Chapter IV

DIALECTICS OF
CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Dialectics, also called as dialectic or dialectical method, which originally meant a kind of logical argumentation, now means a philosophical concept of evolution applied to diverse fields including thought, nature and history (“Dialectic”, Encyc. Brit.). It is also explained as the process, in Hegelian and Marxist thought, in which two apparently opposed ideas, the thesis and antithesis, become combined in a unified whole, the synthesis (Encarta 2009). The term dialectics has its origin in ancient Greece and it was made popular by Plato through his Socratic dialogues. Since this chapter deals with the critical examination of how the cultural transformations resulting from seduction and betrayal or causing it, has been reflected and documented in the novels of Graham Swift and Ian McEwan. The term ‘dialectics’ has been simplified here to serve our purpose.

Dialectics, in this chapter, would mean the art of conversation, a method of presentation of ideas, an understanding of our perception and assertion of the interconnected, contradictory and dynamic nature of the world outside and a method of seeking and arriving at the truth by reasoning or rational discussion. It is different things to different scholars but less ambiguous than culture, which has no fixed meaning. Raymond Williams describes culture as ‘a constitutive social process which actively creates different ways of life’ (Macey 76). Culture, from the Latin cultura meaning ‘to cultivate’, generally refers to the patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activities significance and importance. In order to understand culture better, it is essential to examine its characteristics and ramifications closely.

Culture, as a way of life for an entire society, has been defined as ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society’ (Taylor 3). Culture, as an element of study, has been discussed and commented
upon by numerous sociologists and anthropologists. The study has shown that culture is manifested in human artifacts and activities and may mean any one, or all the possibilities from the following: (a) A general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development (b) A particular way of life, whether of people, period or a group and (c) The works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.

This chapter deals with the detailed study of cultural transformations brought about by various forces acting as a single unit of change or a homogeneous and inseparable combination of various forces. The cultural forces dealt with in this chapter are labeled as colonization, the end of Empire, Englishness, history, Wars, holocaust, atomic explosion, urban sprawl, multiculturalism, religion, class, gender, sex and sexuality, feminism, globalization, advances in communication and transportation, infrastructure improvements, military expansion and the human tendency to seduce and betray. Culture as a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society includes a set of numerous cultural objects. These cultural objects are generally categorized as ideas, beliefs, religions, spirituality, normative rules, rituals, symbols, organizations, customs, laws, media, literature, films, theatre activities, music, sex, protests, employment, resistance and technological innovations.

Both the forces that encourage and resist the change, internally affect cultures. These forces are related to natural events and social structures, which may undergo a kind of structuration. The development in technologies and the consequent social conflicts can generate changes within a society by altering social dynamics and promoting new cultural models. These social shifts may accompany ideological shifts and cultural changes performed unconsciously through diffusion, acculturation and transculturation. The novels of Graham Swift and Ian McEwan are vivid portrayals of contemporary English society, and its engagement with seduction and betrayal. Their characters fall victims to name, fame, glamour and money or carnal appetite.
Graham Swift’s first novel *The Sweet Shop Owner* (1980), through Chapman’s seduction and Irene’s betrayal exhibit the whole range of post-war consumerist boom and the war legacy of mental and physical exhaustion of the typical middle class London society. The story of the novel begins in 1974 and goes back to 1937. In short, the narrative present of the story begins when Harold Wilson became the Prime Minister of England, miners went on a strike and sixteen people were killed in IRA bombings. It was the same year when Nadine Gardiner’s *The Conversationalist*, Larkin’s *High Windows* and Stoppard’s *Travesties* were published.

The Protagonist of the novel, Chapman, meets his dream girl Irene in 1937, a year before the Second World War began. At this point of time, they represented the silent and peaceful lifestyle of England. England and her citizens, already wounded by the First World War’s financial, emotional and political crisis, were scared of any new war. The pre-war meeting of this pair is marked by the innocence of the couple as seeped into their characters from ‘the silence before the storm’ surrounding. She insists him to play the role of a child; he obeys and they instantly fall in love. Though Chapman, the athlete is changed into a limping husband and an obeying father, he is never lost in the post war prosperous England and its consumerist culture. Even for his assistants, Mrs. Cooper and Ms. Sandra, he was never a bullying employer of the Capitalist economy.

Chapman, who is silently moving towards his death, represents the changes that took place from 1937 onwards in the war-affected England. He, as a family head, is going through the mental agony that is equally felt by England as an empire. There are wars and he is at war with himself. There is tolerance; there is decline of the empire, colonies getting freedom and Dorothea, decolonizing herself, going far away from the centre. There is feminine upgrading; he observes the uplifting of Mrs. Cooper and Ms. Sandra through their changing manners, dresses and social behaviour. He carefully watches the consumer boom in crowded shopping malls and settles in his easy chair.
meditating upon the shortage of Sugar, traffic chaos and his job in the First World War as a storekeeper in the army.

As far as lamenting the loss of youthful dreams is concerned, Chapman resembles Willy Loman, the hero of Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*. The name Chapman is supposed to be descending from peddlers of books in popular verses further highlighting Chapman’s involvement in the small scale business – a shop that he opens on the Briar street. Chapman, like Jack in *Last Orders*, settles in South London’s crowded area and develops himself, as an owner of a sweetshop. The shop acts as a landmark of stability and a focal point where local community congregates to celebrate the English past still fresh in their memory. Daniel Lea aptly portrays the transfixed procession of business malls on the high street: ‘The high street in which it is situated appears transient by comparison, being inhabited by a procession of businesses; but in this interaction between continuity and change lies a reiteration of the novel’s engagement with identity. Though the street evolves over time, it is always seen as retaining something fundamentally unchangeable’ (Lea 39).

The consumer items that are placed in order on shelves in the shop and the Saturday morning crowd rushing to buy it take the readers to the London of 1974:

…the magazines and papers, spread, overlapping like roof tiles: tense headlines, pop-stars, orchids in flower, fashion, footballers, naked girls...Toys, Dolls, teddy-bears, jigsaw puzzles, model cars, rockets, cowboy hats. (18)

The dressing habits of Chapman’s early days are demonstrated through his random use of coats like the charcoal for formality, the pale grey for sociability, the dark grey for work, the brown and light green for Saturdays and Sundays. While in the shop on the Saturdays, he watches youngsters who carelessly spend eighteen-nineteen pounds on a single day and walk with arrogance. They wear blue jeans that ‘hugged’ their hips and skirts that got shorter and shorter. His girlfriend Sandra represents the liberated youth who takes off her bra and wears tea shirt without it.
Chapman, the brave and eternal athlete lives like an eternal champion and runs into his future. All the while he is haunted by the single thought of Dory’s future and occasionally, when he is free from such disturbing thoughts, he moves back to his good old ‘sporting’ days: ‘They think its action but it’s only a pattern. You move and keep your eyes on what is fixed’ (197).

As the race marches on, the moment passes on and what we see at the end of the day are the transformed spectators and players in a new situation. The first and the Second World War along with Holocaust and the concentration camps are still giving jolts to the simple life of Englanders like Chapman, Irene and Dorothy. A general sense of national psychic exhaustion resulting from the traumas and deprivations of the war years is still fresh in their memory. His shop is flooded with dolls, gum and cards having different labels of war heroes and comics like Great Battles of World War II. Conflict of one kind or another is visible in the newspapers that are sold in his shop – ‘PEACE BID FAILS’ is one particular headline that appears at several places. It can also be applied to Chapman’s attempts to find inner peace.

The wars in the history book never affected Willy Chapman but his job in Stores Operations in the WW II must have taught him the lesson of humanity. Counting helmets and packs, which he handed out to the soldiers going to the war front, could at least give him the number of soldiers who never came back. As the war ended, people celebrated and cried ‘Victory! Victory!’ but nobody cared about ‘peace’ – the peace that Irene needed after her rape by Hancock. The war experience of Chapman reminds us of the retreat of Robbey in McEwan’s Atonement. The undying memory of the war and the war heroes remain forever unaltered in Willy’s storehouse of reminiscences.

Swift makes him speak slogans like ‘if you win, you lose’ and ‘if there is no fighting, no one wins’ and justifies the UK’s support to her allies and the actual participation in the wars. After the war, what Willy and Irene witnessed in the form of ruins due to sustained aerial bombardment slowly transforms into evacuation of children of the broken family units. It is very well represented by Dory’s fleeing away from home and Mrs. Cooper’s full time job
in Willy’s shop. The prices went up and the public of the welfare state experienced shortages of sugar and other necessary household items. Irene very well realized the value of money and promptly bought a shop for Chapman to engage him in something so that she would be able to repent her meek submission to the abuse of her body.

Though the swinging sixties are known for sexual mores, availability of sex pills and abortion was surely an ex-gratia and an act of benevolence for Dory’s generation. Irene, a wealthy and beautiful but emotionally aloof young woman, gives birth to Dory after her hasty marriage with sociable Chapman and stops enacting love. Four decades of social change and changing ideas of love and sex are reflected through his struggle for love and Dory’s protest against a loveless couple. In this story of a small London suburb, the problems of a small family are enlarged beyond the limit due to Irene’s invalid presence. Her idea of marriage as a professional bargaining betrays everyone, resulting into a series of tragic incidents.

Chapman very well understands Irene’s psychosomatic illness apparently linked to the rape she endured as a young woman. He resolves never to talk to Dr. Cunningham about it and thus struggles to perpetuate the safe but doomed routine of his married life. Numerous repeated phrases in the novel like – ‘Nothing touches you, you touch nothing’, ‘What you have don’t belong to you’ and ‘all right, now!’ function as ‘linguistic parallels to the paralyzed emotional economy of the Chapman family’ (Lea 35) and according to Banyei, these phrases convey the ‘traumatized experience of temporality’ (41). The phrase ‘all right, now’ uttered by Hancock to calm and coerce her into sex is firmly rooted in Irene’s unconscious mind.

However, a lovable man, Chapman never gets Irene’s love in return. She is lost in her own agony and he is considered as only something to occupy with. He could read her mind which mutely said, ‘and all I ask in return for this is that there be no question of love’ (22). However, as a part of convention, she grants him a child in the form of Dorothy. Knowing nothing about these secrets, Dory senses that her mother resents both of them and is unable to
understand their emotions. She leaves home at once and abandons her old father. Dory could never understand why her father accepted and adjusted himself, reconciled with her loveless, pale and inert mother, and lived an isolated life. She never realized why he said:

Did you judge us, Dory, even then? If the word love is never spoken, does it mean there isn’t any love? If she never kissed me in front of you… The same and not the same… She was against anywhere new. Nothing new. Yet (how could you defy her?) everything was eternally new… (6-7).

The refusal of Irene’s love sharing caused destruction in others and made Chapman a simulacrum of a life (Willy, the Sweet Shop). This perverse rejection of a real thing describes the later twentieth century as ‘the offspring of its violent parents’ (Widdowson 14). In short, the novel depicts a clash between Chapman’s popular, Irene’s elitist and Dorothea’s counter culture, which invites a premature death of Irene and the unfortunate suicide of Chapman.

This ‘angina’ patient was also a patient of self-induced load of expectations and frustrations. He idolizes Dory as a replacement to Irene’s cold response and struggles to keep her image intact. Being a war baby like Irene, Prentis is also caught in the web of dilemmas while resolving his father’s honesty. While protecting the image of his father, Prentis tortures his pet hamster Sammy, his sons, their ‘Bionic Man’ and wife Marian, whom he tries to turn metaphorically into a whore. Confused to the core of mental irrationality, Prentis is in search of bravery, which people of his age cannot easily attain; he searches for the ecstasy in the exploitation of his wife’s naked body and tries to prove his own fatherhood by commanding orders in the family. Though he very well realizes his own misbehaviors, he does not like the idea of his replacement with the television and the Bionic man.

Shuttlecock, which has a pre-Falkland war background, was published in the same year when Prince Charles married Princess Diana, Bobby Sands died in Prison in IRA hunger strike, Brixton and Dublin riots broke out and CND rally of 2,50,000 demonstrators was organized in London. It was the same year when English public welcomed Salman Rushdie’s Midnight
Children. D.M. Thomas’ *The White Hotel* and Brian Friel’s *Translations.* While observing all these developments, Swift’s hero, instead of marching forward, moves inward into the autobiographical-historical remnants of the bygone era.

The events of the double-plotted book come naturally to the readers and create gaps that can be considered as a part of human discourse. Prentis, the senior archivist in the police department of ‘dead crimes’ honestly considers his father’s ‘memoir’ as a non-fictional piece of historical text and falls victim to his urge to fill the gaps with his scholarly attitude. Finally, when he gives it up, he feels released and free.

He is caught between the burden of the history of the war and the heroics of his ‘silent’ father. From this point of view, the novel can be read as a young man’s efforts to come to terms with the post-war trauma and interpersonal relationships. His sadistic tendencies are evident in his behaviour with the pet Sammy and his wife and sons. Prentis brutally exercises power over his weakness and ineffectiveness at work. He behaves like a bullying, tyrannical father and a cold, calculating and brutal lover, hardly a sympathetic narrator (Kaczvinsky 3).

Prentis adopts the role of a Nazi torturer and considers Sammy the unfortunate prisoner always threatened by the oven door. His son’s punishment becomes equally sadistic when Prentis, like a Nazi magistrate, torments his ‘accused’ sons by prohibiting them to eat. Like an uncontrolled bull, he moves into Marian and tries to hide his weakness and inefficiency by dominating her through the most detestable, heinous sexual ‘execution’.

