis, the after effect of their expulsion from Heaven, is still evident in the modern day society.

The metaphysical introspections of John Donne and Andrew Marvell successfully seduced the coy mistresses of the world and betrayed them by creating superhuman images of love that bind man-woman together. What Donne conveys through the lines-’Come live with me and be my love / And we will some new pleasures prove’ is also illustrated with equal seducing force by Andrew Marvell in “To His Coy Mistress”: The grave’s a fine and private place / But none, I think, do there embrace.

The reason based neo-classicism and imagination based romanticism were seduced by polished diction and free roaming ideas. It assessed the urgency on common person’s part to sit quietly, thoughtful in tranquility and recollect the lost world in the form of sudden flashes of lightening-the muse. Alexander Pope’s Rape of the Lock, a long poem in which all the mannerisms of society are pictured in minutest detail and satirized with the delicate wit, is solely based upon seduction and betrayal and the cultural transformations that take place as the after effect of the lock-cutting. The Romantic poetry created by William Wordsworth, Shelley and Coleridge, based upon the extreme love for nature and the expression of free ideas, expresses in a soft tone the transformations of the literary moods of the contemporary period.

During Victorian age, novelist Jane Austen proved her capability to bring everyday life into the province of literature. Austen’s well known novel
Emma is built around the seductions in family life and the inevitable betrayals as a part and parcel of routine household chores. Around the same period, creative writers like Bronte sisters, Thomas Hardy, and Charles Dickens also seem to be seduced by the non-human seducing agents like the Yorkshire moors, Dorset, the Midland Coalfields and the beautiful London.

The cultural life as depicted in literary works further advanced to a utopian stage of extreme hopefulness and social concerns in the writings of William Morris and Samuel Butler, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. Afterwards, the cultured mind of Englishmen could be easily detected enjoying the bountiful nature in Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland and many other works written for children, until the modern Harry Potter Series by J.K. Rawlings. The first half of the 20th Century was dominated by Virginia Woolf for her ‘stream of consciousness’; inner musings of people and their unconsciously formed response to the prevalent culture and to people like Irish poet W.B. Yeats, Welshman Dylan Thomas and classic American expatriates- T.S. Eliot and Henry James.

English love for mysterious police and legal procedures was supplied with delicious recipes by popular novelists Agatha Christie, P.D. James, Dick Francis and John Le Carre. Anthony Burgess, Graham Greene and Kingsley Amis dealt with modern dilemmas, moral ambiguities and strange personal relationships with God and man. Amis’ angry young man was further carried forward to John Osborn’s Look Bank in Anger and Beckett’s Waiting for Godot and he was converted from the state of extreme anger to moderate absurdity-a gradual transformation of man from confidence to hopelessness of the modern times.

The latter half of the twentieth century was a mixed bag of established writers at the fag end of their career and new writers sticking to post-modern idealism of self-reflexivity and illogically connected dialogues in the form of broken fragments. Literature after 1945 shows the writer’s reminiscences of the two world wars. The next stage of it notably stressed on Suez Crisis, Falkland war, Berlin affair, the swinging sixties, counter culture, the cold war, CIA,
KGB and to some extent MI6 in Ian Fleming’s James Bond movies. Moving further, we notice the disintegration of Russia, the end of the Cold war, formation of the European Union, third world literature, and fall of Berlin wall, multiculturalism, immigration, post-colonial approach, twin tower explosion and social riots throughout the world.

The literature, written after the Second World War, mostly deals with religious values and beliefs. William Golding frequently touches to the idea of original sin resultant of seduction and betrayal. In his works, he comments upon the innate depravity of human beings and evil as the essential ingredient of human behavior. According to him, as a bee produces honey, man produces evil (Kemp, Encyc.Brit). Muriel Spark and William Golding concentrated on small communities and transfigured them into microcosms. In Lord of the Flies (1954), the world of boys resembling grown-ups, suggests humanity’s fall from grace, conversion from innocence to dictatorship. Spark’s The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (1961) comments upon the rise of fascism in Europe that stands for socio-political transformations and the class based segregation. George Orwell, in the same way, examines the brutal communist ways of political ruling in Animal Farm (1945) and Nineteen Eighty Four (1949) which hints at the bestial urge for seduction and betrayal, later on proving two legs better than the four.

Iris Murdoch’s The Bell (1958) and A Severe Head (1961) have the themes of goodness, authenticity, selfishness and altruism. The Black Prince (1973) is a remarkable study of erotic obsession expressed through suggestive multiple interpretations. Murdoch glorifies the power of love and loss—seduction and betrayal in The Sea, the Sea. It features a retired playwright who feels jealous when he meets his past lover after many decades. Elizabeth Bowen and Elizabeth Taylor dealt with psychologically felt but socially limited canvases. ‘Angry young man’ authors John Braine, John Wain, Alan Sillitoe and David Storey produced novels that were autobiographical in origin and documentary in approach. Anthony Powell’s A Dance to the Music of Time discusses the social details of class and cultural shifts in England from World
War II to the 1960s. Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim* (1954) and C.P. Snow’s novel sequence is written in the same cultural tradition. Thereafter emerged the trend of enthrallment with empire. Paul Scott’s imperial disillusion, dissolution and the last years of the British in India form the subject of *Staying on* (1977) and his *Raj Quartet*.

In the 1980s, post-colonial voices made themselves audible and tried to overcome the feeling of being colonized by the colonizers. Chief among them was Salman Rushdie, a Booker Prize winner for his *Midnight’s Children* (1981). It was a postmodern effort to go back to 1947 and seduce the newly born generation by giving them exposure to look back to the past for the proper understanding of the changing cultural trends. Known for magic realism, Rushdie’s novels exhibit the change as the consequent resultant of modern day seductions and betrayals. In the long chain of contemporary novelists writing about the process of metamorphosis, the queue starts with Salman Rushdie and is yet to end. For the sake of convenience, it would be practically helpful to consider the contemporary writing as starting from 1975 and moving in the forward direction. The 1979-election of Margaret Thatcher or the end of the cold war and the disintegration of the erstwhile U.S.S.R. is also a convenient point of time to start with.

