

THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
ANKARA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
(ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE)

AN EXPLORATION OF THE POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS IN IAN
MCEWAN'S *THE CEMENT GARDEN*, *THE CHILD IN TIME*, AND
AMSTERDAM

PhD Dissertation

Cihan YAZGI

Ankara, 2022

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PhD DISSERTATION

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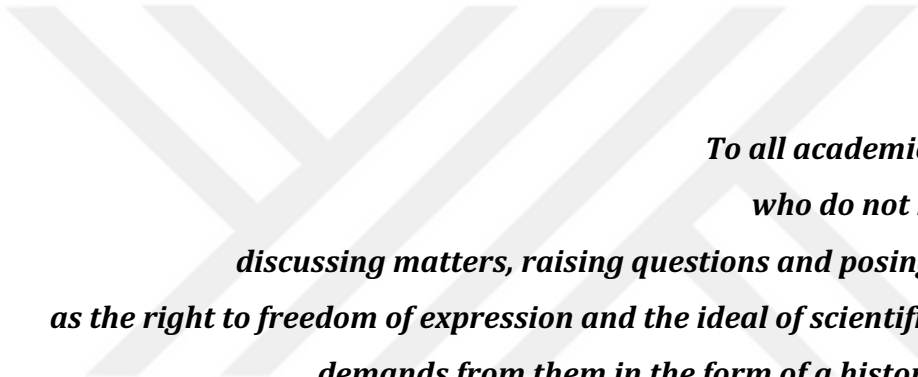
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**TO THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
ANKARA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

I hereby declare that in the dissertation “An Exploration of the Political Unconscious in Ian McEwan’s *The Cement Garden*, *The Child in Time*, and *Amsterdam*” prepared under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Zeren ATAYURT FENGGE, all information has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work. I also acknowledge that if any of these prerequisites are not met in this study, I will bear all legal consequences.

28/06/2022
Cihan YAZGI



*To all academics in Turkey,
who do not refrain from
discussing matters, raising questions and posing challenges
as the right to freedom of expression and the ideal of scientific objectivity
demands from them in the form of a historical burden.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my deepest thanks to my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Zeren Atayurt Fenge for all the academic and moral support she provided in the numerous years I have been trying to complete this work. It was the feedback she generously and continuously provided time and again that made this work possible. Without her unwavering encouragements and her confidence in my abilities, and without her academic mentorship, I would not be able to push on and accomplish this rewarding task.

I would also like to recognise the invaluable assistance of the dissertation monitoring committee members, Prof. Dr. Nazan Tutaş and Assist. Prof. Dr. Trevor John Hope, who devoted so much of their time and effort to continuously read and provide constructive feedback on my written work. Thanks to the questions and issues they raised in our discussions, this work could take shape.

I must also thank the dissertation examining committee members, Prof. Dr. Belgin Elbir and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Seda Pekşen for their invaluable comments and constructive criticism that helped find the direction my studies might turn to in the future. It was a privilege to have the chance to present my work to such distinguished academics.

I would finally like to pay my regards to Assist. Prof. Dr. Fahri Öz and Assist. Prof. Dr. Devrim Kılıçer with whom I first set out on this journey. It was thanks to their academic guidance and support that I was initially able to shape the arguments of this dissertation.

Writing a dissertation tasks one's life skills as much as his academic skills while trying to strike an ever delicate balance between a PhD degree, a full-time job, a family and a life which one is supposed to enjoy in one's late 20s and early 30s. I would not have survived all this without my loving wife Kübra Yazgı. She was and is always there for me with unconditional love and support, so much that I feel that the PhD degree this dissertation brings me belongs to her as much as it belongs to me.

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INTRODUCTION

This study aims at reading, analysing and interpreting Ian McEwan's novels *The Cement Garden* (1978), *The Child in Time* (1987) and *Amsterdam* (1998) with reference to Fredric Jameson's theory of the political unconscious in order not only to foreground the political and the social in McEwan's fiction but also, in the process, to explore, through McEwan's fiction, the ways in which a text unconsciously engages with its contemporary socio-political reality. To this end, this study will explore the selected texts in the light of Jameson's two concentric horizons of interpretation which he identifies as the political and the social, reserving an analysis of these texts in the third, historical, horizon for further study.

In the first horizon, the questions to be addressed are: 'What are the formal contradictions of *The Cement Garden*, *The Child in Time* and *Amsterdam*?' and 'Which determinate real socio-political contradictions are McEwan's works symbolic resolutions of?' In the second horizon, the study will try to address the following questions: 'What are the *ideologemes* in these works?' and 'How does each work function in the antagonistic dialogue of class discourses?' The meaning, relevance and scope of these questions will be further discussed below and in the analytical chapters on the texts themselves.

Jameson's third horizon would deal mainly with the question, 'Which sign systems exist/co-exist in McEwan's work that correspond to certain modes of production?'; yet, as mentioned, the present study will limit its scope to the first two horizons, making only overall remarks in the conclusion on what an analysis of these texts in the third horizon would entail in a fashion of suggestions for further study. Analysis in the third horizon demands, at the same time, an analysis of the modes of production that the sign systems, or in other words, generic elements in a text

coincide with. Since, in overall Marxist terms, all these three texts historically coincide with the Capitalist mode of production as it is maintained in Britain in the last three decades of the twentieth century, the analysis in the third horizon needs to rely on specialist knowledge of economics in order to reflect the fine nuances between the developmental stages of the Capitalist mode of production in these three successive decades, a project that would carry this dissertation beyond its natural limits. Therefore, an analysis of the texts in Jameson's third horizon is left for further studies, the groundwork for which will have already been laid and the direction for it will have already been set by the end of this study.