The sense of protest and resistance is evident in the act of Martin’s hiding his book and Marian’s stopping Prentis from further torturing her sons. Prentis, although knowing the implied meaning of his behaviour, is confused and lost in the maze of dilemmas, doubts, fears, threats and uncertainties. His unusual thinking about his replacement as a father with the ‘Bionic Man’ and a husband with his elder son Martin creates in his mind a ‘sibling rivalry’ (Lea 47). As a result, he torments his sons and wife and tries to prove his superiority.
by showing the desire for power. Marian, when he plays with her body, symbolizes an easily moldable lump of clay:

    But the thing I like most about Marian (excuse me again if this sounds odd) is her malleability, her pliancy; the feeling I get that I could mould and remodel her (she must have learnt a thing or two at that physiotherapy clinic), contort and distort her, parcel her up and stretch her into all kinds of shapes... (27)

However, at the end of the novel, we see this torturing ‘Nazi’ totally transformed - thanks to his promotion, Quinn’s act of burning the mysterious C-9 files thereby preserving the intact image of his brave father. Once again, like any common person would long for, he enjoys a picnic with his wife and sons at the Camber Sands and the definition of war for him goes on changing: ‘I would have a vision of war as a simple, romantic affair of opposing powers’ (216). As a seaside hustler and a regular tripper, Prentis watches the actions of his sons with pride and dreams of progress. When they run naked on the sandy surface, he looks at them with a still gaze:

    And suddenly they were no longer running towards the sea, but running, towards the future … Marian and I made love in the sand… My view was filled with sand, a miniature dune scape, a whole shifting and rippling Sahara that was forming and reforming round our blanket. (218-9)

The lack of transgenerational communication is evident in the wild and self-destructive behaviour of major characters. The fake language coma and catatonia of the ‘spy’ Prentis runs parallel to Marian’s moulding as a sexual doll to endure Prentis’ so called act of ecstasy and enlightenment. Some of them become hysteric and the ‘defeated’ become objects – a ‘commodity’ in the modern feminine sense. The commuters whom Prentis observes in the tube while on his routine journey represent the modern-day behaviour of culturally neutral people for whom a female body is meant only for sexual intercourse. Their piercing eyes dig deep to the navel and search for the hidden triangle of a female body.

Prentis, like Chapman, Tom Crick and Bill Unwin is incapable of transferring shared cultural values and ideas due to his self-induced isolation
and spiritual degeneration. The constant struggle of the narrator to disclose the reality turns him into a cold war hero and he starts behaving like an agent of FBI, CIA or KGB, until he realizes the futility of the painful knowledge and the bliss of ignorance – ‘what people don’t know, can’t hurt them...’ (212).

The recurring element of mental disability and incurable madness is always present in the novels of Swift. The London mental institution where we find Prentis’ spy father, represents a fighter with the unknown and the invisible. The hospital reminds Prentis of an old redbrick country house of another age surrounded by dark and tall trees. These institutions and the inmates are so nicely described that one finds it a fine replacement for the chaotic disorder of the present post-war society.

The idea of naming the hospital wards after names of trees – Acacia, Geranium, Eucalyptus etc. makes it more real and fresh. The self-managed mental institution is so self-reliant and self-illumined that it reflects its beauty and disciplined life outside. Because of this, when Prentis realizes that there is nothing abnormal about these places – where you can confess and feel relieved and absolved – he begins to doubt his own sanity. When he stops his struggle for knowing, he feels an intense urge to return to nature. We find him totally free from the bonds of buried history and transformed into a sane father. It is his return to nature, which finally ends the mute conflicts.

Waterland witnessed many upheavals in Swift’s creative career. This novel not only established him as a great English writer but also compulsively forced him to adopt writing as a full time career. J. M. Coetzee’s The Life and Times of Michael K won the prestigious Booker Prize of 1983 and Waterland, though one of the favoured finalists, remained in the shortlisted novels along with Malcolm Bradbury’s Rates of Exchange, John Fuller’s Flying to nowhere and Salman Rushdie’s Shame.

The year of Waterland’s publication was full of social, political and cultural events like CND demonstrations in Berkshire, re-election of Margaret Thatcher for the second time and formation of women’s peace-camp. The failure of miner’s strike indicated conclusion of Trade Union’s iron influence
over British industry. Contrary to the notion of literary works reflecting contemporary socio-cultural changes, *Waterland* never directly hints at the ongoing activities of that year. Yet, as the story moves forward, one finds the contemporary scenario depicted skillfully by Swift, though in a different way. He comments on the worth of the history as history - as a powerful force modifying the modern day life of a common person like Tom. The multiple narrative strategies make his task of presentation quite easier as far as the depiction of cultural transformations is concerned.

Tom carries the ‘story-telling’ lifestyle of his father forward. He begins with the same mood and tells us what actually happened in fenland and between Cricks and Atkinsons and between him and Mary:

> Fairy-tale words; fairy tale advice. But we lived in a fairy-tale place. In a lock-keeper’s cottage, by a river, in the middle of the fens far away from the wide world… And as we lay, Dad said: Do you know what the stars are? They are the silver dust of God’s blessing. They are little broken off bits of heaven. God cast them down to fall on us. (1-2)

Swiftian hero moves in a cyclical motion, to portray the England of 1820s; Vermuyden, the changed landscape due to land reclamation and production of liquor. Through numerous love and hate scenes, he reaches finally to the year 1980, the point from where the narration begins. In the course of narration, Swift touches the events, along with historical and geographical changes, like stories of fens, sex life of eel, nature of phlegm, coronation ale and the *De la revolution*.

It is in fact a description of a journey to salvation – Tom’s salvation by glorifying the family tradition of storytelling; Dick’s salvation by knowing his incestuous origin; Mary’s salvation by developing relationship and ability to converse with God and Price’s salvation by transforming himself from a doubt-raiser to a history lover. The salvation ceremony, which seems to be performed by St. Gunnhilda of Gildsay, finally converts Kessling Hall into East Cambridge Shire hospital.
Partly a detective story, Waterland comments upon human fate and the responsibility of every individual in the family. It also examines the role of a historical narrative exploited to compare the ‘here and now’ with the half-civilized past. It is the story of two families who are culturally rich and withstand the pressure of the cultural changes. The novel speaks of the eastern England; of a land, whose men are half ‘land’ and half ‘water’ like amphibians.

Swift, very wisely identifies the characters of history with the socio-cultural changes that occurred in England – beginning with the industrial revolution and ending with the unthinkable colours of love and unpremeditated after effects of modern technology. Though the wars are physically over, there is always a war in every mind that loves stories of stars and planets, sluice gates, eels and genitals and of the modern day schools and institutions.

The transition of water to land and vice-versa takes place very smoothly and simultaneously, it reflects the transition of the society. The cultural stage that was erected before the dawn of civilization starts falling down and finally comes to ground with a sudden stroke of war trauma. The borderlines between different countries become blurred; it functions no more as a barrier. This mixing of the borderless society slowly percolates through the silt of human relationships and consequently, the Cricks enter into the Brewery business of Atkinsons and the Atkinsons into politics. In this way, the cyclical story of Tom’s fictional autobiography makes it obligatory for all the characters to look real, trustworthy, and innocent. As it is evident in the history of civilization, wars never conclude and reach to a common consensus; they only come to a halt like a doll’s show waiting to get underway at any moment. Daniel Lea, while describing the recognition of the end as a beginning of a new story, talks about the moments of conclusion:

… Crick’s discourse is focused on three specific moments of conclusion: the end of history (in the shape of possible nuclear annihilation), the end of History as a discipline (through the convenient rationalization of the subject by his headmaster), and the end of Crick’s career. (Lea 73)
The post-modern open ending of this fictional autobiography and historiographic metafiction, tends to think about ‘now and then’. The abortion, the cold war and the teaching of history today could be easily compared and contrasted with the situation of the cold war, the abortion and history as a subject in and around the atomic explosion.

Nowadays, abortion in England is legal if performed in the first twenty-four weeks of pregnancy provided it is permitted by at least two doctors’ written permission. In 1943, abortion was illegal in Britain. Most of the illegal abortions were performed by untrained people resulting in serious injuries or deaths. The swinging sixties witnessed revolutionary changes in sex and lifestyle. This decade, famous for the emergence of hippie culture became pill culture with the introduction of new laws. The social and sexual mores of the ‘permissive’ society proved responsible for the flourishing of Pop, Rock, Rock-n-roll, Blues and Beatles in England, America and Europe.

Mary’s illegal and savagely performed abortion by Martha denotes the barbaric situation, which later on changed completely. Martha’s efforts stand for the primitive and bestial human qualities in contrast with the liberal attitude of the public and the lawmakers around 1980. The family planning act of 1947 positively developed to the contraceptive pill of 1961, divorce act of 1969 and the legislation against sexual discrimination in 1970. Because of this change, we sense the growing courage of Mary, who once passively underwent the physical and mental agonies of emptying her womb, afterwards snatched a baby from Levisham and made herself eligible for an entry into the mental institution. When Martha orders Mary to take off her drawers, we find ourselves lost into the past:

But then we’ve already stepped into a different world. The one where things come to a stop; the one where the past will go on happening. (304)

Martha’s strong supernatural powers attract the two wild and immature lovers towards her to end Mary’s pregnancy. Martha, just like the ‘half-land and half-water’ England, behaves like half-human and half-supernatural machinery. For Tom Crick, going to Martha’s house for the crude abortion is
just like escaping the hovering threat of the two world wars, the bloodshed in the French revolution and the bombing in Germany.

Judith Wilt indirectly blames Swift for his wrong projection of feminine security and the falsifying notions of social sanctity. The male protagonist’s negligence turns Mary mad to fulfill her repressed desire of having a child by snatching a baby. She even goes to the extent of proclaiming herself a true devotee who converses with God (101).

Judith Wilt considers the abortion ceremony as a sequel to the earlier two deaths - willful effort of washing hands off the sins committed:

The abortion Mary plans is both her effort to emerge from herself, from her guilty self-imprisonment, and her effort to expiate one death with another, to punish in herself the sexual curiosity that led to Dick’s murder of Freddie. It is a ritual of abasement and sacrifice which Swift’s narrative connects with her Roman Catholicism; at the crisis of the abortion, with a terrible involuntary persistence, comes the phrase from her school prayers, ‘Holy Mary, Mother of God. (Wilt 10)

Swift very skillfully creates replacements and exhibits the ongoing change as a natural phenomenon. For that matter, Mary’s Schizophrenia does not remain limited to her but becomes worldwide as if supervised by Gildsay’s St. Gunnhilda and the Grand 51 ale (Ex Aqua fermentum). ‘An avid and receptive (empty) vessel’ is the metaphor used by Swift to describe woman. It is also applicable to Tom’s emptiness after his termination from his job and Mary’s emptied womb, which leads to their emotionless marriage. Because of these developments, Mary is thoroughly transformed. She fills herself with her catholic faith and the stealing of a baby as replacement.

In 1943, the teaching of history was focused mostly on political history – the memories of the First World War and the colonial developments towards freedom. Around 1983, after the freedom to colonies, the Suez Crisis, the end of the cold war and after the disintegration of the erstwhile U.S.S.R. and Glasnost and Perestroika, the teaching of history widened. Around this time, the chief concerns of historical study were people and formerly ignored topics such as women and minorities. Though the aims of the study of history remain
the same, the outlook is completely changed. History today is once again what Price had always thought of.

Tom’s narration of history and his life story brings about a change in Price’s attitude. The onetime doubter, Price starts supporting Tom’s attitude to history and becomes his ardent fan. When Tom narrates history in the classroom, the battles, guillotines, the Nazi camps, the French revolution and the gas chambers become alive! Price the antagonist is metamorphosed into Price the Crick ally. He fearlessly stands and demands Tom’s reinstatement:

Yes, the rebel voices are stilled. Silence for Mr. Crick.
But what is this? From the centre point of the recent eruption, in the midst of the silence, comes a sudden solitary cry, strangely urgent and imperative, devoid of schoolboy insolence: ‘No Cuts! Keep Crick!’ (335)

In short, whatever Tom finds suitable in order to add to his story-telling forms a multilayered society, which indicate the cultural transformation in England and elsewhere. Swift, as novelist is always mirrored in Tom’s personality- interpreting the situations from his viewpoints. While describing the arrival of black-sailed windmills in England, Swift reaches to the international level. While portraying fens as the great flat monotony and the wide empty space of reality, Swift mixes realism, fatalism and phlegm together and builds a picture of natural happiness.

Tom’s self-transformation to adulthood, he says, took place in 1943: ‘on that July day in 1943 your juvenile history teacher ceased to be a babe’ (61). His ancestors had also undergone various transformations. The urgency of the socio-cultural need of the society to rejoice and to offer expression of their loyalty towards the monarch and his subordinates would transform into the intoxicating liquid – Coronation Ale. Whenever a king was crowned, people would fondly receive beer bottles and raise their glasses in good cheer to toast the king. The king’s subjects on such occasions hardly cared for the maddening power of the drink and its gradual outcome transforming them from sanity to the state of complete imbalance: ‘pleasure, satisfaction, well-being, elation, light headedness, hot-headedness, befuddlement, distraction, delirium,
irascibility, pugnaciousness, imbalance, incapacity – all in the gamut of a single bottle’ (171).

Finally, when the novel ends, it is curiosity, love, history and civilization, which remain permanently in the reader’s mind:

Children, there is this thing called civilization. It’s built of hopes and dreams. It’s only an idea. It’s not real…It’s built by the learning process; by trial and error. It breaks easily. No one said it couldn’t fall to bits. And no one ever said it would last forever. (336)

‘Waterland’ attests to the ‘indefatigable optimism of humankind’ (Lea 95). Knowing well the futility of the exhausting struggles and endeavors towards perfection and fulfillment, dreaming of human beings will simply go on and on.

Out of this world (1988), narrates numerous splits between understanding and feeling, between forbidden cameras and IRA bombings, between Harry, the photojournalist father and Sophie, the estranged daughter and between the pain of the war wounds and the lies spoken to hide adultery and a fake award like Victoria Cross. Published five years after Waterland, it failed to quench the heightened thirst of readers and critics. In fact, this ‘undeservedly less admired’ (Widdowson 45) novel is nevertheless a great work that portrays the traumatic wars fought inside the Hyfield house, Anna’s beautiful Greece, Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Apollo’s moon-landing and Sophie’s fragmentary confessions as expressed through the most embarrassing ejaculatory phrases.


Swift has deliberately shifted to a theme that is different from Waterland’s landscaping and rises to a higher level in Harry’s Sesna airplane to hover over the underlying sense of insecurity, frauds and lies. At the end, the novel promises a prosperous and blissful life after death and a heaven where all
the conflicts end. The facts that come alive in this novel are actually chronicled in a series of fragmentary representations; chronology loses its sequence but the facts speak of their own situations and present the amalgamation of seduction, betrayal and cultural ethos of Beech family.

Swift, through multiple vocal representatives and their confessions, unwinds the century’s geographical displacement and the cultural shifts of the Beeches – from capturing photos and grabbing sentiments to the realization of the worth of blood relationship, from winning Victoria Cross to the witnessing of man’s landing on the moon, from disbelieving and hatred for a father to the urgency to reunite and reconcile. In short, Out of the World, as a moving and painful saga and an album of memories, recreates and chronicles the wounded warriors and the ultimate conquerors of Europe.