Thatcherism, the doctrine that dominated British politics for the next decade, is an important phase in the context of history, politics and culture in England. Free market economy and minimum state intervention gave way to the privatization of industries and commodity manufacturing. The industrial unrest of 70s was calmed down by limiting the power of the trade unions. This period witnessed a rapid rise in unemployment and riots in Bristol and Brixton. It was still a decade of affluence for some who made money from privatization of national utilities (Padley 3). John Major’s period was replete with political and sexual scandals. McEwan’s ‘Garmony’ is perhaps based upon one of the scandalous leaders.

British politics had undergone a huge transformation by the end of the twentieth century during Tony Blair’s regime. After 9/11 – the twin tower
attack- British minds and the military got involved in Iraq conflict. Hence, Britain’s international status depended a lot upon its relationship with U.S.A. Britain’s open support to Iraq war was protested against with the 7 July 2005 suicide bomb attacks on the London transport system. The immigrant flow had reached to its zenith around this time creating problems of race, class and gender in the multi-cultured society. The counter-culture movement of 1960s and the radical feminism of the next decade gave a new face to the women all over the world. Equally influential must have been the skinheads and punks, the rave culture and the growth of global consumerism and commercialization during this period.

The exhibition of the vitalizing effects of cultural cross-fertilization and its changing patterns is deciphered in Rushdie’s novels. However, Vikram Seth, Timothy Mo and Kazuo Ishiguro did not follow Rushdie’s example. Vikram Seth, seduced by India’s political and social freedom writes about India after independence and the combination of social strata and emotional and psychological outpourings intermixed with numerous obsessions and disillusionment. Timothy Mo goes back to the making of Hong Kong and analyzes a new culture in the making. Kazuo Ishiguro portrays a painter’s creative life coarsened by the imperialistic ethos of Japan. The fatal flashes of atomic explosion are firmly rooted in his psyche. The frequently distorting and expressionistic memories of the war remain intact because of the historical trauma of the Second World War and its aftermath (Homes 12).

For this reason, Brion Finney correctly finds Ishiguro’s novels as haunted by ‘a sense of angst, regret and sadness’ (Jouvert 7) epitomizes the prevalence of political betrayal. Ishiguro uses metaphor in order to create a historically real picture of the ordinary people seduced by materialism and betrayed by the contemporary society. He has said that his aim in creating the Japanese and English settings, characters and situations in his books was less to represent faithfully the social particulars of those nations in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s than to create metaphors to express personal concerns (Homes 13). Ishiguro comments upon the political betrayals faced by the Japanese during
the Second World War and is seen seduced by the reminiscences of the post-explosion ‘radiation’ trauma of horror and sympathy at the same time.

The realism and other –isms as felt and narrated by the contemporary writers is discussed by Homes: ‘Although the novelists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had a shared view of the nature of reality, those of the twentieth and twenty first centuries are generally aware that what constitutes reality is a matter for speculation and debate …’ (20)

Fact and fantasy, reportage, art criticism, autobiography, parable and pastiche are intensively mixed in Julian Barnes’ Arthur & George (2005). If novelists like Buchi Emecheta and Ben Okri wrote about their post-colonial African passion, V.S. Naipaul did the same out of his seduction for Caribbean islands. In A Bend in the River (1979), he narrated the aftermaths of colonial empires around his island, thereby vividly depicting the clash between the cultures. David Lodge, Margaret Drabble and Martin Amis chronicle the social divides in 1980’s Britain by imitating the ‘condition of England’ novel (Kemp 4). Drabble comments upon the conflict between the rich and the poor, and the cultured and the uncultured. Amis’ A Suicide Note (1984) satirizes Thatcherite amorality and greed.

Doris Lessing’s writings have focused on a wide range of twentieth century issues and concerns- from the politics of race to the politics of gender and from the role of the family to the role of an individual in the society. Anita Brookner’s novel Hotel du Lac has the delicate combination of comedy and poignancy, which gives tremendous delight to the readers. While her books frequently study ageing women’s emotional losses and isolation, they are just as often “deploying highly amusing social satire and debunking romantic pretensions” (Smith 3). Muriel Spark, author of The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (1961)and novelist Jeanette Winterson have learnt to look at love from both seduction and betrayal angles: ‘Love never counts the cost, it itself or others, and nothing is cruel as love. There is no love that does not pierce the hands and feet’ (Smith, “Winterson”).
Pat Barker’s early novels dealt with the harsh lives of working class women living in the north of England. In most of her works, physicality plays an important role. She gives detailed descriptions of dilapidated living conditions, of the places where prostitutes work and live and of the parks where the child in her novel meets her molester. The vivid descriptions of the real England of 1980s and the seductive forces and betraying elements catch hold of reader’s attention. Hanif Kureishi’s The Buddha of Suburbia (1990) describes a non-Englishman’s struggle for sexual and social identity. The problems caused due to parent’s separation are discussed in Gabriel’s Gift (2001). Jules Smith describes him as seduced by England as the setting—an acute observer of the existing socio-political situations of the present-day England:

Kureishi is conspicuously a London writer, his works being set in its moneyed milieus as well as its squats, housing estates and comfortable leafy suburbs; his city may be grimy and dilapidated but is also exciting and vibrant. (Smith, “Kureishi”).

Kureishi, pre-eminently a writer of Zeitgeist, dramatizes social transformations over recent decades, and the evolution of a multiracial, multicultural Britain. He easily moves between different cultural practices, observes the diverse heritage, and at times, questions inherent assumptions and satirizes them. His early works mostly depict extravagant sexual freedoms like that of McEwan’s macabre stories. Later on, though he became more conservative, the urge for questioning remained as unstoppable as ever.

Adam Thorpe’s Ulverton (1992), records the 300-year history of a fictional village in the styles of different epochs. Here, Thorpe seems to be continuing the stylistic pattern followed by Swift and McEwan. The idea of bringing past to the present and vice-versa is the hallmark of the writings of Ian McEwan and Graham Swift. Allan Holinghurst’s The Line of Beauty (2004) traces a decade of change and tragedies. His Swimming-Pool Library (1988) gives a vivid and detailed account of London gay culture in the early eighties. In The Folding Star (1994), the narrator develops an obsessive passion for his seventeen-year-old pupil, reminding us the disturbed Jed Parry of McEwan’s Enduring Love. Holinghurst’s writing is clever, literary and seductive. Based
on the literary models like Mann’s *Death in Venice* and Nabokov’s *Lolita*, his novels have in common, a pursuit-of-the-love-object theme (Smith, “Hollinghurst”).