A discussion of the reasons behind choosing Jameson's theory as the analytical lens to be used begins with a discussion of what literature is. Literature is a concept, an abstract idea. Yet, as one of the most important Marxist critics of the century Raymond Williams explains it, 'literature' is commonly concretized in the great works of the canon (45) and, hence, it customarily emerges not as an abstract idea but simply the practical name of the actual written material: works that are considered to be of superior and lasting artistic merit ("Literature", *Oxford*). Similarly, the attributive 'literary' denotes high value and quality ("Literary"). In contrast with this concept's claims to superiority, priority and artistry, 'politics' and 'political' are "downgraded, as mere hardened outer shells compared with the living experience of literature" (Williams 45). Contrary to the definition of 'literary', 'political' is chiefly used in a derogatory fashion to define acts or thoughts that are scheming and self-serving ("Political", *Oxford*).

In the light of these points, one can say that, most of the time, trying to address the question 'why choose an openly political approach like Jameson's the *political unconscious*' turns out to be not so much an explanation of one's critical agenda as an endeavour to dismiss a habitual hesitation to think of the 'political' and

the 'literary' together (Jameson, *The Political* 9-102; Jameson, *Marxism* ix-ix; Eagleton, *Literary*; Williams; Jackson 1-28). Hesitance as such, although it has already been very much alleviated since the work of people like Foucault, finds itself rooted mostly in the belief that dragging politics into an aesthetic enquiry like literature is simply wrong. It is especially studying, in this manner, authors like Ian McEwan, authors whose works are deemed to be of 'superior artistic merit' and 'quality', and whose works are 'clearly' explorations of 'non-political' matters, which is met with disfavour more frequently.

Attempting to argue against this hesitation by dwelling upon the ideas and beliefs at its roots is well beyond the scope of this dissertation, and also is not its aim. However, acknowledging it in the background provides, thanks to the counter questions it raises, grounds for a discussion of the reasons for choosing Jameson as the lens to read McEwan through which: is there any 'literary theory' which is not political in any sense? And for that matter, could literature really be situated outside the political? Elaborating on these questions would help better explain why this study aims to read McEwan through Jameson.

Marx states in his Afterword to the Second German Edition of his *Capital* that his dialectics, which is called dialectical materialism, "regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence" (20). This statement briefly explains one of the founding philosophical principles of Marxism that paves the way to an historical and ever-scrutinizing approach to *any* idea, belief or concept that is habitually taken for granted. According to this approach, there are no absolutes. For instance, even while thinking of concepts that are usually taken for granted such as morality, one has to think of them not as an eternal and invariable standard, but as values which themselves are fluid, now including some acts as moral while rejecting

them as immoral some time later or under different circumstances. As a case in point, Ian McEwan is particularly interested in morals and ethics as he repeatedly states in his interviews ("Interview by Ramona Koval"). In this case, while McEwan builds many of his plots on concepts of morals and ethics in order to make his readers question certain acts in terms of moral choices (Wells 21), Marxism starts by questioning the idea of morality itself. In fact, questioning the whole discourse of morals is going to be very central to the analysis of McEwan's *Amsterdam*, as we shall see, in the third chapter later on. This philosophical weapon represents the Marxist stance, namely "the timeless does not exist" (Dowling 91), and it leads to an historicizing of everything as prompted by Jameson's slogan: "Always historicize!" (*The Political* 9). Therefore, any answer to the question 'what is literature' needs to start by problematising the term 'literature' itself before relying on its customary definition. Otherwise, it would mean taking for granted the existence of a category named 'literature' as an unproblematic, eternally-given, ontological category, like a Kantian *thing-in-itself*.

Leonard Jackson studies the trend in Marxist literary theory that problematises the concept of 'literature' in this way (206-243). According to this branch of Marxist theory, the suggested chasm between the 'literary' and the 'political' is all but a mirage. Raymond Williams is an important figure here thanks to his efforts to supply this discussion with hard evidence provided mainly through his research in dictionaries. In his *Marxism and Literature*, Williams carries out research on dictionary entries and etymologies of certain concepts, and he goes to great lengths to bring home his point that 'literature' as it is understood today, say, by the booksellers, librarians, humanities departments at universities, newspaper reviews, that is, by modern day consumers, is a category conceptualised only in the nineteenth century and subsequently (46-54). According to Williams' research, not

only literature, but also other related concepts of 'art', 'aesthetics' and 'criticism' share a similar history.

He traces the concept of literature from its more neutral first meaning, which connotes literacy in general, to its changing meanings: first, related to a separation of reading and writing, then referring to 'humane' learning, then to classical learning, then to printed books in general, later distinguishing the difference between fiction and non-fiction, and much later evoking a certain category of printed books: a category defined by the bourgeois ideals of 'taste' and 'sensitivity'. As Tony Bennett summarizes Williams' findings, it turns out that what is included under the category of literature has changed several times over the centuries, and it is currently reserved only "for the dominant forms of bourgeois writing" (16). In other words, literature is not a category name for a group of works that objectively share the features and elements of that category. It defines different things at different times, and hence what it comes to define at a certain time is a political phenomenon. What is meant by political here is of course no more than being related to the ways the society forms itself that involve relations of power and authority ("Political," *Wiktionary*).