The novel is full of war descriptions – the World Wars, Vietnam War, Falkland war and the non-verbal duels between father and his offspring. There is also a war of words in the form of the language used, dialogues spoken and the responses delivered. Robert Beech, the First World War veteran represents an element of exploitation and the sense of indecision. He emerges as an obedient Sandhurst cadet who sacrifices his one arm in order to save the life of his unconscious commander. The First World War, mostly fought on land, wins him a Victoria Cross for his courage. He, in this way, exemplifies the loyalty of British fighters to the allies. Forgetting that his wife is pregnant at home, he fires the bullets and as, obliquely suggested, tries to hide his wife’s disloyalty towards him. However, she dies leaving behind a child and a husband full of hatred for the newborn innocent. Winning Victoria Cross rubs out the memory of an infidel wife and brings a new hope in Robert’s life. Winning honour in a war proves more significant for Robert than winning the war and the confirmation of purity of the breed.

Since Swift very tactfully makes us read the novel through history, as captured through his camera (the simulacrum of reality), he succeeds in enlarging the historical scope of reality and keeping the reader busy in reconstructing the story in a linear fashion. The continuity of war stories from
the tribal life to the techno savvy second last decade of the twentieth century is brought to an equal status of animal instinct and reminds one the bronze age lifestyle in ‘church towered and village strewn’ England:

But it’s nothing new. Look at a map of Bronze Age Britain, and what would stand out most prominently? Camps, forts, defense works. What was the great invention of Bronze Age? The technology of warfare. The sword. That went out only in the last century. Strictly speaking, we’re still living in the Iron Age...

(194)

Out of This World is an attempt to present a fictional history of the twentieth century, emphasizing the dehumanization implicit in war and its contaminations: ‘All the main characters have had their emotional and moral lives atrophied by association with violence in one way or another and the novel is an account by flashbacks of that process’ (Widdowson 47). The war in Shuttlecock is presented to the readers through Swift’s narrative strategy of creating novel within the novel whereas Out of this World depends on the photographs taken by Harry. Harry’s two collections of photographs, Aftermaths and Decades portray the armed conflicts of the world. A war completely erases the history by recklessly destructing the lifestyle. Nuremberg was reduced to a heap of sand and though it was rebuilt with great urge and efforts, the newly built Nuremberg was never the same.

Though Harry never actually takes part in fighting, he functions as a detached photographer of the Nazi trials and the after effects of war. His first person narration makes his war experiences more intensely felt than the war descriptions we come across in The Sweet Shop Owner, Shuttlecock and Waterland. Harry’s tender heart, which even craves for those cruel perpetrators of the Holocaust, is seen through his most humane act of calling them as a tortured lot and wishes to forgive them:

But I didn’t find monsters. I found this collection of dull, nondescript, head phoned men, thin and pale from months in prison, with the faces of people in waiting rooms or people co-opted into some tedious, routine task. (101)
Harry is not the only person in this novel to experience war and its aftermath. His father Robert, daughter Sophie, wife Anna and his son-in-law Joe have various indirect experiences. Anna lived through the devastation of Greece in World War II and witnessed the hardened souls of the war hating Greeks and the tourists, who, neglecting every small coup, enjoyed their package tours. As Daniel Lea has pointed out, the novel is prefaced by the date ‘April 1982’, which indicates the commencement of the Falkland war (102). The war was fought for the media in the same way as the moon landing of 1969, which was organized for the photographs of the astronauts and the U.S. politicians – later on acting as the simulacrum of reality. Lea further stresses upon the fragmentary confessions of Sophie and Harry and its utilization to suggest the restlessness of the traumatic minds:

The novel is structured around a succession of repressed traumas that become apparent as Harry and Sophie’s narratives are able to accommodate them. (Lea 103)

The exemplification of what the simulacrum does illustrates the presence of postmodern elements in the novel. That is why the Falkland war becomes an exhibition, which witnessed along with the actual fighters, a small battalion of camera crews and reporters to capture them alive and paint them with some additional colours of fantasy and superhuman qualities. Every war fought for the security and pride of England has become the symbol of self-liberation and self-sacrifice. All the great fighters are considered with glee as war heroes. So too, Robert – when he meets an unfortunate death in the IRA car bombing. His death then does not simply remain a story of a separatists’ attack; it becomes a nation’s story and Robert’s death is termed as a death of a war hero.

Harry’s camera records everything, every little fact – however trivial it may seem to human eyes and ears. Harry’s obsession for camera and photography is due to his evergreen wish to liberate and create another world of reality to replace the existing one. He enjoys the simulacrum of reality and so instead of helping Robert in the bombing event, he runs for his camera and is hopeful of permanently capturing the moment of a war hero’s death.
Just like Swift’s other characters, Harry also seems to be distrustful of happiness. As if living on a cursed planet, in search of enlightenment and liberation, he moves forward in the hope of absolution but what he faces and comes across is disillusionment. The estranged relationship between Harry and Sophie is due to her disliking for Harry’s overuse and over involvement in virtual reality as posed by camera. Harry nevertheless boasts of his happiness and surprises the readers. It is more like a sense of complacency for being capable of hiding Robert’s actual heroic deeds on the battlefield, and for forgetting what his wife Anna had done with Frank.

Harry’s inner eye is always open and watchful. He analyses the cultural past of England and the present of socio-cultural conflicts – racial, class and gender, like a stoic and finally relies on the reality that he successfully captures through the camera eye. He clinically traverses the past where he has the Hyfield house built in 1709 and bought by Robert in 1723. He vividly records his birth in 1918, and the sad demise of his mother. Like Irene in The Sweet Shop Owner, he commemorates his birth as a war child. He also puts on record the suicidal event in Robert’s life and his first flight with him in 1928. When Frank joins BMC as Robert’s surrogate son, he joins RAF as an aerial war photographer to cover destruction of German cities and the Nazi war trials. He meets Anna; the beautiful ‘walking wounded’ lady who readily falls in love with him and without any grudge says good-bye to the culturally rich Greece.

Finally, when in 1953, Anna’s plans to visit her uncle Spiro proves disastrous – her plane crashes on Mount Olympus- Sophie stays with Robert and Harry starts flying to the far corners of the world. In 1969, he is back from Vietnam and after three years, he witnesses his father’s murder and Sophie’s betrayal – she prefers going to U.S.A. with Joe. It is, when Harry gives up war photography and becomes a peacetime aerial photographer of prehistoric monuments, he regains his happiness in the tender arms of the twenty-three year old Jenny.

Swift’s idea to show two epoch-making events taking place in the same year – that of coronation of Queen Elizabeth-II and Anna and Frank’s secret
copulation in 1953 alters everything. Anna wants to save her family by willing to undergo an abortion and Joe prefers watching on TV the Coronation ceremony. Anna is anxious to remove the physical reality permanently from her womb and Joe prefers watching ‘simulacrum’ of the greatest moment of Queen’s coronation.

Back from Dau Tieng, Tay Ninh, and Saigon, Harry enjoys the celebrity status of a camera operator but after watching the live coverage of the moon-mission, he starts reconsidering the worth of photography as a mission:

The camera first, then the event. The whole world is waiting just to get turned into film. And not just the world but the goddam moon as well... They say that afterwards, after they got back to earth, some of those astronauts, some of those Apollo pioneers got religion. (13)

Recalling his schooldays in Hampshire, Harry throws light on the schooling in England and his sense of being a rootless plant; loving neither the school nor his home: ‘This is the only place you belong – this transit region, this in-betweens (121).

Lost in the glory of Anna’s love, Harry imagines himself dancing with her in Nuremberg and playing the roles of a pianist, a drummer, a guitarist and a trombonist. Anna’s so called frigidity as experienced by Harry, exemplifies the transformation of romantic Greeks to cold and dumb creatures due to the aftermath of the war. Anna’s Greece, before and during the Second World War, is far more culturally rich and varied as compared to Sophie’s England, which is more energetic and charismatic than her chaotic Brooklyn.

Swift’s Out of the World travels a long distance from England to the U.S., Germany and Greece, and ultimately merges them with England’s cultural past and present. Swift’s next novel has a suggestive title Ever After, which indicates a happy conclusion of a traditional story – they lived happily ever after. It was published in 1992, at a time when conservative activist John Major headed English parliament. Swift carried on the same theme of ‘repetition of history and the complex and repeating family patterns’ (Mantel 23). The novel is also concerned with the sins of one generation visited on the next and a series of failures and suicides.
The four years after *Out of this World* witnessed major influential incidents in the socio-political history of the world. The fall of Berlin wall, which ended communism in East Germany, was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of inspired Chinese youngsters at Tianmen Square. The cold war between the U.S. and the erstwhile U.S.S.R. ended and the world carefully and cautiously surveyed the implementation of Perestroika and Glasnost. The capital of England witnessed the mass demonstrations against the poll tax and the Gulf war in which British and American forces took one-sided action against Saddam Hussein. The end of apartheid in South Africa and the launching of the World Wide Web confirmed scientific progress and the sense of unity.

One suicide survivor, Bill Unwin, defines *Ever After*, as a story within a story. Bill jumps back into the past of the Victorian England, her rectory and the cultural conflict, notions of geology, construction and life sciences. It is also a novel of love and death and the development of rational thinking amongst the disciples of Brunel, Lyell and Charles Darwin. War and its aftermath, as usual, is present in this generational journey of Bill towards a happy ending, a sense of complacency, self justification and a guiltless life to live happily ever after.

War, which teaches human beings the lessons of co-operative relationship and the need to forget the animosity in order to survive, has been co-related with the war of minds and its dualism. That is why the novel proves to be a valuable document not only of man’s superiority as a thinking animal but also a record of the lifestyles and conflicts and clashes between the rich and the poor, males and females, black, browns and whites, civilized and uncivilized, developed and underdeveloped, and urban and rural.

The established notion of emotionally tied couple’s mutual understanding and support slowly starts cracking from the very first day of their union of souls. The pills used by one of them symbolize a revolt and the need to amend the existing marriage laws to make divorces easily possible shows the opportunism and a chance to start again a new life. The war, then,
does not remain limited to the battlefield and borders only; it moves with the smoothness of a panther to the field of education. As Bill suggests, the so-called scholarship of Michael Potter is anxious to prove a researcher’s worth and glorify the reformers like Matthews, Brunel, Lyell and Darwin. The war as a historical fact, in this novel, results into suicides, adultery, cancers, orphans and infertility.

Bill Unwin’s name itself denotes un-win attitude of an unfortunate middle aged, self-proclaimed mediocre academician, who knows only to succumb, submit and surrender and never to win by hook or crook. The credit goes to Bill’s parentage and his upbringing. When tired of submission and its futility and the loss of pride, he decides to act bravely by over-eating the sleeping pills – but, here too destiny does not allow him an easy escape. Bill’s suffering, in this way, seems to be the summation of Chapman’s broken back and Angina Pectoris, Prentis’ search for his father’s patriotism, Crick’s worthless struggle to elevate ‘history’ as a subject and Harry’s occasional flights to achieve the state of enlightenment.

Daniel Lea describes Bill Unwin as ‘the hopelessly ineffectual male protagonist destined by his own mediocrity, a life of frustrating obsolescence in the shadows cast by others agency [who] searches for a meaning to his life that can accommodate his failure to live it’ (Lea 29). The life story of Matthew Pearce, the great-great-grandfather of Bill, forces the readers to move back to the 19th century Victorian England and to realize the worth of his reformative and rational thoughts over the evolution of man, and the absolute power of God as the creator and preservator of the universe. To Matthew’s bad luck, the motto inscribed on his family clock- ‘Amar Vincit Omnia’ (love conquers all)-proves ineffectual. When his truth seeking expedition perishes into the sea falsifying the all time great motto of Bill’s university – ‘Qui quaerit invenit’ (He who seeks it, finds it). However, the urge of human mind to believe in the disbelief still goes on and on despite academic corruptions, religious tortures and power dynamics.
Matthew’s parents were a combination of Methodist persuasion and Anglican ideology, which transmitted to Matthew the sense of self-reliance, conscientiousness and willingness to self-improvement. After his mother’s sudden death, Bible remained for Matthew the only means of consolation. However, unfortunately, when Felix, his two-year-old son dies, he forgets the Bible. Matthew had come face to face with an ichthyosaur, on the cliffs of Dorset in the summer of 1844 at the age of twenty-five and had kept it carefully like an unresolved riddle in his memory box. That was a point of transformation in the life of God fearing and scripture loving Matthew: ‘The moment of my unbelief. The beginning of my make-belief…’ (101).

This life changing experience of watching a fossilized ichthyosaurs and staring with a questioning mind into the eyes of that monster altered Matthew thoroughly. All goes well until he and Elizabeth bore four children and till 1854, when his two-year-old son Felix (happiness) is alive. As a surveyor, Matthew’s calculating mind observes the globe as an ever-changing entity. His ‘Scriptural’ bridges are disrupted when he meets the Victorian Engineer Brunel and reads Charles Lyell’s Elements of Geology, which proclaimed to have established the great age of the earth and meditates on Charles Darwin’s Journal and Origin of the Species. The transformation of Matthew, which resulted from his seduction by rationality and scientific methodology, unbelief and exploration of the universe, uplifts him to a level of superiority only to disturb his family life and create a rift to demolish the interpersonal relationship.

George Hunt, the Rector in the mask of spiritual scholarship could not resolve Matthew’s dilemma, could not satisfy him with appropriate phrases and contrary to what was expected from him, declared Matthew a blasphemous rogue:

Whereupon the rector cried, with a face that seemed to take even him by surprise, “Damn you Darwin! Damn your detestable Darwin … (181)
This philosophical debate turns catastrophic which sends Elizabeth back to Rectory permanently and in this way, her fifteen-year long marriage suddenly ends. Finally, misunderstood by all, Matthew goes on a voyage and perishes into the sea leaving behind the notebooks written by him during those six (1854-60) tumultus years of exploration and truth seeking.

Bill Unwin, like his previous ‘children of violence’, is born in the village of Aldermaston in Berkshire, later to become the home of the British Atomic Weapons Research Establishment. The place of Bill’s birth is quite suggestive of the forthcoming post-war trauma that he and his family have to suffer. The Second World War as the key formative event of the later twentieth century damages everybody with the constant threat of atomic explosions. Bill’s parents were living a happy life – a perfect combination of the first world war veteran and a talented singer who never turned her gift into a career.