Ali Smith’s novels have ambitious themes: love, particularly between females, death, loss, guilt, illness, time and complex misunderstandings. She tactfully uses the element of sex and a lesbian awakening as a means of seduction and betrayal thereafter. Her books vividly and implicitly portray the aftermath of 1960s sexual liberation in the more developed, quite liberal visualization of modern-day-gay and lesbian culture in Europe (Thursfield, Ali Smith). David Mitchell’s *Ghostwritten* (1999), and *Cloud Atlas* (2004) move around the globe and concentrate on the seductive interlocking of different narratives.

As the twenty first century approached, novelists started retreating into the past once again. Though there are still other important contemporary novelists like Irvine Welsh, Angela Carter, Caryl Philips, Zadie Smith etc. they do not form the part of the programme of our detailed study. They are, nevertheless, equally important, for they act as the advocates and deliver as the chief exponents of the typical historical, psychological and popular novel written after 1950.

Contemporary novel in English deals with different issues that are based upon historical, political and socio cultural background that has helped in the making of modern Britain. These issues can be extracted and analyzed in order to support and understand the scope of our study. Contemporary literature is a recently written work, so while studying, analyzing and judging it, the researcher has to face countless problems. The difficulty in studying contemporary literature is the lack of historical distance against which one has to judge the works published recently. There is the possibility that the themes and stylistic techniques may have faded from view, in the coming years. Some writers may be reassessed after some years and some may be erased from the memory of the readers.
The thematic and stylistic development of British literature described so far is characterized by an increasing sense of democratization and that of challenges from the 1960 onwards. Many doubts about the ways in which texts can be read and interpreted or whether they can be interpreted at all in a meaningful sense were raised. Literary texts are not factual records or historical documents. The worlds the novelist depicts are fictional, imaginative recreations of the socio-cultural reality that they address. The aim of the study of Graham Swift and Ian McEwan is to read them in detail and interpret the texts by focusing upon the incidents of seductions and betrayals, ultimately leading to the portrayal of the cultural transformations.

Since literature is shaped and informed by the historical moment and the social world in which it is created, disseminated and read, it is to be remembered that the study of contextual background is immensely useful for an understanding of the themes and preoccupations explored by a particular text (Padley 12). Thus, in order to understand the contemporary literature thoroughly, its important elements, concepts and themes are discussed in detail in the forthcoming chapters. It is possible that one may not come across some of the contemporary issues and concepts while reading Graham Swift and Ian McEwan, but since they are helpful in the thorough understanding of the British writing at present, a detailed description is underway.

The victory of the allied forces and the end of the Second World War began the decline of the British Empire and India, Egypt and Caribbean islands achieved freedom. As the United States’ pressure increased, England was trapped unawares between the then two superpowers U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. Literary responses to this crisis of national self-confidence are evident in Paul Scott’s *Raj Quartet*. His final, Booker prize-winning novel *Staying On* (1978) is focused on the aftermath of independence through the eyes of British characters that had stayed back in India (Padley 10).

Gradually after the Second World War, the class structure in England started losing its existence. John Major spoke of England as a ‘classless society’, mostly, due to Mrs. Thatcher’s firm denial of the class as a concept:
‘There is no such thing as society. There are individuals, men and women, and there are families’ (Thatcher, Woman’s own). The ‘Churchill-Truman versus Stalin’ brawl could not end until around 1980. Known as the cold war, it emerged on the surface when both the post war superpowers, capitalist America and the communist Soviet Union started extending their influence over Europe. Britain’s expected involvement in hydrogen bomb testing and the possibility of nuclear annihilation led to the formation of a peace movement – Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (C.N.D.). German unification in 1990 was the positive outcome of Gorbachev’s peace policy. Ian McEwan’s The Innocent (1990) portrays the erstwhile situation in the divided Berlin and the bringing down of the wall.

The term counter-culture dealt with a range of cultural practices and activities that challenged traditional values and attitudes. B.S. Johnson’s novel-in-a-box, Unfortunates is an example of counter-culture- experimental writing. The divorce act of 1969, which resulted in the increased number of single mothers, forms the basis of Sarah Kane’s play Blasted (1995) and 4.48 Psychosis (2000). Both these plays, which depicted man as the ultimate betrayer losing the trust of the womenfolk of the world, were radical and shocking, a new thing on British stage.

The gas chambers and concentration camps in Poland and Germany killed more than six million Jews during the Second World War. It was Hitler’s Gestapo and his betrayal of the trust- his idea of the ‘final solution’ to the Jewish question- became later on the holocaust theme in many novels. Martin Amis’ Time’s Arrow (1991) and McEwan’s Black Dogs are the best examples of such novels. Attempts of assimilation into British society and a struggle for asserting cultural identity has been the chief concern of the black British writing from Sam Selvon’s The Lonely Loudness (1956) to Zadie Smith’s White Teeth (2000). Simultaneously, Britain made some considerable contribution to the innovation of science and technological advancement. John Cayley’s digital kinetic poetry entitled River Island was a new thing in this
respect, which illustrates the literary and cultural advancement in the modern age.

Over the last thirty-odd years, the British novelists Graham Swift and Ian McEwan have established themselves as two of the accomplished and most controversial writers of their generation. They are the acknowledged spokespersons of the Contemporary British Fiction and both of them possess the perfect characteristics of a mature novelist: thorough self-discipline in the planning process, an eagle eye for condensing detail, a capacity for using the matter to suggest universal truths and skill for hinting at a wider world beyond the written story. All the characteristics of a skilled novelist could be observed in their so far produced eighteen novels.

Both of them have won Booker prizes – Swift in 1996 and McEwan in 1997. Swift has so far written eight novels out of which, two – Waterland (1983) and Last Orders (1996) have received tremendous critical acclaim. McEwan is famous for The Comfort of Strangers (1981), Enduring Love (1997) and Atonement (2001). The present invoked in their novels is equally insecure and chaotic. It is marked by the destructive wars of twentieth century including World War I, World War II, Vietnam war, Suez crisis, Falkland war, the Gulf war, 26/11 and the recent tube bombing in England. It also records the presence of the consumerist society, loss of love, death as a casual incident, imaginary fear of nuclear holocaust and the fear of the end of history and careless and selfish attitude of people for whom fictitious images on TV and fantasy films suffice the cultural appetite.