This argument should not, though, take us back to the controversial base and superstructure approach that dates back, among other instances, to a passage in Marx's Preface to his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. The argument here does not claim that literature is not to be considered on its own because it is only the expression of a more political foundation, in the way the superstructure is claimed to be the expression of the base. Although the base-superstructure model was later developed into a pure mechanistic theory, Engels himself tried refuting such theorizing as early as 1890 in his letter to Joseph Bloch (760-765). Nothing about literature is so simple as to be easily interpreted by

mechanical causality. Still, it would be equally wrong to move closer to the opposite pole of idealism and argue that literature, as a form of human consciousness, is the foundation that shapes our existence. Neither one of these lines of discussion is among the aims of this study. The argument here goes only as far as arguing that the chasm between the literary and the political is merely illusionary, or one might say, *ideological* because literature as a category is not an absolute but a construct that has changed in its scope and meaning over the centuries in line with political changes within human societies.

The definition of ideology produces its own controversies: What is ideology? Is it false consciousness? Is it something inevitable? Yet, without diverting too much from the point by elaborating on these questions, it is better to state that this study uses the term ideology in its more neutral sense of “a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group” (Williams 69) while keeping in mind the words of Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*:

[E]ach new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones. The class making a revolution comes forward from the very start, if only because it is opposed to a *class*, not as a class but as the representative of the whole of society, as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class. (68-69)

It can clearly be inferred from the extract above that, for Marx and Engels, ideology is not to be fought against with an objective of rooting it out, because its existence is inevitable in class societies. It is to be fought against in order to overcome it with another and ‘better’ ideology; to transform a society which is divided into classes

and other sub-groups of race and gender. And such a fight would greatly benefit from attempts to reveal the existence of such dominant ideologies in their full shape, prevalence and characteristics.

Apart from this, Marx and Engels' statement points at the centrality of ideological struggle to class societies. This renders it more necessary to seek the political in literature and in literary theory. It is as much important for a dominant class to win the ideological war as the revolutionary one in order to maintain its hegemony, and cultural domains like literature and literary theory are two of the many fronts where this struggle takes place. In other words, arguing that literature stands apart from the political and that using a type of political criticism, such as Marxist criticism, simply contaminates this pure category and ruins the aesthetic sensibility of a literary work of art simply serves the ideological goals of a certain system of beliefs characteristic to a particular class which is trying to represent that system of beliefs as a universally valid one. Jameson characterises this as the liberal humanist tradition and summarizes the ideological goal behind as follows:

[T]he anti-speculative bias of that tradition, its emphasis on the individual fact or item at the expense of the network of relationships in which that item may be embedded, continue to encourage submission to *what is* by preventing its followers from making connections, and in particular from drawing the otherwise unavoidable conclusions on the political level
(*Marxism xi*; italics added)

According to Jameson, the liberal humanist tradition directs the critic to isolating an artwork and ignoring its broader connections on the socio-political level. This is in no way saying that this liberal *explication de texte* is not useful or simply faulty and needs to be abandoned. Like any critical approach, it retains its own value. Yet, it

also has its limitations, and, as stated above, the aim is not to eradicate this approach but to acknowledge its limitations and overcome them.

In short, stating that literature cannot be related to politics is a political argument per se: the unquestioning acceptance of 'literature' as an absolute and independent category prevents the critic from tracing the imprints of the dominant ideologies and class discourse in it. This acceptance aims to sustain the illusion that literature has always been what it is now, and it has always included only the fiction that conforms to a certain standard, whereas in fact, achieving that standard would mean dealing with the values which serve that contemporary dominant ideology. Jackson summarises these arguments by saying that the "bourgeois literary critics ... have created an imaginary set of universal human values which 'literature' from every period is supposed to exemplify" (229). The idea of Jackson's argument is that although there is no intrinsic quality as such that is common to the works of Homer, Shakespeare, Dickens or Joyce, the bourgeois understanding collects them all within the category of 'literature' as if there is a common intrinsic and transhistorical quality that they all share.

Jackson's words here are also important in a different way. By attributing their definition to literature and defining the 'standard' or 'merit' the dictionary definitions of the terms refer to, the bourgeois liberal-humanist school hence helps a ruling class maintain ideological domination in the realms of literature and art. As Eagleton says concerning this, "[d]iscourses, sign-systems and signifying practices of all kinds, from film and television to fiction ..., produce effects, shape forms of consciousness and unconsciousness, which are closely related to the maintenance or transformation of our existing systems of power" (*Literary* 210). Louis Althusser emphasises the same issue when he says that "no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony" through what he calls

the Ideological State Apparatuses (146). According to Althusser, the ideological arena is as much a “site of class struggle” as any battle frontier is (147), and the ruling class needs to control it to “secure the reproduction specifically of the relations of production ... [and] State power” (150). Antonio Gramsci, in fact, focused on this issue long before in his *Prison Notebooks* and talked about “the political and cultural hegemony of a social group over the whole of society” (*Prison* 20). He discusses how “the interests of the ruling classes” are secured through “initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes” (*Selections* 258). It would not be wrong to remember Michel Foucault at this point who was also interested in his writings in the “rules of exclusion” that shape the society (216). Foucault says “one would only be in the true ... if one obeyed the rules of some discursive 'policy' which would have to be reactivated every time one spoke. Disciplines constitute a system of control in the production of discourse, fixing its limits” (224). As an example, Foucault mentions the biologist Mendel whose ideas were accepted as truth only a century later since back in his time they contradicted the dominant discourse of his discipline. All these points underline, once again, a fundamental relation between the literary and the political and indicate the use to be derived from an exploration of this relation toward a better understanding of human societies.