Sylvia was a perfect bride, a pretty adornment to Col. Unwin’s career advancement, seniority, authority and self-esteem. Their union remained intact and envious till she sang, turning him from protector to worshipper. It is after many years, when Uncle Sam reveals the secret of Bill as an engine driver’s son (already killed in the war), Sylvia’s affair with a railway engine driver (the mid-1930s) is once again discussed just to disturb Bill mentally. His brave father’s image disappears in front of him and an engine driver tries to replace the void. The last pre-atomic day, i.e. August 5, 1945 is permanently marked in the memory box of Bill. On this particular day, Sylvia and Bob have a birthday tea in Aldermaston – the day before the first atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and after three days on Nagasaki to prove that America, Washington’s America, really existed on the map of the world!

The reason behind Colonel Unwin’s suicide – whether because he knew Sylvia’s affair with the engine driver, or because of his ‘mysterious duties’, remains unknown. As usual for Swiftian heroes, Bill’s anxiety to know ‘what really happened’ is satisfied by Sam’s revelation of the secret ‘paternity’ of Bill. However, actually, Bill could never know whose son he was.
The marriage of Sylvia with Uncle Sam, a polymer and nylon business tycoon leaves Bill once again isolated and alienated. He could easily digest his father’s suicide by recalling the lustful memories of Parisian beauties like Yvette, Simone and Michelle, their delicious and seductive names and their beautiful limbs. Though resentful, Bill did not react because ‘the hypocrite and the coward in [him] stopped [his] tongue’ (60). May be because he was a slow burner and a long-term investor of emotions, he mutely dubbed Sam as a perpetual juvenile and openly praised him for his business tactics.

The valuable diary of Matthew suddenly gains much more importance than was expected. Michael Potter, who worked as a professional historian and telly-don at Bill’s College is an imposter and stands as the ‘simulacrum’ of the real historian. His exploitation of Katherine and a research student, Gabriella, is enough to prove his crooked nature and his love for name and fame. Though Potter’s special field of study is ‘Victorian Idealism and Victorian Doubt’, he hardly struggles to work on it; on the contrary, he tries to offer his lady to Bill as a ‘substitute’ to Ruth and persuades him to hand over the notes to him.

In this way, Bill Unwin proves to be superior to Matthew Pearce for he saves himself from the troubles that devastated Matthew. It was because Matthew refused to accept the illusions and consequently, left for America in search of a New World, leaving behind his wife, children, home, work and nation. However, at every stage Matthew understood that the desire to know the truth was tearing him away from those he loved, he could not control the knowledge lust (Levenson 38). Opposite of this is Bill’s twentieth century commercial, attitude of following the set notions of moral behaviour; he readily transfers the notes to Michael in a fine, edited form. He chooses his blind love for his dead wife Ruth and permits himself love her fading image.

Swift is normally fond of portraying the middle-class environment in his novels. In Last Orders, he deliberately chooses to represent a social milieu by narrating the life stories and inter-relationship of a retired insurance clerk (Ray), a grocer (Lenny), an undertaker (Vic), a car salesperson (Vince) and a butcher (Jack) – all of them inhabitants of upper lower class of Bermondsey.
For a while, Swift has bid adieu to his earlier educated and highly articulate middle class protagonists like Chapman – the Sweet Shop owner, Prentis – an archivist, Tom – a history teacher, Harry, a photojournalist and Bill – the innocent university don.

The story goes back to the recent past, around 1980-90 and from then on, while moving in a Mercedes, travels frequently back and forth. As usual, Swift covers the period of two world wars and the post-war socio-cultural change that took place beginning with the swinging Sixties to the end of the cold war. Around this time, John Major’s England faced the wrath of IRA bombings at central Manchester. The Anglo-Irish joint Declaration of Peace of 1993 proved meaningless. Swift maneuvers to avoid these issues of socio-political unrest, solely concentrates upon the glorification of friendship, and brings together a host of partakers, from different professions and family backgrounds. The social milieu proved more readable and outstanding than Doyle’s *The Woman who walked into Doors* (1996) and Ravenhill’s *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) and conferred on him a long awaited recognition.

It is a story of a group of old friends and their journey from London (Bermondsey) to Margate Pier arranged deliberately (except the detours) to scatter off the ashes of their deceased friend, Jack. This multiple-first person narrative tells a story of transformations of human minds, which are busy in honoring friendship of a dead man. *Last Orders* has seven prominent voices, five male and two female- six alive and one dead. The dead voice is that of Jack Dodds who wanted to settle permanently at Margate Pier. With his death, start the festivities of his final rites, which reduce the pain of June’s disability, Vince’s alienation, Amy’s revengeful guilt, Sally’s abortion, Katherine’s exploitation by her father and Vic’s unfortunate, unclean but still devotedly carried undertaker’s job. Widdowson terms it as a novel of flashbacks which acts as a kind of historical explanation for the current circumstances of its characters (48).

The family in this novel is a combination of all the males and females that are present in the story – Amy, Mandy, Katherine, Ray, Vic, Lenny, Vince,
June, Suzie, Sally, Joan, Carol, Daisy, Pam and Barry Stokes. Swift freely talks about their jobs, the pub, their memories and their affairs. All the members and their typical fantasies belong to the cultural ideology of 1980’s Bermondsey:

The Bermondsey of Last Orders is a wonderfully dense little world, an extended family home made up of the things its inhabitants remember or cannot forget from a mundane object like a clock above the bar to a war-time visit to a whorehouse in Cairo…” (Poole, Review)

The physical union of Jack and Amy, while hop picking at Wick’s farm in Kent, results into a retarded daughter and further results into a permanent distancing between them. Amy, for the next fifty years, strives hard to bring June back to normalcy and to show the world what she can do. However, her honest efforts bear no fruits and June is still lying in the mental hospital – even on her fiftieth birthday. One of the major institutionalized silent women of Swift, June, never speaks a word of hope. Amy, who is left alone to visit and help June tries to put herself in June’s place in order to understand her well and console herself in this queer act of substitution. What saddens her is Jack’s act of negligence and her own helplessness. As if it was really the fault of Amy, Jack shamelessly suggests: ‘…best thing we can do, Amy, is forget all about her’ (Swift, Last Orders 253).

Fortunate for getting a shelter, Vince is adopted by Jack and Amy and is saved from becoming an institutionalized man. Evacuated and brought up safely by the Dodds, he represented the war babies and the victims of post-war ideology of the new generation of England. The union of Jack and Amy and June’s unfortunate birth takes place during the Second World War; war once again becomes a determinate factor in shaping the lives of the main characters. Amy hopes that the war may bring the three together but to her shock, it drives Jack away far from her to the unknown regions of Africa’s El Alamein. Vic, on the other hand, serves in the war as an undertaker and while cleaning up the wounds of the dead soldiers performs his family job of serving the dead with no thanks in return.

Even Vince, whose home and parents were destroyed by doodlebugs (German flying bombs) and who was later on adopted by Amy in the absence
of Jack, couldn’t be accepted by Jack as a substitute. Because of this, Vince denies joining Jack’s profession. Vince, yet another child of war, damages the chastity of Sally by impregnating and leaving her behind at the mercy of God – adding one more institutionalized woman to Swift’s fictional community.

Ray, though a victorious fighter in the African desert, is unable to continue his winning habit and ends up an unfortunate father and a mercilessly abandoned husband. His daughter Suzie has left for Australia and has lost contact with him for the last twenty-five years. Carol, Ray’s wife, follows her footsteps and moves to Australia to stay with one Mr. Barry Stokes. Ray’s fourteen-week affair with Amy brings his energy of bygone days back to him, but finally Amy as Carol’s substitute does not stay with him permanently. Vince’s troubles come to end with his marriage to Mandy but he sees his own moral and ethical death with his living eyes when he uses his own daughter Katherine as a bait to sell a car to an Arab client-’There goes Vince Dodds who pimps for his own daughter’(168).

Sally has also been engaged in prostitution – as a reaction to her forceful abortion by her father and her desertion by the damaged child of war, Vince. The plans of Lenny, Ray and Vince to make reconciliation with their estranged daughters remain a distant dream of the war casualty. It is only Vic, the undertaker, whose sons are around forty and who have successfully run their ancestor’s profession. He is having better relations with his sons. In spite of total silence on the issue of family business, he still mourns the fact that his ‘passing on’ of the undertaker’s job to his sons has displeased him for it is not a prestigious job:

> It’s not a trade many will choose. You have to be raised to it, father to son. It runs in a family, like death itself runs in the human race… (78)

The authoritarian absence of Jack unconsciously reveals all the mysteries and secrets so far kept deliberately hidden from each other. The novel in this way, declares, the final ceremony of chucking the ashes at the Margate pier as an example of the catharsis of the group and the individuals. Swift has very powerfully made the ‘absence’ of Jack as a matter of ‘presence’
and the dead body (corpse) comes back as a social and spiritual force. Jack’s absence is also responsible to glorify Hussein as an oriental encroachment and the intermittent, colourful snap-shots of the self-appeasing, freedom loving hippies, Gypsies and Beatles.

The mobility of the friends, as a sign of transformation, from Bermondsey to old Kent Road - Black Heath - Dartford - Graves End - Rochester - Chatham - Wick’s farm - Canterbury Cathedral to Margate works as a symbol of change and loyalty to the deceased friend. The sense of responsibility among the friends also indicates a change. The journey organized and performed by Amy’s support was actually imaginatively seen by her in the fast galloping caravans of the gypsies:

> The gypsies came with their caravans and horses, needing the hopping just like us, but made their camp separately, over by the wood, eyeing us like we were the ones who’d pitched up where we shouldn’t, and I used to envy them. (235)

> ‘When a door opens, you enter someone else’s life’(23), precisely declares the theme of Swift’s next novel, The Light of Day (2003), which moves forward without any conspicuous surprises or revelations but simply unwinds a domestic tragedy. Published in 2003, the novel has many modern day techniques of expressions that joyfully justify the murder of a lewd husband and mistaken identity of an alienated young blonde-haired woman. It was a time when England was still feeling hot due to 9/11 attacks.

The literary world welcomed the literary outputs like McEwan’s Atonement, Rushdie’s Fury and Monica Ali’s Brick Lane which in general might have supplied some stuff to Swift’s ideology: the ability to say quite a lot in a few … [and] simple words (Birnbaum 5). The military invasion of Iraq by US and British forces appears in the novel in the form of the civil war in Yugoslavia – Serbs and Croats at war, and thousands of refugees seeking political asylum in England.

The cultural past and present, that the characters roam in, mostly covers three decades preceding ‘the present’ of the novel, and witnesses the
contemporary ways of juxtaposing the ‘Here and Now’ with the ‘Then’. This murder and mystery thriller slowly unwinds the story, which goes back to the day before two years, when Sarah, a lecturer by profession, impulsively kills her husband. Later on George Webb, a police officer turned ‘matrimonial’ detective is entangled in the complex web of platonic love. The cultural transformation is evident in the setting of the novel- the professions of the characters, inter-relationships, marriages, expulsion from a job, divorce, various fetishes (Knee watching), and obsession for redemptive love, lesbianism and cookery.

Every character that undergoes a transformation faces dilemma of morality and ethics on one side and ‘carpe diem’ lifestyle on the other. Sarah’s long and secure married life shatters into pieces with her sudden violent behaviour of stabbing Bob. George, who unconsciously breaks the law of his profession (be detached!) falls prey to his fanciful love and the idea of romancing in a dreamland. He transforms and learns to look at the world in the same way as Kristiana does while returning to her homeland. Infidelity and its after effects, just like the atomic war of 6th and 9th August, 1945, plays a vital role in transforming the simple lives of South Londoners- converting golf course into a brothel, an investigation into obsession, gynaecology into forensic science, Serbs into Croats, Rita into Rachel and alien Helen into an amusing food lover.

The Light of Day pulls everybody out of the dark world – the world of clashes and conflicts and seductions and betrayals. The professions the characters adapt to and the places where they play their roles along with the occasional visits to jail, a crematorium and the golf course form an amalgamation of various insoluble elements poured into the all-absorbing solvent of culture. When in love with Sarah, George instantly forgets his police life and his wife, Rachel and willingly turns deaf to Sarah’s job of teaching. In short, both the female teachers seem to be responsible to exploit the simplicity and forgetfulness of George.
The burning flames of the swinging sixties have almost extinguished around the eighties – now lovers have learnt to sacrifice ‘the smoldering combustion’ of their androecium and gynoecium. Sarah stresses on the changed definition of love: ‘Am I making sense, George? To love is to be ready to lose … It’s to put someone else’s happiness before yours’ (69). George meets Rachel for the first time in April 1968 and his father Frank dies in the same year. Since there is a great deal of ‘not knowing’ in George’s story, like - did Frank love Carol? Did Sarah exploit George? Why did Sarah kill Bob? Will George and Sarah meet in future and will they live happily ever after?-nobody doubts anybody’s death. George’s unattainable love for Sarah transforms into his firm bond with his daughter Helen. He exploits Helen as a means of listening to his guilt

The twenty-four year old marriage of Sarah and Bob start shaking with the arrival of Kristiana. The outcome of a civil war, she brings lethal weapons with her; first deranges Sarah’s quiet life and second, disrupts Bob’s image as a dutiful and obedient husband. Though Kristiana is saved from going to asylum and getting lost in alleys of war-torn Serbia, she hypnotizes Bob and for the next two years, remains merely an element of seduction. Eventually, Bob’s confession is guarded by Sarah’s motherly love and her concession crosses the limit to make her forget who she is. Sarah kills Bob without any prior hint and does not give him a second chance to attack or say sorry. If he was a war child, Kristiana was essentially a displaced person. If he belonged to post-world war prosperity in Wimbledon, she belonged to the bitter hostility between Serbs and Croats.

In fact, Sarah and George knew it well that their own England, full of disloyalty and corruption, was no better place than Croatia and Serbia. The lurking menace of bestiality and jealousy was covered up by the polished words like civilization – ‘Where there were golf courses there was civilization and where there was civilization there were golf courses’ (236). Not George alone, but Bob, Sarah, Rachel and Kristiana, too, are caught in the false social web of civilization and struggle to come out of it. George does it by watching
her passion, Sarah does it by her concession, Bob does it by Kristiana’s renunciation and Kristiana tries to do it by her submission – her sexual exploitation. It clearly shows that though the great wars have reached to an end, the wars at home are yet to reach to a proper treaty and reconciliation.

Swift’s usual glorification and portrayal of the ‘murky lines of lower middle class England’ (Widdowson 100) is evident in this novel. Despising the fast growing suburbs lacking cleanliness and healthy environment, George goes to his parent’s past and laments the loss of peace, spaciousness and beauty of the bygone days. Thus he negates all the positive outcomes of the scientific innovations and telegraphic communication- ‘First there’d been a village among the fields, then a suburb, with a high street and a golf course, but before all that there’d been the caves’ (100).