Both Swift and McEwan have successfully recreated a virtual world of possibilities and concentrated on rendering rather than discussing the great socio-political and intellectual currents of the period. Their writings always have a man at the centre, and nowhere do they erupt into slogans in order to exert a subtle political power over us; we come across an experience and not simply a paraphrasable idea. The recurrent themes and the key concepts that form the very substance of the novels of McEwan and Swift and their
contemporaries can be summarized as a cluster of situational seductions and betrayals leading to unforced cultural changes.

Swift’s ordinary ‘lives’ do not seem to take part directly in the warfare or a sudden ambush. When they meet the reader, the war either is over or expressed as if it is always outdated. McEwan’s characters directly participate in the war. The confrontation takes place first and then its repercussions are felt in a zigzag way. Swift’s characters get satisfaction in either neglecting the whole thing or proclaim that sometimes it is better not to know, whereas McEwan’s people happily go to the source of the problem and with a scientific approach try to unearth the hidden secrets of the universe. We come across people like Chapman- a gradually degenerating and self-deprecating shopkeeper, Prentis-a domestic tyrant half hidden behind his father’s memoir, Tom Crick- a demoralized history teacher, Harry Beach- a transformed lover, Bill Unwin- a pseudo-don and an incorrigible romantic, George- a runner chasing a mirage and Paula- an anxious mother worried to face the forthcoming tomorrows.

Swift was born in South London on May 4, 1949 on the borders of Sydenham and Catford. His mother Sheila Irene’s family came from Russia and Poland around the turn of the century and had a prosperous background. His father Allen Swift, a fighter pilot during the war, hailed from the working class district down the hill. Swift attended Croydon Grammar School, Dulwich College, Cambridge and York University during 1954 to 1973. He was a scholarship boy in his school days. He excelled academically from the beginning and was proud to win a scholarship at Dulwich College, the alma matter of P.G. Woodhouse, Raymond Chandler and fellow Booker winner Michael Ondaatje. His English teacher, Laurie Jagger always praised his calm and quiet nature- ‘He didn’t say anything unless he had to’ (O’Mahony, Guardian).

Around 1967, when he was in Queens College, Cambridge, he was a full-fledged hippie. He grew long hair and went on the hippie trail. However, it must have been a very short period because he does not seem to glorify the
hippie ideology in his works. During his stay at Cambridge, his friends considered him somewhat contrary individualist. One of Swift’s fellow students Hugh Haughton, now a professor at York University, describes Swift:

He was quid, he was a dark horse … He was not obviously a literary star. But those of us who knew him realized there was something else going on. He was reading people like Babel and Kipling who weren’t on the political agenda. (O’Mahony, Guardian)

Swift is a childless novelist who has been staying with Candice Rodd, a journalist and editor since 1975. He belongs to a small but happy family and is a full time writer, busy in writing mostly at his home. During his initial days of struggle to settle in any one profession, he worked as a part-time lecturer in London Colleges. As a creative writer, he has been influenced by the narrative style of Flaubert and Nabokov.

Swift has lived in London his whole life, except for the time spent studying English literature at Cambridge and York Universities and a year, teaching in Greece. He is a genuine south Londoner and has always been proud of London:

“I respond to the sound of London … London is like no other city I know in its ability to become beautiful. You can suddenly turn a corner and there are odd moments of light…” (Harrison 11)

When Swift was in Greece, he happened to read Isaac Babel, Chekhov and Montaigne. Those readings inspired him and confirmed his desire to become a writer. Once he decided to devote himself to become a full-time professional writer, he almost ignored his Ph.D. work. Eventually, Alan Ross who encouraged him to write began publishing his short stories and helped him in publishing his first novel The Sweet Shop Owner in 1980. Since then Swift’s writing campaign is going on smoothly, with eight novels, a short story book and an anthology to his credit until now.

In 1983, Swift lost Booker to J. M. Coetzee, but it nominated him as a serious writer and he was included in that year’s ‘Granta Best of Young British
Novelists’ collection. As an ‘intensified nostalgic melancholia’ (Tew 142), it gave him enough confidence to think seriously of making career in writing:

Until *Waterland*, I wouldn’t say that I was entirely out in the cold, but I certainly had my moments of wondering ‘Am I really going to make a career out of this? And the events of 1983 said, ‘Yes, you were right mate!’ (O Mahony, *Guardian*)

Swift is a full time writer who specializes in the heroism of drab lives. His plots generally have nothing very autobiographical in it. Most of his creative writing is based upon pure invention. The best example of his heightened imagination is *Waterland*, which describes the Fenland and the process of ale formation. History of the evolution of humankind and the two World wars are always present in the background of his novels, which very methodically narrate the lost hope of peace bids and highlight the tortured central relationship between father and son or daughter and husband and wife.

We meet Willy Chapman, his victimized wife Irene and their estranged daughter Dorothea in Swift’s family story of a shopkeeper, *The Swift Shop Owner* (1980). The story unfolds over the course of a single day in June. It narrates the life experiences of the disillusioned shopkeeper Willy Chapman and hints at the life altering seductions and betrayals. He is seduced by the desire to be loved by somebody but instead of the fulfillment of his desire, his wife and daughter betray him. His wife Irene is seduced by her own untold agony. Dory, his daughter is seduced by the sense of ideal expectations. Both of them betray themselves and keep on mutely lamenting the loss of stability and parental protection.

The novel portrays a typical middle-aged English man, Willy Chapman equally disturbed by his elite wife Irene’s indifference and daughter Dorothea’s over-ambitious nature that easily falls prey to a misunderstanding. He is not seduced by the romantic meaning of love. He is happily wandering on his ‘home to shop’ road and seduced by the present moment gets lost in the commercial market of London’s Brior Street. Presently a lame person, Chapman is seduced by the reminiscences of his ‘running’ events that he excelled in during his school days, and wife Irene’s thankful nature to buy him
a well-furnished shop. During his last days, nobody even imagined that he suffered from a fatal disease, *angina pectoris*.