Lastly, it is crucial to mention another, a more immediate, aspect of literature's separation from the political. Eagleton states that back when the term literature was contained within the category of rhetoric, it was always thought to exist in close relation to its social purposes and to the relation between people who were performing it. He says that texts were regarded “as forms of activity inseparable from the wider social relations between writers and readers, orators and audiences, and as largely unintelligible outside the social purposes and

conditions in which they were embedded" (*Literary* 206). However, the liberal humanist approach, especially in the shape of New Criticism, suggests exactly the opposite of this. It separates the text from its wider social relations, purposes and conditions. The tendency to see the literary text as standing on its own as if it came out of nowhere or did not go through a process of actual composition is in fact the tendency to erase the traces of its being a *work*, just like any other work made or done by a real person by using tools and resources; tools that are shaped by that historical moment in the vast history of humanity. Any literary work goes through a process of formal composition within the social and formal properties of a language and the givens of a culture. The suppression of this process of composition and its circumstances becomes an ideological abstraction of the text. It isolates the text and conceals the fact that it went through an actual composition of selecting, picking, phrasing and rephrasing within a socio-political context.

To sum up this discussion on the relation between the literary and the political, therefore, it can be argued that advocating the existence of a 'literature' that should not be politically exploited is a political statement in itself which tries to obscure the class domination and control over these domains. Williams states on this subject that the contemporary "forms of the concepts of *literature* and *criticism*, from the perspective of historical social development, are forms of a class specialization and control of a general social practice, and of a class limitation of the questions which it might arise" (49). Literature as a conceptual category has always been entangled in power relations at every point in the continuous historical development of societies. The active values, which are forced upon it by the ruling class ideology to limit and to summarise it, hence are not absolutes but the values of a given social and historical context. This argument lays the groundwork for Fredric Jameson's theory of the political unconscious as it will be discussed below. Jameson

takes this argument on the fundamental ties between the literary and the political and offers a method to reveal those ties lurking in the unconscious of a text.

The other question evoked above concerned literary theory and its relation to the political. Since literature itself exists always in relation with the political, it would be wrong to try to argue that literary theory does not. As with literature, politics has been there from the beginning of the history of literary theory as well. Terry Eagleton contends that literary theory is a 'non-subject' in the sense that it is not an intellectual enquiry in its own right, but the reflections on the literary realm of some other broader perspectives "concerned with human meaning, value, language, feeling and experience ... [and] with broader, deeper beliefs about the nature of human individuals and societies, [like] problems of power and sexuality" (*Literary* 195). The idea here is that literary theory does not emanate from its object of study, i.e. literature, or it does not develop and evolve according to an essence that is intrinsic to literature as it would be in chemistry where types of experimentation would develop and evolve together with chemistry's object of study. Literary theory is always attached to other disciplines like linguistics, history, psychology, sociology or economics. Therefore, going back to Eagleton's words, literary theory is always an extension of the perspectives concerning these disciplines, and it always reflects some other broader beliefs about human meaning, value, nature of individuals and societies, and problems of power and sexuality.

Eagleton's *Literary Theory* is a work dedicated to following the traces of these perspectives within several schools of literary criticism. He examines critical methods from Formalism to New Criticism, Reception Theory, Structuralism and Psychoanalysis to finally arrive at his concluding chapter, which he titles 'Conclusion: Political Criticism'. He explains the meaning of the title by saying that it "is not intended to mean: 'Finally, a political alternative'; it is intended to mean: 'The

conclusion is that the literary theory we have examined is political' " (*Literary* 195). Eagleton's conclusion, as simply stated as it is, indicates that there is no 'non-political' form of literary criticism. Hence, it can be argued, the assumed difference between political and non-political criticism is again an ideological phenomenon. The supposedly non-political forms are themselves political, but since they move within *the* politics of the dominant ruling class, they are passed on as objective truth, overlooking their ties to certain ideological preconceptions. They are represented as 'normal', 'self-evident', 'commonplace' and 'everyday', and to be intrinsic to literature itself. Eagleton criticises such preconceptions so powerfully and lucidly in his study that it would be worth presenting here two lengthy quotes from his *Literary Theory* in order for his examples to retain their original power:

It is ... difficult to engage [certain] critics in debate about ideological preconceptions, since the power of ideology over them is nowhere more marked than in their honest belief that their readings are 'innocent'. It was Leavis who was being 'doctrinal' in attacking Milton, not C. S. Lewis in defending him; it is feminist critics who insist on confusing literature with politics by examining fictional images of gender, not conventional critics who are being political by arguing that Richardson's *Clarissa* is largely responsible for her own rape. (198-199)

The idea that there are 'non-political' forms of criticism is simply a myth which furthers certain political uses of literature all the more effectively. ... The difference between a conventional critic who speaks of the 'chaos of experience' in Conrad or Woolf, and the feminist who examines those writers' images of gender, is not a distinction between non-political and political criticism. It is a distinction between different forms of politics - between those who subscribe to the doctrine that history, society and human

reality as a whole are fragmentary, arbitrary and directionless, and those who have other interests which imply alternative views about the way the world is. There is no way of settling the question of which politics is preferable in literary critical terms. You simply have to argue about politics.

(209)

It is remarkable how much certain types of criticism rely on supposed self-evidence instead of proper argumentation in their claims to being innocent of politics. Without taking the time to dwell on what they mean when they talk about 'intrinsic value' and self-evidence, they declare themselves to be concerned with nothing else but what is intrinsic to literature and self-evident about it, unlike 'political' criticisms which bring in all sorts of distortion into the text. Therefore, as the first quote suggests, it is itself a political move to consider certain types of criticism, i.e. feminist, Marxist or post-colonial criticism, to be political as against the innocent ones. As stated in the second quote, the non-political/political opposition is a mirage, and any discussion that takes this opposition at its focus would end up getting nowhere and, in the end, would necessarily turn into a discussion of which politics is preferable.