A different world in a different age of Napoleon and Eugenie looked more peaceful and cultured for George than the modern empire of suburbia where love becomes war and cooking becomes a substitute for love; where a well-equipped tanning centre inverts reality by adding beauty effects and glowing charms to the dull faces. Though apparently, Swift seems to be mimicking the style of ‘one day in the life of’ – James Joyce’s Ulysses and Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway, he shows closeness to McEwan’s Saturday. The modern day lover, who loves roaming into future and willing to ignore the past, is successfully epitomized in George.

Tomorrow (2007) discusses intimate experience of procreation and growing up. A slow and gradual process of transformation is narrated through Paula’s first person female experiences. A male Swift plays the writerly role of a woman and speaks out her thoughts.

It is June 1995; Paula the mother of Nick and Kate is the only ‘awaken’ member meditating on what will happen tomorrow. The quiet small hours of a Saturday morning are loaded with her backward journey to the couple’s parentage, the Second World War, the swinging sixties and the permissible behaviour, her love affair - pillow talking, marriage and expected pregnancy. Her extended pregnancy, however denied by the natural process, turns into
reality with the modern scientific method of fertilization. Boys grow up and finally, the day has come — their sixteenth birthday — when they would have to face the news of the betrayal of their parents. The ‘genuine family happiness’ (Brownjohn, Review) is in danger now — what will happen tomorrow?

Paula seems to have forgotten the Swiftian dictum — ‘what eyes see not, the heart rues not’ or ‘sometimes it is better not to know’, so she is anxious to reveal the secret of her motherhood to her children and achieve catharsis by purgation of her guilt. What she muses about creates a picture of happy England of Hippies, Blues and Rocks and she is lost in the memories of the Swinging sixties, the freedom of sex and the availability of sex pills. Though they are war babies, they are not at war when the problem of his low sperms arise — she wants a baby and he surrenders — readily accepts her ‘demon’ lover Mr. S. For Paula, the holocaust and the ‘walking wounded’ community of Harry’s Anna in Out of the world proves to be less important than the industrial revolution and the structure of DNA:

We were born in the historic year of 1945, when a lot of big things happened, but … the biggest thing to have happened this century was a quiet little event that occurred in a laboratory: the discovery of the structure of DNA. (156)

While narrating Paula’s feelings about marriage (‘Marry me! Marry me!’) (78), Swift gives her a chance to tease Mike and get transformed her body into a womb, her mind into a genetalia and her excitement into an unforgettable curiosity to solve the mystery of the Mysterious! That is why perhaps, she thinks, men propose and women undergo a sea change — by changing names, homes settlements and customs. The sex and its thrill that Paula happily witnessed in 1966, has become a common routine thing in 1995 — at a time when girls always carry ‘a traditional standby: the packet of three’ (12). She warns, though inaudible to Nick and Kate’s ears, why rush into something so patently available? ‘A sort of sex-fatigue before it’s even started’ (12).

Although it is true that the family will not break because of a single misconception, Paula wants Mike to be approved as a biological father by her
sons. She wants a successful conclusion to her act of disclosure and revelation. This novel, in short, depicts in a single ‘monologue’ narrative, the plight of a girl, a mother and a wife waiting for a ‘deed’ of acceptance from her twins, the society and God as well.

Ian McEwan’s first novel The Cement Garden (1978) is an upward growth of the incestuous decline of a family of orphaned children. It hints at the urban alienation and the insecure, disturbed mental landscape of post-modern children of England who turn to privacy, secrecy and egocentricism in order to rebuild a virtual family and avoid outside intrusion. Written in a spine-tingling style, The Cement Garden looks like an extended form of his short stories, First Love, Last Rites (1975) and In Between the Sheets (1978). Both are full of disturbing tales of sexual aberrance, black comedy and ‘macabre’ obsession. His first two novels The Cement Garden and The Comfort of Strangers, which depict four children’s descent into bestiality and a grisly murder in Venice, earned him an unwelcome nickname ‘Ian Macabre’. It went on until the publication of The Child in Time (1987), which examines the disastrous effects of a child’s kidnapping, on its parents.

McEwan has successfully kept himself at a distance from the world of bereaved children and their small adulthoods. What he does in the novel is that he laments over the society’s inability to train and transform their infantile ways into the moral and rational perfection of ‘regulated childhood’ (Williams 1). The novel disturbs a common reader for its portrayal of something appalling, sinister and heinous which is generally considered beyond a sane man’s imagination – totally opposite and contradictory to Rousseau’s idea of original innocence of children:

Nature wants children to be children before they are men... Childhood has ways of seeking, thinking and feeling peculiar to itself: nothing can be more foolish than to substitute our ways for them... Why fill with bitterness and sorrow their first swift years which will never return for them any more than they can return for you? (Williams, 212)
The four unfortunate children Jack, Julie, Susan and Tom are similar to the characters portrayed by Charles Dickens. In the Dickensian Victorian world, we come across children like Oliver Twist, Paul Dombey, Little Nell, Pip and David Copperfield, who are ‘sentimentalized and heavily tinged with Pathos’ (Williams 213). Jack and company, too, like those children, enter the thorny wilderness of so-called humanity and the ‘golden gates of childhood are forever closed behind them’ (Williams 213). The Cement Garden, in this way, does not merely remain a children’s story; it indirectly comments on the ‘innocent’ world of children where they want bliss and bliss only and do not wish to accept the reality of the grown-up world and its laws, rules and regulations, inhibitions and taboos, and their constant run towards undue material fulfillment.

McEwan very wisely, by portraying the outside world of Derek and the law enforcement machinery as empty, insipid and hollow circle of prohibitions, paints the childish wish of a carefree life lacking the worldly restrictions and orderliness. The prevalent culture that emerges through this story narrated by a child hero is evident in the behavioural patterns like role playing, curious questioning about body parts, the process of sexual reproduction and innocent transformational acts like transvestism, voyeurism and the freedom of enjoying ‘the absence of cultural and historical reference points’ (Williams 220). It is also evident in the form of urban alienation, the confused mental world of children and the emotional deadness of the characters who become ‘specimens [and] bodies rather than complete people’ (Harris, Review).

The novel opens with Jack’s feelings of reluctant guilt towards his father’s death. Though he says he has not killed his father but continuously feels that the death has been coincided with his own physical growth. McEwan shifts the role of a father to Jack and afterwards, that of the mother to Julie. Everything is seen from the viewpoint of Jack, so what comes to us about the parents and the siblings is his own creation. As a narrator, though the author seems to be standing at a long distance, he is always present in Jack’s mind – while watching the rotten corpse of the mother, while applying lotions to
Julie’s soft skin, while playing Mummy-Daddy games, while examining Sue’s genitals and while observing Tom’s liking for female dresses.

Jack’s narrative slowly reveals the relationship between his parents, his house and the surroundings. This family of four plus two, uncommon in every respect, is shown as living on the decayed outskirts of an unnamed British city.

…McEwan creates the notion of dysfunction and shared mental distress as he puts each child under the unnaturally intense microscope of which Jack is the lens. (Ambler 2)

Jack, as one of the members of his dysfunctional family, gets annoyed when his mother opposes his father’s decision of cementing the garden. Though the adamant and haughty dominating male is all set to change the garden landscape thoroughly, his wife resists, as she seems to have resisted all her life and brings his heart attack quite earlier than expected: ‘That night my parents argued over the bags of cement. My mother, who was a quiet sort of person, was furious. She wanted my father to send the whole lot back’ (10).

Jack’s mother wrongly considers herself a woman of wit and responsible for looking after the needs of her siblings.

Jack’s description of his father’s death which nobody openly mourns and after which nobody visits the house in order to comfort the family is itself an indication of their social and physical dissociation from a decaying and desolate cityscape. Jack’s family house represents the decaying atmosphere symbolizing nothingness and all but Derek knows well that nothing comes out of nothing. The family house where the only people to visit were the ambulance men who took Jack’s father away, looks like a castle – still carrying on its shoulder the cultural past of empirical England.This traditional house, though isolated and crowded by members alienated from the society, is replete with running jokes in the family, initiated and maintained by Jack’s father:

…against Sue for having almost invisible eyebrows and lashes, against Julie for her ambitions to be a famous athlete, against Tom for pissing in his bed sometimes, against mother for being poor at arithmetic and against [Jack] for [his] pimples which were just starting up at that time. (15)
In the course of time, neither Jack nor other children grieve for father’s death or mother’s cement burial. Jack is friendless and self-centered, later on believes in self-abuse – resorting to masturbation and spoiling the colorless liquid, which is assumed to bear the power of manliness.

Jack forgets what his mother had told him about the process of growing up- ‘Every time… you do that, it takes two pints of blood to replace it’ (29). His attraction towards a female body goes on increasing and he starts looking at his sister’s body parts with a microscopic vision of a Scientist. Jack’s voyeuristic attitude makes him dream during daytime and his strong wish to spy on his sisters, to be with them and be invisible develops into an abnormality from the modern day morality point of view. Julie, who has giant arms and beautiful legs seduces him and he, unknowingly betrays his own self - ‘Her Knickers showed a brilliant white against the pale brown skin of her legs and … a few black hairs curled out from the white crotch’ (38). It goes on and on until their final incestual bout takes place. Nick Ambler describes the act of incest as a sort of catharsis:

… his final incestuous act with his sister is a perverted catharsis of his pent-up and confused anxieties in a world where an unnatural nest of bereaved children construct their own subjective normality. (Ambler 3)

The act of incest between Jack and Julie makes them remain absorbed in each other’s body and proceed to make love and remain indifferent to the arrival of the forces of law and the thuds of hammer in the basement. Derek declares the destruction of the children’s suburban bower of bliss and summons the police into the house. The small family of Jack, Julie, Sue and Tom is distracted. It leaves Tom’s wishes to be a girl unfulfilled and Susan’s science stories half read. Byrnes considers the act of incest as a victorious battle of two allied forces against an outsider. It can be seen as ‘an attempt to keep their parents alive by becoming them and joining forces against the outsider’ (Byrnes 132) and nothing more than a need to love and share.

Though all these children try to erase the memory of their parents, both of them always remain present in spite of their permanent absence just like
Commander Hunt’s Cosmo and Jack’s nightmares. However, the freedom that Jack and company realize after their parents’ departure is an indication of the modern day ideology, which shows the broken family system in the flourishing skyscrapers in the urban settlements.

There are various transformations in the novel; their mother’s transformation into a tombstone which her dead body protests against, Tom’s dressing as a girl for the sake of security, Julie’s transformation into a mother and wife and Jack’s role playing as the dominating father. All the children want to avoid orphanage, restrictions and contacts with the war-torn, savage and barren cityscape. The fear of outsiders become more acute and disturbing when Derek tries to become the supporter of the family; he is denied his new role –new transformation. To conclude, Ian McEwan paints like an artist the anonymous derelict urban development, sadness of the unfortunate children’s fate and the hidden urge of humanity to transform from A to B or B to A in the contemporary world of semi-science mindset.

McEwan’s next novel, The Comfort of Strangers, narrates Colin and Mary’s journey from innocence to maturity and from friendship to separation. McEwan, in this compact narrative, comments on the changing socio-cultural values of a minor (sexually abnormal and mentally disorganized) class of society, which is, necessarily ever present, but for the fear of breaking well established social norms is kept hidden forever. The morality of existing churchmen, diplomats and the orthodox community, which opposes the free expression of individual’s perversions or an element of counter-culture, occupies a larger part of the society. Nobody, who ever considers himself a socially acceptable person would dare to delve deep into the intricacies of complex neural constructions of such ‘cases’. McEwan does this successfully. Maybe he wanted to reveal the mysterious triangular zone of a female body and its enormous capacity to consume and crumble the cupidity of male dominance.

For this reason, McEwan identifies with Colin and undergoes a great self-torture while narrating this extraordinary tale of a special ‘hidden’ class of humankind:
I found [the novel] terribly difficult to write... I felt very strongly identified with Colin, as if I was writing my own death in some strange way. I felt terribly sickened by it. (Hoffenden 83)

McEwan finds comfort and consolation in Adrienne Rich’s (epigraph) Sibling Mysteries and Cesare Pavese’s (epigraph) brutality of travelling – off balancing the travelers and moving towards the eternal. To be precise, McEwan exploits the inadequacies of female lives in the kingdom of sons and their blind adherence to destiny and the jovial acceptance of becoming the object of gaze.

Apart from all those willfully accepted seductions or forcefully subjected mental and physical betrayals, the novel takes us to the unnamed city, Venice, its rich elite and popular culture and its intriguing palaces and colonies. The novel clearly depicts two worlds – a world of Colin and Mary, back in England, where both of them were engaged in theatre activities, occasional romancing, and Mary’s role of true mother of an athlete and a footballer son and Colin struggling to establish himself as a pseudo-parent to them.

The ex-husband of Mary is always present in the background as a supporter who looks after the children and in a way, makes Mary’s journey with Colin possible. It is of course, a beautiful world signifying the prosperity of English mind and the culturally civilized people. The second world is that of the unnamed tourist place – most probably Venice, known for its beauty and splendour. However, what McEwan and Colin come across there, Venice turns to be a land of sado-masochistic abnormal, decomposed and decaying males.

According to Payandeh, McEwan’s intention in writing the first two novels has gone unexamined; nobody cared about his thought-provoking engagement with cultural questions and his wish ‘to dissect and criticize contemporary culture’ (Payandeh 145). Refuting the view that McEwan forces upon the readers the unwilling role of a voyeur of abnormality, Payandeh concludes that –

Violence and sex in McEwan’s novel serve as a means: the end is to impart self – knowledge, to make readers more conscious of their desires, and ultimately move in control of their own predilection for violence. (145)
Colin and Mary, both have an urge for something, which they feel inside but do not talk about. As they enter in Venice and stay in a hotel, their bodies which were earlier not on speaking terms, start getting a turn on when they smell something abnormal about Robert’s distortion of sexual pleasure and Caroline’s ability to enjoy the terrible fantasy.

Slowly the abnormal sexual behaviour of an apparently repulsive minority, that of Robert and Caroline, becomes so strong and appealing that Colin and Mary very easily fall victims to the strange, exotic and fulfilling tactics of the abnormal Venetian couple. Leaving behind two sons and her radical feminism, Mary returns to the stage of primitivism and partakes in what proves to be a distrastrous act of sadism. It is true that McEwan chooses to portray the morally and culturally forbidden territory of adult sex but he dares to show the world what actually happens when the adults fearlessly remove their clothes and shed the fear of social acceptability.