Prentis, in *Shuttlecock* (1981), a senior archivist in the sub-department of London police, is a hard working, ambitious, God fearing and obedient person. He has recently lost his mother and has nearly lost his father who, at present, is in a mental hospital undergoing a treatment for mental breakdown and language coma. He was an engineer before joining British Army as a spy. Everything changes when he is captured by the German Gestapo and later on, escapes with the help of American Seventh Army. After the publication of his war memoir, he becomes a war hero and remains so until last two years, when suddenly he breaks down. It is the fear of blackmailing and destroying his social status and reputation. Gradually, Swift unfolds the mysterious layers of the past and we meet Quinn, Prentis’ boss, his wife Marian, and his two sons, Martin and Peter.

Prentis wastes most of his official time in finding out the truth in his father’s memoir. He is seduced by the sense of research and fact-finding. Quinn plays a pivotal role in making him face the reality and the meaninglessness of fact-finding. In this story of an inaudible and frustrating clash, Prentis becomes obsessed with his spy father’s adventures during the Second World War. His father is so severely seduced by the sense of name and fame that he stops talking and reacting to the world events. The sense of doubt and insecurity tortures the son to the extent of madness. Swift very brilliantly portrays the pressure of unrealistic expectations. All the major characters are seduced and in the course of time betray each other.

However, *Waterland* (1983) finally confirmed his capability to work as a full time writer: ‘what he calls his long show haul had paid off’ (Harrison 11). This novel, narrated by a history teacher Tom Crick, describes his youth spent in the Norfolk fens during the Second World War. In the course of treading on the fenland, we come across the madness of Sarah, incestual relationship between Ernest and his daughter, Freddie’s death by drowning, fun games with Mary’s genitals, secret copulations and abortions, the mad act of stealing a
baby and the most pathetic death of a socially outcast, ‘potato head’, Dick. The bay of North Sea is contracted to Great Ouse and the river Leem. The novel abounds in loathsome seductions and self as well as political betrayals. Swift has very skillfully inserted history in this literary work and has been able to document the transformations of people— from land to water, from doubt to salvation, from nuclear war to the war of words and from innocence to maturity.

It narrates the story of three generations through multiple narrations. Tom’s history teaching becomes his lifelong passion and he forgets his role as a teacher. He is seduced by the sense of revolt against the established notions of historical truth. The novel depicts the seducing agents like storytelling, incest and affinity with water and the devastation caused by it. The novel has a lot in it that shows the changing structure of relationships. Waterland gave Swift a place on the list of Granta’s ‘Best of young British novelists’ alongside Salman Rushdie, Martin Amis and Kazuo Ishiguro.

Out of this World (1998), the story of a photojournalist and his estranged daughter, and Ever After (1992) which narrates a university professor’s traumatic discovery of his career, followed it. In Out Of This World, swift discusses the estranged relationship between the photojournalist father and his unstable daughter. His indifferent camera and indifferent views seduce the whole world to look into it and people betray themselves by believing in the virtual reality.

It builds a glorious picture of ancient England in the form of Hayfield House, built in 1709. Robert’s profession of a Sandhurst cadet is marred by his wife’s disloyalty. However, like Prentis (Sr.) Robert prefers keeping quiet and betrays himself. Anna’s small stint with Frank is nothing as compared to her courage to leave the wounded Greece, uncle Spire and the rich country of drama. Anna is seduced by her past as well as by Harry’s photography but she gets an undeserved poetic justice; she is killed in a plane accident on mount Olympus. The urge for knowing has been wisely trapped by Swift in Ever
After. It glorifies the seducing element of going beyond the known and betraying the family members for no fault of theirs.

Swift’s *Last Orders* (1996) recounts a journey of four Bermondsey friends, from London’s east end to Margate, arranged in order to scatter their dead friend’s ashes into the sea. It narrates a journey of loyal friends roaming in the past of their own and commenting upon the typical English environment and human detours. The novel graphically represents the journey of Jack’s friends from Bermondsey to Margate. What follows in the course of this journey forms a cultural landscape of the modern day England. The Hippies and Beatles and even the corpse as a social force are always present in the background. It throws light on the triviality of human life. Irrespective of the class, race, language and cultural groups that you belong to, human deeds are brought down to zero level by the inevitable death. Historically set in a recent past, the novel abounds in a number of seducers and betrayers.

*The light of Day* (2003), his next novel, narrates the story of a murderer and a private detective. It shows a murder and a love affair and takes the readers to the land of ideal love. Both the lovers in this story are grown up people who try to redefine the idea of immortality of love caught between the society at one side and their personal problems to cope with the adult bodies and young minds at the other side. George is seduced by Sarah’s approach, by her beautiful dresses, her soft skin and by her cooking expertise and neglects her betrayal- murder of her husband. George’s own problems at the office, the misunderstanding of his boss and his suspension, his wife’s betrayal and the international war between the Serbs and the Croats always exist in the background. What surprises us the most is the obsession and guilt as experienced by a mature, senior man like him. His next act of finding an opportunity for redemption through Sarah becomes an act of self-betrayal.

Swift’s latest publication, *Tomorrow* (2007), takes us back to the last fifty years of a father named Michael and a mother named Paula. He had a low sperm count, which made them to go for artificial insemination. Now, they have Nick and Kate, sixteen-year-old twins. However, the matter becomes
complicated when they plan to tell the truth to their children. The mother is seduced by the imaginary fear of what would happen the next day. The mind games take place in the early hours of a midsummer night, as the mother lies awake next to her snoozing husband, who is expected to tell the children about the unusual nature of their conception (Harrison 11). It shows seduction of a mother who plays mind games of optimism and pessimism. Swift raises the questions about the differing opinions of the generations and gives a hint of a cultural change.