Deciding on a critical approach to read a literary work through the lens of which, therefore, should focus on not whether it is a political one but what the purpose of the reading is. In other words, what is left to be addressed regarding the theoretical approach of this study is the question why one would want to read McEwan's work through Jameson while there are many other approaches available just as political as Jameson's.

Literature is there, just like literary analysis, to make the human better understand himself or his society, to enrich his life and to discover certain traits, beliefs, emotions or ambitions that make him and his society what they are thanks

to its power of reflecting back at its readers what they may not be able to realise on their own. McEwan himself would describe his writing in this way, “as a medium for improving our understanding and treatment of” ourselves and one another (Wells 21). All forms of literary criticism try to do this, but in different ways: a structuralist would state that becoming aware of the encompassing structure that makes everything meaningful is the way to better understand and enrich one’s understanding of life and being. A new critical reading would claim that that enrichment would only come from a close reading of the text while a psychoanalyst may stress the role of the unconscious elements that could be spotted in between the lines.

According to Jameson, all these literary theories are valuable in the limited framework of study that they draw for themselves or they are able to draw for themselves to the extent their historical moment would allow them. On the other hand, they are also valuable for Jameson in the way they represent the shortcomings and limitations of undialectical thought. They are not able to view their givens as only historically relevant. That is, they are ahistorical in their perspectives and attribute transhistorical value to their methods and findings, so they are incapable of transforming the society and only capable of strengthening the existing power relations (Jameson, *The Political* 193). Therefore, they are valuable in terms of revealing the ideological closure of certain modes of thinking, but otherwise, without the real transformative value that the enrichment and deepening a discussion of literature is supposed to provide, they fail to meet what McEwan would want to attain through his fiction; their discussions simply serve a reproduction of the dominant power relations in the society (Eagleton, *Literary* 210). Choosing Jamesonian exegesis, on the other hand, is a matter of aiming for a transformation of the society which, as his Marxist approach states, is a class society.

Jameson believes that only a Marxist approach with its dialectical/historical understanding is capable of bringing about a more complete account of literature by revealing the truly socio-political essence of any cultural artefact so as to set in motion a transformative comprehension of the individual and societies:

[All matters must be] retold within the unity of a single great collective story; only if, in however disguised and symbolic a form, they are seen as sharing a single fundamental theme ... only if they are grasped as vital episodes in a single vast unfinished plot: 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles...'. It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity. (Jameson, *The Political* 19-20)

According to Jameson here, the ability of a Marxist approach to regard any matter within one vast history of society as class struggle is what gives it the power to attribute the literary work the true historical validity that inheres within it. And the aim of his theory of political unconscious is to detect, work out and bring to light the repressed and buried ties of the literary work with that vast socio-political history. To bring these ties into light, the theory of the political unconscious tries to surpass the false compartmentalisation that puts a "gap between the public and the private, between the social and the psychological, or the political and the poetic ... which ... maims our existence as individual subjects and paralyzes our thinking about time and change" (Jameson, *The Political* 20). Relying on the argument that "everything is 'in the last analysis' political", the analysis of the political unconscious proposes an "unmasking of the cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts" (Jameson, *The Political* 20).

Again, as Terry Eagleton says, literary works “are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of their authors’ psychology. They are forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world; and as such they have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the world which is the ‘social mentality’ or ideology of an age” (*Marxism* 3). On a similar note, Fredric Jameson states that “the closed realm of literature, the experimental or laboratory situation which it constitutes, with its characteristic problems of form and content and of the relationship of superstructure to infrastructure, offers a privileged microcosm” to observe the thinking of an era in its totality (*Marxism* xi). These two positions may easily be counted as a simplified summary of a certain strand of Marxist theory of literature, and they, unlike the globally dominant Anglo-American liberal tradition with its false separation of the literary from the political through ‘practical criticism’ (Jameson, *Marxism* x), point at the implausibility of thinking literature apart from the social, the political or the historical which, in a more Marxist terminology, is considered as historical materialism (dialectical materialism). Hence, on the same plane of thought, a literary work is one of the finest laboratories one can resort to in order to obtain a full grasp of, what Jameson calls, the ‘social mentality of an age’. Therefore, reading the works of contemporary writers such as Ian McEwan with the help of Jameson’s Marxist approach will undoubtedly provide the opportunity to observe the ‘political unconscious’ of the texts and to better understand the socio-political reality of the periods they were written in.

However, this should not be understood as a mere sociology of literature, the kind Eagleton warns against, since a truly Marxist approach is not a matter of discussing whether the text mentions the working class or whether it acts as the mouthpiece of the dominant class, or if it openly criticizes the dominant ideology for that matter. As Eagleton states, a truly Marxist approach aims “to explain the literary

work more fully; and this means a sensitive attention to its forms, styles and meanings ... as the products of a particular history" (Eagleton, *Marxism* 2). Works of art do not only incorporate ideology into their discourses but also into their forms "in the way the formal unity displayed by works of art represents structural limitation and ideological closure on the aesthetic level" (Dowling 54). Therefore, a careful study of the forms and styles of a literary work is as important for a Marxist approach as a study of what that text says on the surface level. This is because, as mentioned before, there is no direct way of talking about or pinning down the ideological: "an ideology is never a simple reflection of a ruling class's ideas; on the contrary, it is always a complex phenomenon, which may incorporate conflicting, even contradictory, views of the world" (Eagleton, *Marxism* 3). Jameson's method does just that by going beyond a mere sociology of literature and by grasping the literary work as the product of a particular historical social formation. It tries to accomplish this by focusing not on what the text says on the surface, but on what it hides beneath its formal structure. Following what Freud says in his "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," Jameson's method focuses on the unconscious of the text to locate clues of an artwork's socio-political essence there.