Colin as a successful publisher and Mary as an actress in a women’s theatre group are obviously normal but what makes them participate in Robert-Caroline fantasy pact, is more astonishing. Colin is exceptionally ‘beautiful’ and attractive and he is described as a middle-aged Englishman who has fair skin, almost childlike body and dark, angelic curves. Mary, who belonged to upper-middle class, could not concentrate on the signals of danger projected from time to time by Robert and Caroline. McEwan shows us how intelligence of a non-corrupt mind proves to be useless in the world of distorted souls. The dreams of Colin and Mary are very significant and function as a warning to them. Colin’s dreams were of flying and of appearing naked before a stranger, while Mary saw in her dreams the fine old churches, the altarpieces and the stone bridges over canals – suggesting Colin’s lack of redemptive power and Mary’s strong ties with the spiritual head.

Both Colin and Mary used expensive colognes and powders on their bodies and chose their clothes meticulously as if they were expecting to become an object of gaze. While Mary did her yoga on the bedroom floor, Colin would roll a marijuana joint, which would enhance that delightful
moment. When they stepped out of the hotel lobby into the evening air, they dutifully fulfilled the tasks of tourism ‘the ancient city imposed, visiting its major and minor churches, its museums and palaces, all treasure packed’ (3).

Their love for each other is seen through their attending to delicate shifts of mood and repairing breaches. As individuals, they hate offence but when they are together, sometimes they offend each other in surprising and unexpected ways. McEwan’s unnamed fantasy city, Venice adds more to the meaning of the novel. It serves as a metaphorical map against which to read and interpret not only western history and culture but also our modernist and postmodernist understanding of the psyche, and at the same time ‘it is a figure for ancient narratives of the labyrinth, that impenetrable space which resists mapping or topographical survey’ (Seaboyer 3).

Venice is shown as confusing and sinister as it collapses back into narrow streets and canals. As an unchanging medieval city, it is slowly being transformed due to pollution and rising water level and the fantasy seems to be the beginning of the collapse of all the established values, normally attached to the Venetian grandeur and glory. Colin and Mary, through the Venetian alleys are chased by the beautiful musical bands, which reflect the purity and permanence of the Italian culture.

Orchestras, staffed and conducted by men in dinner jackets, oblivious to the morning heat, played simultaneously martial and romantic music, waltzes and extracts from popular operas with thunderous climaxes. (32)

For Mary, the same beautiful Venice transforms into a labyrinth of government departments and its beaurocratic murmuring after the planned, cold-blooded murder of Colin. It is the couple of the dark world who is schematic and very wisely exerts hypnosis on Colin and Mary. Robert and his wife Caroline is a mixture of English and Canadian culture. However, Caroline, since her back is broken during a sexual encounter with Robert, has forgotten everything about Canada. In spite of Robert’s strange behaviour, Caroline stays with him and starts taking perverse pleasure in her lifestyle. She stands for the tolerance of world’s women folk.
Robert, who was treated with unabashed favouritism by his parents, was punished severely – creating a sense of patriarchal dominance in Robert’s psyche. The novel also comments upon, through Robert’s ‘spermless’ case, the socio-cultural pressure of the traditional society for a couple to have their own children. What Robert does to Caroline, Colin and Mary seems to have emerged from his past life of strict childhood and present life as an issueless father. It is at the end that we find Robert’s fantasy of killing somebody while having sex with him or her proves more powerful than Colin’s fantasy of inventing a still machine for having sex with Mary.

Finally, contrary to Mary’s radical feminist ideology, Caroline, who has developed a liking for the feeling of being completely reduced, makes Mary fall into some kind of drugged stupor, under the influence of some depressant. Colin’s artery is cut off and he dies – for those who love voyeurism. Colin unfortunately proves the theory of the natural oppressor and naturally oppressed a true one but Mary concludes that the hypothesis of sexuality and pain is false. Robert, the ‘premium mobile’ reminds us of Michael in Graham Swift’s Tomorrow who can’t become a biological father. Robert, as a stalker, reappears again in McEwan’s Jed Parry in Enduring Love but for the readers’ satisfaction, is punished at the end.

McEwan’s next novel, The Child in Time, is a welcome departure from the blood, pus and semen that forms the central part of his earlier stories and novels. The mindless violence in The Comfort of Strangers and the incest in The Cement Garden, which ended in the destruction of the family unit, have been positively changed to warmth and love; The Child in Time ends with family unity. McEwan is apparently writing about the plight of the parents of an abducted child – Stephen and Julie’s mourning over Kate’s kidnapping before two years. However, inwardly, McEwan’s emphasis is on showing something else to a grown-up eye:

With the intricate images of children and the complexities of time that recur, McEwan portrays the search for – and the importance of recognizing and accepting – the child that exists in every individual. (Slay 2)
The Child in Time is about re-creation, redemption, reconciliation and recovery. The motif of the immovable time and unchangeable child unifies the novel and creates lots of space for the development of the novelists’ ideas about cold war, world wars, shortage of water, licensed begging, welfare schemes for the UK citizens, privatization of schools, the quantum physics, and manipulated childcare reports.

The cultural present that McEwan talks about is the middle of the nineties – a decade ahead into the future. Due to his looking into the future, McEwan is hopeful in narrating a story of reformation in children’s lives and that of the ‘possibility of redemption through love and lust’ (Ryan 49). Kiernan Ryan terms it as an inspiring tale of one man undergoing a kind of ‘evolutionary transformation of consciousness’ (49).

The London of future is described in realistic detail. It is shown as crowded with armed policemen and licensed beggars present at the peak hours in almost all crowded squares. The unnamed female Prime Minister (most probably Lady Margaret Thatcher) is on permanent Nuclear Alert and is ready to solve any critical problem. Irrespective of McEwan’s political views and the Prime Minister’s political allegiance, she is brought down to the human level to be pitied by the readers. Thelma’s analysis of the most intricate development in Physics adds much to the changing notions of science and as a result, McEwan succeeds in reverting to past and hints at premonition and the child in Charles.

Stephen, being the author of children’s books like Hashish and Lemonade, is presently working as a member of a sub-committee on ‘Reading and Writing’ headed by Lord Paramenter. He still feels that his lack of attention in mall on a particular Saturday morning snatched away Kate from him. He laments on the lack of attention on the part of all parents of England and so, feelings an urgency of preparing an honestly prepared report on childcare. Kate’s loss, gives him enough energy to do something for the neglected children of his society. The excerpts from The Authorized Childcare Handbook shows Stephen’s concern for the private school’s children and the children begging at
the squares, uneducated and uncared so far. He honestly gives the discredit to the sprawling Malls in the Metros:

Those in the first group tended to buy fresh fruit and vegetables, brown bread, coffee beans, fresh fish from a special counter, wine and spirits, while those in the second group bought tinned or frozen vegetables, baked beans, instant soup, white sugar, cupcakes, beer, spirits and cigarette. (10-11)

Eventually, McEwan tortures Stephen from within; he falls victim to drinking, ‘moodily sipping neat scotch, reading magazines back to front or watching the Olympic Games’ (33). Without any attempt to contact friends, he even stops returning the calls monitored on his answering machine. Lost in the thought of Kate’s ever-growing presence in absence and his wife Julie’s untimely retreat to Chilterns, he is consoled by the sips of beer and daydreaming. Having worked hard as a filing clerk in a news-cutting agency and delighted by the romance and nobility of the undertaking, Stephen had always dreamed to be a Thomas Mann, a James Joyce or a William Shakespeare. His honest undertaking of narrating a summer holiday story in Lemonade and describing a travel in Hashish added a lot to the fantasy world of children. He made England alive through his stories:

… hippies stabbed to death in their sleeping bags, a nicely brought up girl sentenced to a lifetime in a Turkish jail… drug enhanced sex, amoebic dysentery… bicycles with wicker hampers instead of day-glo Volkswagen buses, and set not in Jalalabad but just outside Reading. (26)

McEwan’s interest in the collision of private fates and public events is obviously reflected in Stephen’s private grief of Kate’s loss, Julie’s departure, Charles Drake’s return to nature, Thelma’s mother-physicist role and the Prime Ministers’ inability to disarm for the sake of heart. The socio-political changes and the implementation of different policies are always present in the background to legitimize the authenticity of Kate’s story.

Julie represents a woman who is unable to cope with the unfortunate and unexpected kidnapping of Kate. She represents a culturally liberated woman-finding outlet through her violin teaching at the Guildhall. Later on, after her
marriage, when her group—the string quartet—splits, she finds it difficult to give vent to the inner conflicts. Like an escapist, completely ignoring Stephen, she leaves for Chilterns.

Stephen, like a mad man, visualizes Kate, her face, her recent birthday and wishes to find her replacement in common street girls. This virtual transformation of one body into another proves the presence of the Creator. His feelings are so intense that he himself performs the biological ceremony of his second baby’s birth. The new baby’s arrival, which he had foreseen in the ‘Bells’, brings the old love back and makes him forget for a while the childcare report, Drake’s jungle and Thelma’s criticism of the modernity in literature. Marriage as a social contract, in Europe and elsewhere, forms the very foundation of human society. McEwan comments upon the cultural loss due to divorces and separations:

… marriage was a dying institution because more people got divorced than ever before, or it was thriving because more people got married more often than ever before; they had higher expectations, they were trying to get it right. (146)

Their second child compensates the lost Kate, and they forget, though temporarily, the old wounds of helplessness and sudden shock. The novel, for a very short time goes back to the World War II and its aftermath as the chief source of estrangement between Stephen’s parents. Further, Stephen experiences, hatred and violence as the result of the cold war between world’s two superpowers.

Charles’ departure from a well-established political position is unexpected. He enjoys it like a child of ten and Thelma accepts it as a matter of inevitability. Thelma’s interest in physics and her ability to understand Charles’ need to go back to the forgotten childhood confers upon her the status of benevolent motherhood. She completely transforms herself and tries to experience the joy of Charles’ transformation. Charles, like Tom in The Cement Garden, seeks ‘to escape the confusion and chaos of his world by regressing wholly into the serenity and security of childhood’ (Slay 6). Charles’
regression makes it obligatory for Thelma to play the role of a surrogate mother.

Finally, what wins over all other compatible human emotions is undoubtedly the political opportunism of the unnamed Prime Minister – who throughout her life sacrifices the demand of her heart and pays attention to her head. Charles’ abrupt and un-noticed end transforms his escapism into a psychological mystery of Thelma’s quantum physics. The kidnapped Kate and Ruth and the beggar girl merge into each other and are recreated through Julie’s womb in the form of a new baby – without any socio-cultural tag of religion, race or economic status.

The transformation of every little thing into, a somewhat new thing can be compared with the manipulatively transformed report on childcare. Nobody understands the conspiratorial understanding between the Second World War and the cold war of eighties, Olympic battles and the famous French retreat as reflected in Julie’s retreat to Chilterns and her parturition, Stephen’s ‘midwife’ role, and the second baby as the compensation for Kate.

McEwan’s *The Innocent*, is full of his earlier ‘macabre’ obsessions. The socio-cultural and political transformations that we come across in *The child in Time* are missing in his new spy novel. There are few war traumas and the cultural divisioning of the twentieth century as seen in the dismemberment scene of ‘defeated’ Germany’s drunkard ex-servicemen Mr. Otto. The novel shows how the ‘soldier fantasy’ of allies, raping the defeated body of the defeated nations, declares the end of the cultural rift between the all-powerful allies and the guards of the concentration camps. This stylish bestseller tale of espionage and betrayal, in spite of all its seductions, sings a song – ‘I put a Spell on you’ and ends into a victorious retreat of a thoroughly transformed Englishman, Leonard Marnham.

Though the novel is set in 1955-Berlin, it is not only about the wall and its protection. It is about the USA’s power exhibition, the UK’s extended hand of friendship (though a trembling one!), Russians’ loyalty to communism and
Germany’s ravished image as a land of sinners – a land which sadistically enjoys the continuous bombardment of violent and deafening explosions.

The novel witnesses many transformations, Leonard, the innocent post-office technician of Tottenham is converted into an active ‘clearance four’ spy, a ‘victorious’ lover copulating wildly with a ‘defeated’ German girl Maria. Maria’s ‘my little innocent’ Leonard is converted into a dislocated modern staff; finds his loyalty divided between Dollis Hills in Tottenham and Berlin.

The first two world wars and its after effects – the Berlin Wall being the most unfortunate resultant factor – are at the centre of the story. Though Germans were safe from the enemies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and were not the direct sufferers, they underwent a great psychological change. First, when the wall was built the two parts of the country were established as safer bases for Capitalism (West Germany) and Communism (East Germany) and the original Germany was lost in chaos.

The post-script to the novel brings back the reader from the 1955 Berlin to that of June 1987. This sudden shift in the time scale transforms the erstwhile spy into a London businessperson -the owner of a small company supplying components to the hearing aid industry. His visit to Berlin, after thirty years of absence, brings him back to a totally revolutionized city. The Second World War, despite a victory, was not helpful in uplifting the moral standards of the declining empire of England. Contrary to the expectations of the public, the war had given innumerable scars and mentally wounded common citizens to be admitted to newly established mental institutions. Churchill’s dinner speech, ten days after the end of the Yalta conference, aptly describes the shadowy victory and its aftereffects:

> After this war … we should be weak, we should have no money and no strength and we should lie between the two great powers of the USA and the USSR.  
> (Colville, Preface)

Winston Churchill’s prediction about the future state of England – like a puppet in the hands of USA – proved to be true. George Black had to serve under the CIA station Chief William Harvey in a joint venture (Operation
Gold) in and around 1956. The same joint CIA-MI6 venture has been reflected in *The Innocent* – only the difference is that George Blake has now become the fidgety, Leonard Marnham. If we forget for a while the cold war between USA and USSR, there has been always a cold war of domination and supremacy between the weak UK and the strong USA. When Leonard, after his deputation to Berlin, enters into the secret web of conspiracies and rackets, is warned again and again to prove his very Englishness – ‘Make sure you are who you say you are’( 2).