While talking about the solitary act of writing, Swift, in an interview with Robert Birnbaum, describes himself as ‘not the natural, out-on-the-road kind of writer’ (Identity Theory, 2008). Sophie Harrison describes Swift as ‘the world’s most non-driving driver’ (“A Life in Writing”, Guardian). Swift has been translated into around twenty-five languages and has been compared by critics with Laurence Sterne and Thomas Hardy. For him, the purpose of a novel is to go beyond words: “What interests me is the way individuals go back over their past and how this coincides with a historical context” (Pons, Centrist). Swift’s dedication to the art of novel is single minded. He writes a great deal about the past catching up with the present. Like McEwan and Salman Rushdie, he depends on his characters’ mind games and their journey from the present to the past and vice versa:

In a literary world, which is full of tired totems and one-trick *enfants terribles*, Graham Swift is the stubbornly real thing. His work slices through the ephemeral and the trivial to the core of our concerns with death, family, nature and history—both personal and collective. (SALON: Interview)

In short, Swift’s fictional works that represent the contemporary, post-modern British writing is full of necessary ingredients of modernity. The family in his novels does not remain only British and the individuals as the only post-colonial remains, but with a magical ladder of imaginative exploration, they touch the zenith of superiority, thereby taking the novels to greater heights. He is aptly praised for writing about ‘ordinary people’ and the agonizing embarrassment of relations between parents and their offspring.
Most of his characters are the kind of people you might find walking their dogs on the common: office clerks, school teachers, washed-up academics or shop proprietors whose grainy lives have led one critic to note- ‘Swift’s characters seem uncomfortable unless they are unhappy’ (Guardian, 2003).

While weaving the mysterious threads of heartfelt emotions, Swift moves back to the two world wars and summarizes its effect upon the landscape and the lives of ordinary, middle-class, sophisticated people. While doing so, he touches the evolution of English people, the colonial regime, scientific inventions, geographical discoveries and socio-cultural aspects related to sex, family, cinema, drama, dance, painting and sculpture. In the same way as McEwan has done in his novels, Swift tries to portray the twentieth century as a chronicle of cultural transformations, seen through the materialistic shroud.

McEwan seems to be obsessed with the perverted, the depraved and the macabre and functions as an inscrutable voyeur who describes abjection and obscenity with chilling detachment (Ryan 203). His characters and their destinies are dissected with clinical precision of a neuro-surgeon in a suitable prose style. Swift’s popularity originates from his attentive absorption in the squalid realities of the innocent, ruthless and selfish.

McEwan was born on 21 June 1948 in the military garrison town, Aldershot in Hampshire, England. Since his father David McEwan was an officer in the Army, much of his childhood was spent in the Far East (Singapore), Germany and North Africa (Libya). He got his early education in an English Boarding School-Woolverstone Hall in Suffolk- and later on graduated in English in 1970 from Sussex University, Brighton. He did his post-graduation in creative writing at the University of East Anglia (Norwich) under the tutelage of Malcolm Bradbury and Angus Wilson. It proved to be a turning point in his creative life. It made him a creative writer by bringing out the hidden expressive urge on the surface and moulded his creative sensibility in a proper shape and size. As a creative writer, he tops the list of other East
Anglia alumni of his batch like the famous dramatist Snoo Wilson, novelist Clive Sinclair and theater producer Jonathan Powell.

Before getting married to David McEwan, McEwan’s mother Rose Moore was Ernest’s wife and a mother of two - Jim and Margy. During the Second World War, Rose fell in love with David (McEwan’s father) and had a son from him but they could not bring up the child (later on named as David Sharp); had to surrender this one-month-old child to one Sharp couple. The same David sharp has very recently appeared on the scene as McEwan’s brother. David has very recently published his autobiography entitled ‘Complete Surrender’.

Though David could not see his real father who died in 1996 of emphysema, he could meet his ailing mother in 2002. She died of Alzheimer’s disease. McEwan had a mixed feeling over the sudden and unexpected revelation of the new brother:

My first feeling was excitement – I’ve got a brother!
But also shock and then, within a few days, sadness.
(Byrnes C.10)

McEwan was the third son in his family but due to a considerable gap between him and his elders, he always thought himself to be the only child in his family. Though his secret brother’s revelation took place quite late in his literary career, we somehow find its traces in his early writing. It reminds us a couple’s discussion over an unborn child in The Child in Time. One central theme of McEwan’s work has always been the power of a single moment to change lives utterly. In the same way, David’s discovery was more than anything, touching McEwan’s life intimately and far torturing than he had imagined in his own literary creations. That is why McEwan is doubtful whether the book would justify his loss of invaluable childhood. McEwan says:

My feeling is that there are consequences that flow from the turmoil of war that never find their way into history books or even memoirs. (Byrnes C.11)

McEwan has two sons from his first wife Penny Allen, who had absconded with their youngest son Greg to France, making it headlines in 1999. Later on, the family dispute was settled and they were legally separated. His
second wife Annalena McAfee is a great source of energy and inspiration for him. She works as a journalist and the editor of the Guardian review section. McEwan, as his biography shows, has been like any other middle class Englishman—full of tortures and troubles. Despite facing numerous fabricated calamities, he has been continuously engaged in writing scripts for movies, pieces for musical presentations while looking at the darker side of the world through his magnifying glasses and wearing a mask of a meditative magician like a grown-up Harry Potter.

The everyday chaotic world and the imaginative worlds that he constructed seem to be of a similar kind. He emerges on the literary arena, as an ambitious writer with the gift of engaging himself in contradicting fantasies and aspirations, thinking about the ‘tension between the private worlds of individuals and the public sphere by which they are contained’ (Matthews ‘Biography’ 3).

Soon after his post-graduation in creative writing, McEwan went to Afghanistan. His experience there added much more to his post-1968 counter culture ideology that he believed in before the Russian invasion. Soon he grew bore with the Afghans’ irrationality and anti-intellectualism. In 1974, he settled in London and gradually became a Londoner, enjoying (though out of compulsion) the chaotic crowd, the malls and multiplexes and a constant threat of motor accidents and terror attacks. As a father figure, he must have gone through the burden of parental anxiety as evident in Saturday (2005) and at the same time, seemed to be enjoying a London based onlooker as evident in his cold war novels like The Innocent (1990), Black Dogs (1992), Amsterdam (1998) and Atonement (2001).

Initially he was influenced by the writings of Franz Kafka (for his beautiful stories), biologist E.O. Wilson (for his interest in Science Renaissance) and Evelyn Waugh (for the superb story of progressive derangement). McEwan’s interests in the later period of his writing shifted to John Updike for his ‘great intellectual reach and an insidious emotional penetration’, Sigmund Freud for the psychopathology of everyday life, Philip
Roth and Saul Bellow for ‘a largeness of ambition, a generosity of imagination, and a wicked sense of humor’ (Chotiner, ‘Interview’). McEwan planned to remain loyal and attentive to the creative strength of the stalwarts like Kafka, Updike, Freud and Saul Bellow. In McEwan, there was always a latent urge for writing something shocking and memorable that made him such a great writer.