As for choosing Ian McEwan as the focus of this study, it can first of all be said that he is no doubt a prominent literary and cultural figure in the contemporary British and world literature. There is a great amount of commentary on his career and his work, and there are many different views concerning the subject matter of his works. Malcolm Bradbury states that by the middle of the seventies, fiction in Britain underwent a serious change thanks to a new generation of writers who were "less bound by the conventions of realism, increasingly interested in the grotesque and the fantastic" (389). According to Bradbury, two significant writers opened up this new direction for the British fiction, Martin Amis and Ian McEwan. McEwan's

concern for the “underground psychic and sexual realms” was a true reflection of the contemporary aspects of the social disorder and crisis (391). In Bradbury’s words, McEwan and Amis were “satirists and troubled moralists” who were able to underscore the lost innocence of the time by means of their “technically complex” methods that “displayed a new attitude growing in fiction” (390-391).

Similar to Bradbury, Peter Childs also mentions the importance of Amis and McEwan in the shaping of the literary climate in Britain after the seventies. In Childs’ words, their emergence in the literary scene “heralded the arrival in the 1980s of the writers who are now the best-known contemporary British novelists, such as Julian Barnes, Kazuo Ishiguro, Graham Swift, Salman Rushdie, Jeanette Winterson and Pat Barker” (1-2). Jack Slay goes on to add Angela Carter, Fay Weldon, J. G. Ballard, Will Self and some American gothic writers in this list, writers whom McEwan is mentioned together with (3).

Jack Slay also comments that McEwan’s choice of realism in his writing over the prevalent experimentalism of postmodernism back when he started writing is an example of his defiant attitude (3). It also represents his concern for carrying across the social messages inherent in his work. Actually, for Slay, this characteristic of McEwan’s style is what makes his work an “accessible reading to a tremendous audience” and puts McEwan in the tradition of the “reformative literature of ... such writers as Dickens, Eliot and Carlyle” (4). Malcolm Bradbury, on the other hand, interprets McEwan’s work as closer to the post-realist, postmodern tradition (389-391). Lynn Wells, just like Slay, underlines McEwan’s eager anxiety to create “believable characters and compellingly readable narratives in the tradition of the great English novelists, the imaginative conditions for ... achieving greater moral awareness” (17). However, Wells locates McEwan within the postmodern tradition as well. She names Iris Murdoch and John Fowles as his influences. She even declares

him to be “one of the world’s foremost writers of ‘historiographic metafiction’” (16). McEwan himself admits making use of postmodern techniques such as pastiche, intertextuality and self-referentiality (Hamilton 13-14; Wells 17), but more than that, early in his career, he disassociates his work from any fixed literary movement by announcing that “[he] can’t locate myself inside any shared, any sort of community taste, aesthetic ambition or critical position or anything else. [He doesn’t] really feel part of anything at all” (Ricks 24).

McEwan has won numerous awards, some of which are the Man Booker Prize, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, the Jerusalem Prize, the Whitbread Novel Award, the Somerset Maugham Award, the Shakespeare Prize, the Helmerich Award, and the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize. Among these prizes, maybe the most important one is the Man Booker Prize, which is one of the most prestigious literary awards together with the Pulitzer and the Nobel. Apart from the literary awards he was granted, McEwan was listed by *The Times* among the “50 greatest British writers since 1945,” and by *The Daily Telegraph* among the “100 most powerful people in British Culture” in 2008. He is a Fellow at the Royal Society of Literature, the Royal Society of Arts and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, among whose Fellows have appeared names like Coleridge, Hardy, Dickens, Benjamin Franklin, Karl Marx, Stephen Hawking, Charles Darwin, T. S. Eliot, and Pablo Picasso.

It can be said, in conclusion, that Ian McEwan is a significant figure for not only Britain but also arts and culture on a global scale. He has influenced and added to the world culture not only with his novels of different genres, but also with short stories, drama, screen writing, movie adaptations, children’s fiction, an oratorio and a libretto. He is actively engaged in the social agenda of his day and always expresses his opinions regarding political, social or ecological issues through interviews and

newspaper articles that he pens for national papers like *The Guardian*. He actively interacts with contemporary culture and social life. This alone makes his work a significant case study for a Marxist approach with all the opportunities such a study would yield of observing the contemporary 'political unconscious'; not in the sense that winning prizes makes one worthy of study, but in the sense that winning prizes marks one as an important actor within the dominant ideology which in turn makes one worthy of Marxist study.

The Cement Garden is McEwan's first novel, which he authored after two successful short-story collections, *The First Love, Last Rites* (1975) and *In Between the Sheets* (1978). Its atmosphere resembles the dark and macabre atmosphere of his short stories. All the appalling subjects of sexual tension and abuse, death, dark secrets and identity crises from these stories are also there in *The Cement Garden* as well; especially the incestuous relations between the siblings from the story 'Homemade', the gender and identity crisis from 'Last Day of Summer', or the bottled-up penis from 'Solid Geometry' are just a few examples. At the centre of the novel, there is a middle-class family with four children. Their oppressive father dies unexpectedly, followed shortly by the mother's similarly unexpected death. To avoid being taken into foster care, the children decide to bury their mother into cement in the basement of the house and keep her death a secret. The children, Jack (15) and Julie (17) slowly take up the role of parents as they try, in a way reminiscent of the children in *Lord of the Flies*, to live on together with their two little siblings without adult supervision. The sexual tension between the children emerges as an important element in the story. The novel ends when Julie's boyfriend Derek (23) discovers the mother's dead body and calls the police while Jack and Julie are making love upstairs. *The Cement Garden* is read as a reflection on disturbing

adolescent fantasies, but analysing it as a symbolic act, this study found that the text deals with the British Empire's demise in its political unconscious.