The joint spying venture ‘Operation Gold’ loses its purity and turns into a mediocre, time wasting ‘operation alloy’. The homogeneity of three cultures, viz. British, American and West German is disturbed by the relationship of Leonard and Maria. It begins an era of CIA’s retreat and KGB’s advancement. At the same time, it also reflects the courageous act of self-pride on the part of Leonard, who, despite his limited strength, successfully overthrows the invisible pressure of American army. Later on, without making much fuss over Maria’s becoming Maria Glass, he swims back to the safest shore of England and preserves his dignity and his very ‘Englishness’.

McEwan, while writing about the 1954-55 England and Leonard Marnham, has simply transferred his own childhood days into a grown up simplicity. The ‘grown-up’ Leonard stands for all decorum and civility of the courteous Brits, proving superior to the brash, impatient Americans and the cynical Germans. Both as a political and cultural force, the once beautiful guiding star ‘England’ has been eclipsed by USA. As Kiernan Ryan suggests, the novel illustrates the nation’s seduction by the American way of life, its greedy capitulation to an array of habits, tastes and postures. *The Innocent* shows how completely the innermost self can be penetrated and disfigured by desires cultivated in the public sphere (Ryan 55).

Leonard, the Englishman, enjoys the luxurious flat and is all set to enjoy the soldier fantasy- to love and enjoy the beautiful females of the defeated nation. The transformation of Russians from friends to foes is also noteworthy. Russians who were heroic, big and cheerful, had received many army
equipments from Americans but were expected to be faithful supporters of USA. Contrary to the expectations, the Russians started hating the Americans and slowly the cold war began. Bob Glass appropriately gives vent to his anguish for Russians. Leonard’s affair with Maria, who provides him a replacement to his mother, begins and the cold war between two worlds is transformed into a hot affair between heroism and sacrifice.

As soon as the copulation is successfully performed, both Leonard and Maria emerge from their hibernation. The love affair takes an unfortunate route of killing a drunkard and the whole situation changes. Otto’s dismembered body is packed in suitcases, and kept in the warehouse. Leonard’s innocence is instantly lost when he is chased by a dog, signifying canine vengeance and the ultimate downfall of human beings. Leonard’s participation in killing and betrayal disturbs the happy atmosphere and functions as a warning bell of departure and segregation for both of them. McEwan makes his motive clear in an interview with Rosa Casademont and vindicates Otto’s dismemberment:

I wanted to show the brutality man can aspire to by comparing the dismemberment of a corpse to the dismemberment of a city; the bomb devastated Berlin of the post-war. (McEwan, Interview)

The novel, in short, describes the loss of sexual innocence and cold war, espionage and the divided Berlin as the outcome of world Schizophrenia. Slowly, for the betterment of humankind, the ripples of the disturbed mind settle down and the public crushes the Berlin wall in 1989 as shown in McEwan’s next novel – Black Dogs. The title creates a sort of anticipatory chill in the heart of the readers. Written in a fictional memoir from, it is an eminently British combination of lucid syntax and detached compassion, which narrates a story of two people who are very much in love, yet complete opposites of one-another. Jeremy paints a portrait of his in-laws, June and Bernard and confirms his fascination with others by accepting them as his pseudo-parents.

The non-linear story of June and Bernard’s life, apparently divided in four parts, stands for the four seasons leading to maturity of human life. The
four scenes at Wiltshire, Berlin, Majdanek and St. Maurice de Navacelles converge at a certain point, in the French valley where June meets the fearful Gestapo dogs trained to rape human females and Bernard meets the strangest dragonflies that excite his entomological instincts.

The first meeting of June and Bernard is like any other date of an English male and a female who believe in communism as a fashion. They meet and in a pursuit to know more about each other, enjoy sex and get married hurriedly in 1946. June actually grew up in an era when their ashamed families sent unwed mothers to mental institutions. Unmarried mothers were social outcasts, and were treated vengefully even by the charities which were supposed to help them. Every beautiful girl was raised to believe sex was bad and immoral.

Because of the age-old thinking of sex as a means of getting love in return, she, like any other woman of her time, considers her first pre-marital sex with Bernard as a ceremony of execution:

We went up to the guest bedroom and started to undress. I was about to have what I had been thinking about for weeks, but I was miserable full of dread, as if I were being led off to my own execution… I was miserable about it but I was also testing freedom. (55)

The Second World War postponed many marriages and disheartened many young couples who were eager to unite. June relieves the moment of her jubilation and exultation and willfully joins hands with Bernard in enjoying a carnal pleasure and a criminal freedom. The next thing they jointly agreed to was communication; she gives it up after the ‘black dogs’ experience.

June, being a woman of the post-second world war era, was always in search of freedom, which can be linked with her femininity. However, as a person, when she joins communism just after her wedding, volunteers for six week’s work for the Red Cross in Italy, she seems to be enjoying the freedom of intellect and ideological thinking. The third important freedom that she experiences is the spiritual and intuitive freedom. It happens when she courageously negates the male dominance of Gestapo dogs. It was the speciality of June’s character to talk freely about what was considered
unthinkable like contraception, divorce, homosexuality and V.D. Next comes her obsession with Marx, Lenin and Stalin:

Whenever we talked about the world beyond ourselves, we talked about communism… we decided to forgive the party its stupidity at the beginning of the war, and to join as soon as there was peace and we had left our jobs. (58)

When they were volunteering for the Red Cross, they noticed and even felt sorry for the grief and devastation left by the war-nearly every man and woman had lost a child, a spouse, a parent or a friend. Parallel to the disastrous war condition of Italy runs the story of Jeremy and Jennie’s camp visit at Majdanek, Lublin. As they stand at the main entrance, they look at the numbers of Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, French, British and Americans who had died there. They are shocked to find that the official plaque did not mention the names of the Jews who had sacrificed their lives. For Jennie, the ‘black dogs’ are those who deny the right to Jews based on their race. If working for Italians was a matter of joy for June and Bernard, Jennie’s visit to the concentration camps fills her mind with grief for the forgotten thirty six thousand Jews from Lublin.

McEwan’s chief concern in this novel centers on June’s confrontation with the ferocious black dogs, resembling donkeys who were wandering freely on the French soil. For June, it is a moment of gaining confidence, a moment of victory over mutinous males and devilish Nazis and loathsome Fascists. Here, not only a woman wins the unexpected battle with unholy forces but also the whole ‘other half’ of the universe wins against all odds. It proves to be a moment of transformation for June – the lady communist becomes partyless and experiences the omnipresent God.

In her fighting with the black dogs, she witnesses the presence of coloured invisible lights. Talking about the newly gained confidence and the experience of the invisible, she enjoys the supreme freedom of spiritual loyalty and the sudden, life altering transformation: ‘a conflict, a change of heart, a new understanding… a halo of coloured light around my body’ (60). The supernatural experience of June, which transforms her throughout, finds outlet
in her three books – *Mystical Grace*, *Wild Flowers of Languedoc* and *Tend Meditations*. The symbolism of black dogs as explained by Bernard nullifies her spiritualism to be replaced with depression: ‘So June’s idea was that if one dog was a personal depression, two dogs were a kind of cultural depression, civilization’s worst moods’ (104).

Nevertheless, for June, the dogs always remain a symbol of the evil that exists around us. It appears again when the society is in turmoil and helps to build a rock-hard strength in every individual to stand erect in the hours of crisis. The cultural transformation as obscure as the presence of the black dogs is evident in the lifestyle of June, Bernard, Jeremy and Jennie. When asked about the whereabouts of the black dogs, McEwan, like an astrologer, says – ‘the catastrophe of Yugoslavia began… if you asked me where the black dogs went, it’s exactly there’ (Byrnes 246).

Finally, when in 1989 the wall which had created many problems for Leonard and Maria in *The Innocents*, is crushed down by Germans. However, as the human tendency suggests, a new invisible wall of pressure politics, groupism and fascism appears in a new form. After examining the ugly scenes at Checkpoint Charlie, one starts losing hope in human development and a complete transformation seems impossible. As stated in the law of conservation of energy, the evil in human mind changes its visible form and like a ghost, enters into another body:

As the monument to the defeat and division of Nazi Germany topples, a vicious new generation of racists emerges to take up the torch of fascism... It is the wide spread fear that, far from having left the apocalyptic horrors of both world wars behind, we may be en route to reliving them, because the human drives which fuelled them had merely been suppressed, and may never be eradicated. (Ryan 61)

*Enduring Love* published in 1997 is a superb tale of mid-life crisis and marital disharmony precipitated by the intrusion of the third person. The novel leaves the reader with ‘an impression of disappointment and loss of faith in goodness, morality and any kind of spiritual values’ (Byrnes 254). The story, which focuses on the conflict between science and religion, the idea of love and
the loss of trust mainly, talks about the disruption of normal patterns by a strange obsession of a strange young man. The novel narrates two love stories – one is the story of Joe, the scientific journalist and his Keats-loving wife Clarissa; the second love story is the one sided story of an abnormal Jed Parry who loves a normal rationalist analyzer, Joe. If a student of science reads the novel, it may be considered a research work in which three characters are used to explain the *de clermambault’s syndrome*. It is a rare disease, which is hardly diagnosed by a common medical practitioner or a social worker.

Joe loves Clarissa; James Gadd loves Harry Gadd, in the same way, as Mrs. Logan loves Dr. Logan. Not all these socially accepted relationships can accept the dangerous suicidal tendencies and the extreme unusual behaviour of Parry whose routine life and existence on the earth does not show any apparent signs of psychopathological – schizophrenic psychosis. Joe and Clarissa is a happy couple, staying together for the last seven years. He is a science journalist interested in the structure of DNA and the development in Quantum Physics. She is a childless academician fully devoted to Keatsian philosophy of beauty and truth. Truth is what she unconsciously falters at and doubts frequently Joe’s honesty in order to prove his sanity, normality and socially acceptable personality.

Suddenly when a ballooning accident takes place, their spring picnic in Britain’s Chiltern Hills transforms into a disaster. Five people from five sides run to save a child. Bridging the gap between urban and rural psyche, they run to help the balloon in turmoil. The scene of the falling man stirs Joe’s soul and he feels the nausea of a premonition fulfilled. His was the same premonition – helplessness of a common person to avoid wars, violence, bloodshed and corruption in the modern times:

> Life was revealed as cheap; thousands of screaming individuals, no bigger than ants, were about to be annihilated and I could do nothing to help… I found myself in a prominent place watching from far off the unfolding a disaster – an earthquake, a fire in a skyscraper, a sinking ship. An erupting volcano. (18)
The sense of forgiveness that we witness in Joe’s attitude towards Jed defines his rationalistic meditation like Bernard’s response to the two black dogs and Matthew’s response to Darwin’s theory and the teachings of Bible. This sense of understanding a soul in distress, the very quality of Joe, is beyond the mental reach of romantic Clarrisa. Considering Jed’s abnormal condition, Joe equates him with Harry, caught and curled up tighter in the directionless balloon: ‘He was in paralysis of will, a state known as learned helplessness, often noted in laboratory animals subjected to unusual stress; all impulses to problem-solving disappear, all instinct for survival drains away’ (11).

Though unable to bear children, Clarrisa had rebuilt her life again by ensuring that children remained part of it. Her love for child as an angel grew with her affinity to nephews, nieces, godchildren and the children of old friends and neighbors. She goes through a critical situation when Marjorie’s four-week old baby is lost due to a rare bacterial infection. That is why she appreciates Dr. Logan’s sacrifice for a child unknown to him. With the same understanding, she tries to understand the problem of Jed Perry’s need to love and be loved:

She thinks she understands Parry well enough. A lonely inadequate man, a Jesus freak who is probably living off his parents, and dying to connect with someone, anyone, even Joe. (81)

The parent searching Jeremy in Black Dog reappears here in a distorted form. Thanks to Jennie – she married Jeremy and gave him ‘much to talk about’ parents. Jed Parry got none and he suffered. His unhappy past life and loneliness might have changed him to normal situation. The novel also talks about the strange tribe of Hippies who grew hairs, smoked ecstasy and danced on the rhythmic drumbeats. McEwan, for a while, forgets the King’s story of obsession and enters into the dreary world of weapons, fanatics and violent ways of life. The hippies use words like shooter or piece for a gun and the bullets are called as rounds. By introducing and portraying Daisy’s character in detail, McEwan is harsh at criticizing the political domination that has ruined the life of pleasure loving hippies.
The epigraph to McEwan’s *Amsterdam* (1998), the Booker prize winning novel, is from W.H. Auden’s *The Cross roads*: ‘The friends who met here and embraced are gone, each to his own mistake’ (Kohn 1). In this novel, we come across Amsterdam in Netherlands, only to conclude the long-fought battle between friends through euthanasia and Molly’s post-death scenario. Robert Kohn finds Amsterdam’s traces in James Dougherty’s *The Five Square City* which comments on the city’s multiple meanings in different cultures (Kohn 3). It is one of the best examples of intertextuality:

All literary texts are woven out of other literary texts…
There is no such thing as literary originality; no such thing as the first literary work: all literature is intertextual. (Eagleton 137)

In the same way, Amsterdam functions as the final destiny of a life long travel, a journey of the common person towards eternity – through a planned suicidal revenge and legally unobjectionable means of achieving it. All people are inter-related in a way. People like Clive Linley the musician, Vernon Halliday the publisher and Julian Garmony the foreign secretary, are tied to each other with the love bond of Molly. In her forties at the time of her death, Molly is still attractive, having the inherent dangerous capacity to capture the attention of any intellectual person. As generally happens with every beautiful blonde, Molly finally settles with George, a revengeful personality disturbed to the extent of exploiting her pre-marriage whereabouts. Molly’s three lovers and her England including George stand for different cultures and the traumatic incidents, which take place after her sudden death indicates a calm and quiet vengeance of destiny.

Like Sarah in Swift’s *Waterland*, Molly is an example of McEwan’s post-second world war institutionalized woman. However, her pre-marital exploits converge after her death and try to neutralize each other and be vaporized. After her death, an elegant black comedy starts taking shape and ends into a melodrama – ending the ‘Millennial Symphony’ into a stringless fiddle and a future Prime Minister into an abnormal transvestite. The terrible
way of departure is witnessed by a multitude of people who bid her adieu with their shivering nostrils and frozen eyelids.

Byrnes diagnoses Molly’s disease as the tertiary syphilis which destroys her central nervous system to bring an unfortunate end: ‘Loss of judgment combined with delusion of grandeur is typical of neuro-syphilis. It seems as if McEwan has left Molly’s diagnosis open to speculation’ (Byrnes 146). Shortly after Molly’s funeral, what both Clive and Vernon feel like is an indication of the venereal disease. Though they end in rather a foolish way, the survivors among Molly’s past lovers are pathologically diagnosed as chronic cases beyond any repair.