Siobhan Dad writes about his transformation from a raw beginner to a ripe talent:

The course of creative writing exposed him to the best of American fiction, which galvanized him to eschew what was polite and dull in English writing and made him wild and wanting to shock. (Encyc.Brit. 2007)

McEwan was awarded the Shakespeare prize for his valuable contribution to literature by the Alfred Toepfer foundation, Hamburg in 1999 and a C.B.E. in 2000. He has been christened metaphorically as ‘Ian Macabre’ by critics for some of his dark stuff and perverse short stories in First Love, Last Rites (1975) and In Between the Sheets (1978) and novels like The Cement Garden (1978), The Comfort of Strangers (1981), The Child in Time (1987), Black Dogs (1992) and Enduring Love (1997). In later works, he seems to be softened a bit, may be due to his adulthood and maturity. He explains this transformation as a result of the growing age –‘when you get older you feel—may be a little more delicate and hope that things will flourish’ (Chotiner, ‘Interview’).

His first collection of short stories, First Love, Last Rites won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1976. His second volume of stories In Between the Sheets appeared in 1978. These claustrophobic tales of childhood showing deviant sexuality and disjointed family life were remarkable for their formal experimentation and a controlled narrative voice. He had earned the tag ‘Ian Macabre’ for his dark themes and it was so overused that he developed a disliking for it. Imagining the worst things and converting it into compact writing had a desired effect for McEwan. ‘It was a young man’s insistence on
being noticed’, he says and vindicates his style (Dobrzynski, _Wall Street Journal_).

When McEwan the storywriter turned into McEwan the novelist, much of his preoccupations with sexualized children and violent relationships, unconventional and yet familiar themes remained with him until the publication of *The child in Time*. McEwan has so far written ten wonderful and critically acclaimed novels, screenplays and lyrics for films and television, an Oratorio _Or Shall We Die_ and a book for children, _The Daydreamer._

_The Cement Garden_ is a story of four children in an orphaned family, living lonely after their parents’ death. We see them slowly declining to incest and bestiality. They bury their mother in the cement kept in the basement of their house and attempt to carry on a normal life. Seduced by the sense of protection and threatened by the fear of their unity they betray the society and the laws of nature. By acquiring pre-mature adulthood, they pose a problem for the society and the cultural progress of their own selves decline slowly to incest and bestiality.

It describes the fearful atmosphere of English countryside and the experimental lifestyle of four innocent children who oppose a change in their identity status and try to win over the death. The English laws and the social structure create an imaginary fear of loss of family as a single unit among the children. As a result, they are seduced to hide the news of their mother’s death and keep distancing from the rest of the society. In the meantime, they go on betraying everybody and each other. Jack masturbates, and starts living life like a slovenly nincompoop. Jack and Julie play father-mother role in the family.

Role playing and watching each other’s sexual organs and playing sexual games become their pastime. The dead body of the mother starts decomposing and the betrayal comes to an abrupt end. The incest between Jack and Julie and Derek’s entry into their life proves devastating. The novel portrays the possibility of a future situation. McEwan’s emphasis on dark, drab and notorious illustrates a unique family drama, which may be considered as
one of many exceptional stories still performed mutely on the stage of the
world, without anybody to watch.

His second novel, The Comfort of Strangers (1981), is an inseparable
mixture of fantasy, violence and obsession. It is set in a city that resembles
Venice. McEwan has nowhere mentioned the place names in his first two
novels. It is a nightmarish novel about a travelling English couple caught into
the traps of a sadist couple. It narrates a loathsome violence and the most
distasteful, pervert obsession. The major characters, seduced by the sense of
violence, betray the simplicity of a soul.

We find McEwan little changed in his approach and treatment of the
society in his works written after this novel. In the 1980s, when he began
playing the role of the family head, his novels became ‘less insular and
sensationalistic and more devoted to family dynamics and political intrigue’
(Encyc.Brit. 2007). Abduction and the loss of a daughter and its devastating
effect is the chief concern of McEwan’s The Child in Time (1987). It examines
how a kidnapping of their daughter affect the parents. Every man has a child
in him so one must learn to look inside – is the message given by McEwan.

Though Stephen has lost his daughter physically, he is fully immersed in
her thoughts and memories on mental level. In his long search, he is finally
exhausted and then, in a shocking and fearful atmosphere, creates Charles as a
grown up boy who is co-incidentally the chairperson of the Childcare
Committee, a writer of children’s books and a publisher of quality creations.
What Charles does, when he suddenly shifts to the forest, is the most important
cultural shift that we witness. Kate, the innocent daughter of Stephen, is always
present in her ‘absence’– a shrouded figure at the periphery of vision – and
sometimes comes out on the open in the guise of a beggar girl, a schoolchild or
any other beautiful and innocent face on the street. This novel marked a change
and confidence in McEwan’s writing.

The Innocent (1990) is a love story set in post-war Berlin. We meet an
innocent in the form of a brave lover who dismembers not only the dead body
of a cruel husband but also ten decades of the twentieth century. It also throws
light on the spy community and international espionage during the cold war around 1955. The novel, though apparently an espionage thriller of constructed conspiracies, has been successfully crafted. The secret of the smooth retreat from the tunnel becomes a mediocre incident due solely to Leonard’s tip off. Nothing very serious happens except Maria’s physical translation from Leonard’s British tongue to Glass’ American accent. Culturally speaking, the cold war, which was at its zenith during the 1950s and 1960s, seems to be spreading the news of the swinging sixties, Beatles, Blues, Rocks and Punks. Otto’s body is dismembered and with that, McEwan dismembers all the amateur warriors of the world.

The same Berlin Wall described in The Innocent falls down in Black Dogs (1992). In this novel, McEwan takes the readers to a Nazi death camp and the political ideology and individual loyalties are elaborated in detail. It is a fictional memoir of a couple. She is devastated due to her confrontation with the Nazi trained hounds and he is under stress due to his political bifurcation and a blind adherence to the party. It also comments on the presence and absence of the Berlin Wall.