The winner of the Whitbread Prize, *The Child in Time* features several themes in its narrative and is the third novel by McEwan. From the onset of the story, the reader meets Stephen Lewis, the protagonist who writes fiction for children, an occupation he accidentally ended up in. Soon, the basics of the main plot are revealed: a few years back, on a weekend morning when Stephen let his wife Julie sleep in and went to the supermarket without her, their three-year-old daughter was abducted from under his nose while they were at the cash till. This event of random menace leads to an upheaval of the family's peaceful life. In the following chapters, the reader follows Stephen to and from a monthly meeting of a government committee, which is one of the fourteen sub-committees working on a new childcare and education policy, where he constantly daydreams about the past and his lost daughter. He is miserable at home and he has no social life or function. Although the story ends on a promising note, it is narrated against a disturbing and dark backdrop of a future where everlasting Thatcherite rule has turned the country into a dystopian realm. *The Child in Time* is appreciated as a political statement against the neoliberal Conservative government of the time and a critical stance on patriarchal values. However, after an analysis in Jameson's two horizons, it is found that the narrative movement corroborates the neoliberal-neoconservative viewpoint and denies a feminine outlook in its political unconscious.

The Booker Prize winner *Amsterdam* centres around the story of two 'old friends' and the events taking place in their lives after the death of their ex-lover Molly who seems to be the only common point between them, something that both holds them together as friends and ironically makes them feel contempt towards each other. Vernon is a newspaper editor and Clive is a composer of classical music.

Then, there is Julian Garmony, the right-wing Foreign Secretary, also an ex-lover of Molly, and George Lane, Molly's now widowed rich husband. Throughout the novel, the reader follows these four central characters into some moral dilemmas they go through and observes the corruption that is prevalent not only in their personal lives but also in the political and social life of the country in general. *Amsterdam* is considered to be McEwan's foray into satire and is mainly read as a take on the decaying morals of its time. An analysis of the text's political unconscious, however, reveals the narrative's engagement with the crisis brought about by the post-Cold War paradigm shift of the 1990s and also its acquiescence in the free-market hegemony.

All these findings that are explored with a Jamesonian analysis of the political unconscious of McEwan's novels go against the grain and contradict the conscious, or rather the surface meaning of these works. This indicates the value of Jameson's theory of the political unconscious and, by extension, the value of the analytical task taken up by this study.

There are two reasons for these three specific books to be chosen among all the novels of Ian McEwan. First of all, they represent different phases in McEwan's long writing career. *The Cement Garden* belongs to the early McEwan, who was then usually referred to as "Ian Macabre" (Groes 1). After a period of macabre and 'literature of shock' which is confined to the small and familiar universe of the 'family', McEwan writes *The Child in Time* where he broadens his perspective and chooses a subject matter that now goes beyond the confines of the family setting to include more social matters. He himself considers it a separate phase and calls this period from *The Child in Time* to *Enduring Love* the period of "novels of a sort of crisis and transformation, rites of passage of great intensity for characters" (qtd. in Childs 120). Then comes *Amsterdam* that is "lighter in tone, much more based in a

recognizable, shared social reality” (qtd. in Childs 120). Jameson’s method requires the consideration of the political and social background of a work; therefore, this study explores McEwan’s works from different political and social periods to avoid the repetition of the same arguments. Since the works named above were written in different decades, and since they belong to three different phases in McEwan’s oeuvre, a study of the aforementioned novels make room for different arguments and perspectives to emerge.

Secondly, all these three works seem to be devoid of any overtly political statements in their narratives. *The Cement Garden* deals with the confined environment of a family, *The Child in Time* focuses on the excruciating healing process of a trauma, and *Amsterdam* is about four adult men, ex-lovers of the same woman, backstabbing each other. Since Jameson’s method promises to be that untranscendable horizon which makes sense whatever cultural artifact is to be interpreted, it would be reasonable to choose these ‘seemingly’ unpolitical texts instead of other works that would embrace more openly political statements. Also, the fact that these novels have not yet been read from a Marxist perspective is promising in terms of what it may add to the literature on McEwan’s fiction. In other words, this study assumes that Fredric Jameson’s method will open up new meanings of McEwan’s fiction as will be exemplified by an analysis of *The Cement Garden*, *The Child in Time*, and *Amsterdam*.