The novel depicts the Britain of seventies, which witnessed a lot many cases of invasion of privacy and vulgarization of the press. The press in the form of Vernon’s ‘Judge’ one day publishes Julian Garmony’s photos of cross-dressing, declaring him a transvestite. The strange episode of cross-cultural dressing is enough to defame any aspiring politician; the photos to be published in ‘Judge’ are enough to tarnish the image of Garmony. Therefore, what pleases the public acquires double and distorted meaning due to the orthodox mindset of the society.

In Amsterdam, there are two protagonists, Clive and Vernon, and the calamity is the death of a friend and the death of friendship. Having seen the sudden deterioration of Molly, both these friends make the euthanasia pact—the first one of them who becomes ill and loses his sanity will be assisted by the other to die happily. Clive’s involvement in preparing an ‘all time best’ tune for the forthcoming musical performance – Millennium Symphony – is at its height when he is simultaneously inspired by a bird’s melodious call and in a mood of trance, neglects the Lakeland rapist. Finally, when he reveals the secret to Vernon, he grabs the opportunity and disturbs him mentally by making him visit the police station frequently.

Lost in a mood to capture the complicated tune, Clive ignores the troubled voice of a woman and her arguments with a man. Slowly when the argument grows violent, Clive realizes that he must take a decision. However,
to his surprise, he ignores the couple and continues working on the tune. This selfish act of Clive leaves him open to accusations of moral insensitivity: ‘He was in his music. His fate, their fate, separate paths. It was not his business’ (96).

The novel ends when both Clive and Vernon, as if in an act of rehearsing the symphony and increasing the circulation of ‘Judge’, plan to kill each other – and leave the world peacefully. The promise of friendship is fulfilled and so is fulfilled the desire of Garmony to succeed in politics. Clive’s act of borrowing Beethoven’s ninth symphony is discussed at the rehearsal and he is criticized for imitation. It is a clear indication of the guilty mind of Clive who always felt sorry for not helping the woman who was molested in the Lakeland Valley. The novel points out Garmony’s hypocrisy in particular, modern day diplomat’s habitual, false promises, and selfish protests against the bureaucracy and democracy. The cultural depiction in the novel highlights the usurping media and its immodest behaviour.

McEwan’s Atonement covers a long span of seventy years of the 20th century. The England as appeared before, during and after the Second World War has been vividly painted by McEwan. It plans simple story, an autobiographical realization of past events and is a means to mend the disastrous mistakes that the little girl Briony commits. When she was thirteen, she was imagining herself to be a stupendous playwright of modern times. It is in short, all about realistic events that took place in the beautiful campus of Tallis house in the Surrey Hills near London.

The novel written in a manner that may confuse a reader is an outburst of a woman at the age of seventy-seven who does not find herself courageous enough to publish it. She is senior Briony or you may call her the window of late Mr. Thierry, who has postponed the date of her novel’s publication; it may be published now after her death. She does not want to stain the reputation of Marshals and has no stamina to face the litigation. In the end, without adding or deleting a word, Ian McEwan plays the role of her editor, sincerely without omitting Briony’s signature at the end, spelt as – BT.
**Atonement** enjoys the background of the Second World War and England’s role as one of the allies to fight against the Germans. In the process, the country undergoes numerous socio-political and cultural changes. Briony Tallis and her contemporaries enjoy the opportunity of education and other upgrading sort of developments. The novel hints at the cultural changes that took place during those seventy years. It narrates the story of Jack’s philandering, Emily’s typical attitude of acceptance and family security. Cecilia’s sense of love and sex, Briony’s imagined adulthood, Robbie’s excessive sense of gratitude, the vase as a symbol of virginity and the love letter as a Freudian slip. It also comments upon the class structure of English society and the idea of love, marriage, sex and divorce. It also narrates the continuous struggle of innocent souls of Briony and Robbey – one who wants to recant her testimony and another, Robbey – a faithful lover, a warrior and a pure soul without a single trace of vengeance against anybody.

Tallis Estate as the place of action in the first part of the novel, witnesses the first spoiled performance of Briony’s *The Trials of Arabela* in 1935 and the successful performance of the same play in 1999. Cecilia and Robbie at the same Tallis Estate live out the play’s childish and fairy-tale theme of forbidden love fulfilled. The novel speaks the language of Cambridge returned people. The language obviously shows the sexual repression, as is the case with Robbie who promises in his love letter to Cecilia – her wet ‘triangle’ and his hidden urge to kiss it.

If there are expressive voices like that of Briony, there is a corrective and controlling voice of Cyril Connolly. The horror of war speaks finally the language of peace loving people and wishes to settle down the dust. The dust is still there in a microform even though McEwan tried to curb it in *Saturday* by arranging C.N.D.long march. The Estate underwent a change in the course of time:

> An Adam-style house had stood here until destroyed by fire in the late 1880s. What remained was the artificial lake and island with its two stone bridges supporting the driveway, and, by the water’s edge, a crumbling stuccoed temple. (29)
The young and curious Briony, like Dr. Henry in *Saturday* comes to the window and watches the ‘climbing- into the pond-in her- underwear’ scene. Cecilia is seducing Robbey and Briony is being seduced to write once again with a fresh mood. She suddenly grows up but not to the benefit of the loving couple. Contrary to her age and innocence, she becomes protective and anxious to save Cecilia from further insults, behaves like an adult, but unfortunately, an ‘adult’ with a false impression. She simultaneously, within a moment, experiences herself changed – from a younger to elder sister and from an immature fairy tale writer to the narrator of proven facts.

Jack Tallis, being the head of the family, who works on eventuality planning in the office of Home Ministry, performs the duty of preparing estimates of the number of casualties to be expected per ton of explosives in the event of war. In this way, the war is always present in the novel. His act of paying for Robbey’s uniforms and textbooks and readiness to pay for his medical education shows the ever-presence of one benevolent father figure. His act of benevolence to some extent bridges the gap between Talises and Turners. However, unfortunately, it makes Robbey keep silent, go to jail, and forgive easily the mistaken Briony and the landlord Paul Marshall.

Robbie returns exhausted, with a load of vividly realized details of the encounters during the retreat. Accompanied by Cecilia he lives happily in the postwar England – a poetic justice endowed upon them by Briony. It suggests Cecilia’s revolt back home as an effect of ‘the partial democratization of Britain that resulted from the social upheaval of war’ (Dyer, *Review*). The presence of Robbey’s two Army companions in the retreat to Dunkirk, Corporal Muce and Corporal Nettle, remind the readers the disastrous war and the agonized condition of the affected soldiers and civilians. The last part of the novel shows the complete transformation of Briony. One time upper class arrogant and egoist, she starts working as a nurse and looking after the wounded soldiers in Alder Hey, the Royal East Sussex and St. Thomas hospital.
Atonement clearly defines Briony’s transformation from a literary narcissist to the self-oblivious nurse tending the wounded soldiers of the war as an act of correcting the wrong done. She represents a self-proclaimed criminal undergoing self-imposed sentence. It erases all set norms of the permanence of truth, the morality of art and brings out a visible difference between the joy of childhood innocence and the pleasures of adult sexuality.

McEwan’s Saturday, shows the transition of a neurosurgeon’s mind games into reality. The morning that starts at 3:40 a.m. remains calm and quiet for three more hours with Henry’s musings limited to him and the two damaged airplanes that flew with reddish spots of anticipated fire and explosion. From six onwards in the morning, the twenty first century, which is full of crowd, clash, conflict and revenge, starts unfolding and ends happily in the mechanized operation theatre.

Henry, as a product of the organized power of the modern times, finds savagery and barbarism permitted by the state politics and an individual devalued by the mechanical society. Does he find any solution to the ongoing problems? Probably not. But what he behaves like on Feb, 15, 2003 is enough to prove him as a man of substance having full sympathy for the weak, neglected, wounded, infected and paralyzed. He is the proof of what a single man, if he is pious, dutiful, obliged and loyal to his country, religion and family can do.

McEwan’s expertise in human brain portrays Henry as a doctor of human mind. Being one of the supreme novelists of his generation, McEwan, with enough restraint and eloquence, charts the map of Henry’s daylong expeditions, through different mazes and brings him back to his family kitchen to provide psychological, emotional and biological treatment to a patient diagnosed of Huntington’s disease. During frequent intervals in his daytime activities, like playing squash for winning and watching from a safe distance the CND demonstrations, he keeps on singing ‘No War’ anthem for the benefit of humanity.
The elegant and acute prose of the novel creates a forty-nine year old Henry, who stands erect in the hour of calamity, to show us how we live today – with our ear to the transcendental music of ‘blues’, and our biological observations and perceptions of lovemaking. He also needs to have the cathartic effect of fiction to face the sudden outbursts of facts. ‘Globe and Mail’ appropriately reviews Saturday as the direct fulfillment of W.H. Auden’s definition of great art – ‘clear thinking about mixed feelings’ (7).

The day Feb. 15, 2003, halts for a moment when the life of both Henry and Baxter starts falling apart and when the scattered pieces unite again, we find the sun slowly disappearing and darkness spreading throughout London. The unimaginable and unspeakable events of attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 are vividly present in Henry’s memory. When he watches the planes through his bedroom window, the horrifying experience buried deep for the last two years suddenly reappears on the surface. The atmosphere of fear and post 9/11 paranoia in Saturday has been universally praised. Thus, Henry and McEwan seem to be the same. As Lee Siegel wrote in the Nation, it is as if ‘public consciousness has finally, caught up with Ian McEwan’s vision of life’ (Cooper 2).

The novel opens with a sense of foreboding – a constant threat and imaginary fear of some impending tragedy, transformed from New York to London’s Heathrow. Henry realizes the same fear in different forms:

He’s asking no one any favours. Even when the landing lights have shrunk to nothing, he continues to watch the sky in the west, fearing the sight of an explosion, unable to look away. (18)

The growing unease of a grown-up Henry, which begins with the 3.40 a.m. incident seen through the window, lurks behind the forthcoming troubled happenings of the day. The familiar motif of the outside menace appears in the form of Baxter, a Huntington patient and a mediocre non-literary, non-medical man who hardly thinks about the CND, Iraq war, Saddam and Al-Qaeda. Henry suddenly remembers Falklands, Bosnia, and Chernobyl. His atheism is the result of all the man made, tragic events like Suez Crisis, Cuban missiles,
Berlin Wall, or Kennedy’s assassination. Henry detests American troops mustering in the gulf, the storming of the Finsbury Park mosque and Bin Laden’s false promise of martyrdom. He realizes that the war, though a bit different from the world wars and Falkland crisis, is a modern curse – a new form of clashes among the ancient tribes- the Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Frisians:

He bought Fred Halliday’s book and read in the opening pages what looked like a conclusion and a curse: ‘the New York attacks precipitated a global crisis that would, if we were lucky, take a hundred years to resolve. (33)

Henry comes across the massive demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq and finds himself ambivalent about the invasion. Daisy is opposed to the invasion. However, Henry, who has treated a former Iraqi citizen tortured by Saddam’s army, thinks twice before opposing the war. Henry, as an Englishman and ‘the western’, has constructed a fantasy of victim hood and thereby unconsciously criticizes the non-westerners for their barbarism. The barbarity, which is conveniently relocated in an external enemy – in Iraq or in Baxter, finally comes to a compromise and Henry once again, with the same, non-reduced urge for love and sex is eager to copulate – like a terrified beast in search of a protected sanctuary.

Henry represents a grown up ambitious adult engaged in constant work neglecting the sense of love and sex. The sex act performed by the middle-aged people seems to have lost romance in the process of marital compromise; what remains is the darkness, the missionary position and the action performed in a hurry – without a preamble. Finally, when Baxter and his friends invade the privacy of Henry’s family and strips off the pregnant Daisy, it is once again the magic of Theo’s ‘blues’ and Arnold’s Dover Beach that transforms the sad world of anger into a permanently complacent one.

McEwan’s On Chesil Beach narrates a story of an inexperienced couple on the very first night of their marvelous wedding. The story takes us back to 1962 around which England, in particular, went through a sex-revolution,
which provided not only the contraceptives but also something more ecstatic—a freedom to enjoy bodies without any fear of conception.

The idea of entering in the bedroom of a couple—their first mating scene—is fascinating and unfamiliar. McEwan seems to have diverted a bit from his interests in physical sciences, particularly quantum-electro-dynamics. He is still at work in this novella, playing his role of a psychiatrist and sexologist. The hotel on Dorset seashore where this couple is staying and the sea coast where both of them walk and talk about the failure of their first expected fulfillment, has been wisely chosen by McEwan for the final act of exhumation of the buried past and an invisibly torturing present.

Both Edward and Florence lived in a time when a conversation about sexual difficulties was plainly impossible and what they experienced might have been experienced by McEwan’s generation. McEwan honestly illustrates Florence as one of the many types of women described in the Indian ancient treatise, Kamsutra. Florence is reluctant and shy. Love for her is staying with each other and sharing life experiences, while for the history lover Edward, it is something about the socially accepted process of penetration and insertion. The picture at the end clearly suggests the physically mismatched couple planning to separate. As a preparation for the safe departure—for him from a frigid woman and for her from a mad man—both of them try to define and point out the deficiencies lying dormant in their individual personalities.

Culturally speaking, it was the ship of nineteen sixties that was going to discover ‘the New World’ (Aspden, Review). It was a period when Harold Macmillan was running the country and concert halls were over-crowded with the last of the Victorians and the Second World War veterans. The sexual intercourse between a male and female body is actually a union of two minds symbolizing a transition from innocence to experience. Unfortunately, the historian husband and the musician wife cannot perform and openly challenges the sex act as a loathsome, useless activity that brings humankind down to the level of bestiality.
Com Toibin describes it as a novel about ‘Sex and class in England, riffing gently on the work of Lawrence and Forster, suggesting that Florence’s frigidity is partly a function of her class and is shared by her parents’ (Toibin, Review). If that is the case then Edward’s fear of pre-mature ejaculation can be termed as the result of daydreaming in the sans-expression regime of Harold Macmillan.

The so far analyzed eighteen novels written by Graham Swift and Ian McEwan represent the contemporary English mind, which sometimes goes back to the nostalgic past, and, at the next moment, marches forward in the present democratic landscape. Men, women, the socio-cultural institutions, and the constantly occurring transformations keep impinging upon the individuals and their socio-moral attitudes. Sometimes they are affected by cultural changes and at times, they operate as the agents of transformations.

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