Enduring Love (1997) describes how a ballooning accident triggers a tale of stalking, fixation and erotomania. It is a story of Jed Parry’s homoerotic obsession with religious overtones, described pathologically as a clinical variant of de Clerambault’s syndrome. It comments upon the disastrous effects of a pathological disorder on a family. Amsterdam (1998), converted from his own play, won the prestigious Booker Prize in 1998 and confirmed McEwan’s position in the front row of literary titans like Graham Swift, Julian Barnes and Martin Amis. It narrates the story of a bitter feud among the lovers of an institutionalized woman, who dies of a prolonged venereal disease - a disease termed as ‘madness’ in the novel. It meditates upon the life value of man and the meaning of perversion in the modern times.

Amsterdam describes a tragic situation in a comic way. The tragedy takes place due to one beautiful woman Molley Lane and her promiscuity. The European modern day idea of free sex seems to be responsible for many
unfortunate turns and twists in the lives of human beings. Molley is beautiful but she is free, frank, and fidgety. Her casual approach to sex and sexuality never allows her to stick to one single person. Her male friends are also each other’s friends but somewhere, in their heart of hearts, they hate each other. They are seduced by the temporary fragrance of Molley’s beauty and the desire to possess her and as a result, lose their worth and self pride and happily euthanize each other.

Clive, the great composer undergoes a transformational experience of creating an altogether new theme. He is so severely seduced by his experience that he does not even try to help a woman in problem. It is Molley’s seduction once again, which destroys Vernon’s publishing profession. Fortunately, for Garmony, thanks to his wife’s timely support, his reputation as a great politician is not tarnished. They betray each other honestly but they could not betray euthanasia that kills both, Clive and Vernon. Seduced by a terrible death wish, they kill each other and save themselves from future attacks of madness. The novel proves to be a cultural Kaleidoscope of a group of people from different professions, their public life of ego and pride and their private life of moral bankruptcy and hypocrisy.

_Atonement_ (2001) begins in 1935 in the Pre-World war England and ends in 1999, on the threshold of the turn of the century. It traces, over six decades, the consequences of a lie told by a girl of thirteen. Only at the end, she reveals the truth by confessing in a written form - the novel itself. McEwan, here seems to be seduced by a typical autobiographical narrative which he tactfully uses to throw light on various betrayals. As a story of a story and history of ‘his-stories’, the novel covers a large period and is a combination of love, duty, compassion and atonement. Briony, a girl of thirteen, around 1930, speaks out a particular lie unintentionally about Robbey’s misbehavior. Finally, she repents and wants to atone it through a written record of events. Just like Julie in _The Cement Garden_, Briony wants to grow faster than her mind may allow her and gain adulthood.
The famous retreat of the British Army in France during the Second World War functions as a full proof evidence of authenticity. It is aptly exploited by McEwan to make the things seem real and historical. It is actually like Cyril Connolly’s letter of advice to Briony’s writing skills, which reads like a true, historical fact. All the incidents, which take place in the novel like the first performance of The Trials of Arabella, Robbey’s imprisonment, French retreat, Nazi Blitzkrieg and post-war London damages – all seem to be taking place due to Briony’s seduction and betrayal.

Saturday (2005), influenced by Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway is a vivid and graphical description of one particular day in 2003- a day of anti-Iraq war and mass demonstrations. It is also about a fatal disease, a pregnant daughter and one New Blue Rider Orchestra. This dazzling and profound novel portrays a brilliant neurological doctor, Henry and his single day struggle on 15 February 2003. Dr. Henry is under a constant fear – the fear of terrorism. The 26/11 U.S. attacks reappear in the form of the fear and the doubt of self-annihilation. As a result, what Henry experiences throughout the day points to the cumulative effect of post – 26/11 feelings.

Here we have another Jed Parry in the guise of Baxter – a fighter, intruder and a patient. Theo’s music related activities reflect the late 20th century’s contribution to the ‘counter-culture’ development in music. His guitar and piano are as intoxicating as the bird’s call heard by Clive in the Lake District when he was busy in creating a new melody for The ‘Millennium Symphony.’ The rational thinking and analytical attitude of the modern man instantly diagnose the Huntington’s disease and suggests a cure for those suffering from it. Literature wins over all other forms of knowledge when Baxter listens to Arnold’s Dover Beach and gives up the idea of hurting Henry’s family members.

On Chesil Beach (2007) is McEwan’s latest creation, which goes back to the swinging sixties and comments on man-woman relationship and the permissible behavior. McEwan takes the readers back to 1962, a period of swinging sixties and the sexual revolution. By showing us the inability of the
honeymooning couple to copulate successfully, he lifts the simple subject of sex and love to a maximum height. The bitter experience that the couple undergoes reveals that a man loves physical union whereas a woman adores the idea of love itself. McEwan in this novel emphasizes the need to have a satisfactory sexual relationship to make the future companionship tolerable.

The gamut of McEwan’s creative ability and expression is the planned conglomeration of specially sketched characters, rational thinking based upon human evolution and, the abundance of nature so well captured, sense of the past and its impact upon the present and common human tendencies. The ever-going activity of seduction and betrayal, as understood conventionally, hints at sexual activities and sudden departures from it without prior notice. Apart from this, there is something, which seduces, betrays, and forms the large part of his metamorphosed world.

Though the sexual intercourse factor is always present and active, there is something more urgent and concrete in his works that forms the very substance of his creative outburst. McEwan is remarkable for his formal experimentation and controlled narrative voice. He narrates the tales of unfortunate childhood, deviant sexuality, and disjointed family. He is the most controversial writer who was wrongly dubbed as a ‘macabre’ novelist of terrible and obscene ideas.

Though we are on the threshold of the second decade of the twenty first century, the Europeans are still haunted by the ‘horrific’ memories of the wars. Its after effects are still evident in the form of an invisible and everlasting imaginary fear. The modern man is in a dilemma like Eliot’s Prufrock. The urban sprawl, growing industrialization, globalization and privatization is giving rise to terrorism and bombings, suicides, sudden deaths, kidnappings, rapes, riots and mysterious psychosomatic diseases.

The second and the third chapter of this thesis throw light on seduction and betrayal in the novels of Swift and McEwan. The fourth chapter explains in detail the cultural changes in the form of the portrayals of various cultural groups or characters engaged in innumerable undertakings. It brings on the
surface those forces that have the potential to change the culture that always remains an essential and inseparable part of human life. The last chapter compares and contrasts the creative output and critical ideology from the viewpoint of seduction and betrayal as manifested in the fictional corpus of Swift and McEwan.

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