Fredric Jameson describes his theory as ‘a Marxist critical insight’ which is “the ultimate *semantic* precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts” (*The Political* 75). He argues the Marxist insight to be the untranscendable horizon which “subsumes other interpretive modes or systems” which have only limited ways of interpreting the reality and whose “more positive findings [can be] retained, by a radical historicizing of their mental operations” (*The Political* 47). As

will be seen below, Jameson's model is not a self-standing new method in itself which will be applied to the text to extract meaning in the fashion of a carpenter using a new tool to give a new shape to his material. It is more like an approach that makes use of the existing tools, i.e. methods of literary criticism, in a way that exceeds their original intention. It uses, for instance, structuralist, psychoanalytical or deconstructionist methods and tools to analyse the text and then reconsiders their findings within an ultimate Marxist understanding. That is to say, although it is a crude analogy, Jameson's model does not hand the carpenter a new tool, but tries to show him the workings of the ones he has been using and their ultimate capabilities. Within the first political horizon of his model, for instance, Jameson relies mainly on a reconsideration of Kenneth Burke's idea of a *symbolic act*, and Julien Greimas' semantic categorisations. In the second horizon of his model, he now borrows *langue/parole* from Saussure and heteroglossia and dialogism from Bakhtin. In the third horizon, he makes use of Nicos Poulantzas' social formation and Ernst Bloch's nonsynchronous development. Meanwhile, as the foundation of his theory of political unconscious, he refers to Marx and Engels, along with Louis Althusser, Freud, Lacan and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Jameson explains his model of semantic enrichment that will reveal the unconscious of any text in this following short paragraph before he delves more into how each of his horizons works:

Semantic enrichment and enlargement of the inert givens and materials of a particular text must take place within three concentric frameworks, which mark a widening out of the sense of the social ground of a text through the notions, first, of political history, in the narrow sense of punctual event and a chronicle-like sequence of happenings in time; then of society, in the now already less diachronic and time-bound sense of a constitutive tension and

struggle between social classes; and, ultimately, of history now conceived in its vastest sense of the sequence of modes of production and the succession and destiny of the various human social formations, from prehistoric life to whatever far future history has in store for us. (*The Political* 75)

The first 'political' horizon, as Jameson says, considers the text to 'coincide with the individual literary work or utterance', that is to say, it follows the steps of an 'immanent analysis'. As William Dowling explains it, Jameson's use of the formalist immanent analysis addresses the criticisms that a Marxist approach "distort[s] the text to achieve 'Marxist' results" (120). By taking the formal structure of the text itself as the departure point, the reading in the first horizon refuses to use "a pattern imposed on the raw" data, but asserts that "aesthetic objects project their own norms" (Dowling 120). Although the first horizon promises to focus only on the formal structure of the text, Jameson adds, his perspective will be different from "that of ordinary *explication de texte*, or individual exegesis" since he will make use of a term he borrows from Kenneth Burke: "the individual work is [to be] grasped as an essentially *symbolic act*" in his first horizon (*The Political* 76). To explain himself, Jameson refers to Lévi-Strauss' interpretation of face paintings of the Caduveo (a South American tribe). According to Lévi-Strauss, Caduveo face paintings show a tension between the axis of the face and the lines that are painted on it. This, Lévi-Strauss says, is an indication of the social contradictions prevalent in the Caduveo tribe that is organised by a caste system. Since the Caduveo were not able to resolve this social contradiction elsewhere (unlike other tribes like the Bororo who provide a practical resolution through opportunities of intermarriage between castes), their face paintings turned into an outlet for a symbolic resolution of this contradiction. Jameson carries this argumentation over to the interpretation of 'any form of art' arguing that interpretation in the first horizon "must necessarily

grasp them as resolutions of determinate contradictions" (*The Political* 80). However, as argued at the beginning, Jameson does not plan to do this simply by indicating a political contradiction that was present during a text's publication and making a connection between that and the text, thus imposing something on the text from the outside. Rather, he argues that this contradiction will be discovered in what the fundamental formal contradiction *within* the text itself indicates. In other words, Jameson does not move from a contradiction in the society to the text to find its reflections there, but from the text (by articulating the contradiction in its formal structure) to the contradiction in the society.

In the first horizon, Jameson considers the text as the symbolic resolution to a determinate contradiction, a contradiction that is visible through the text's own projection of it. Therefore, while working within the first horizon of Jameson's political unconscious, McEwan's works will be interpreted as symbolic acts in order to reveal the contradictions they unconsciously aim to resolve. In *The Cement Garden*, for example, the narrator Jack's desire has a contradictory nature as it is a desire torn between an imaginary unity and a symbolic unity, which indicates a British society torn between an imperial past and a neoliberal future. In his third novel *The Child in Time*, the contradiction is two different versions of childhood and two different versions of time structure, which is indicative of the two contradictory directions that Thatcher's neoliberal/neoconservative politics try to move towards at the same time. In *Amsterdam*, the contradiction is within the moral programme that the narrative suggests, which represents a post-Cold War paradigm shift from the politics of value judgements to the politics of market values.

The second 'social' horizon is where the text does not stand on its own as the individual work itself, but as a part of the greater "collective and class discourses of which a text is little more than an individual *parole* or utterance" (Jameson, *The*

Political 76). For Jameson, the next step here is now to grasp the individual text, whose formal contradiction and the socio-political contradiction this corresponds to were already explored in the first horizon, as a single utterance of a greater class discourse. Jameson says that the “class discourse can be said to be organised around minimal ‘units’ which we will call *ideologemes*” (*The Political* 87). In the second horizon, then, the analyst has to start considering the text to be an *ideologeme* which will bear the stamp of a class discourse on it. Just as in Saussure’s theory, where *langue* is “an abstraction nowhere completely present in any body of texts or utterances and something that must always be reconstructed from partial evidence,” Jameson’s class discourse has to be reconstructed from what can be revealed from the ideologeme, i.e. the text (Dowling 132).

Any ideologeme will at first seem to indicate a univocal class discourse. Just as Gramsci’s theory of hegemony suggests, any class discourse needs to appear univocal to protect its power position. Yet, Jameson argues, the “content of a class ideology is [always] relational” and hence cannot be univocal (*The Political* 84). At this point, Jameson now borrows from Mikhail Bakhtin to better explain his argumentation. Making use of Bakhtin’s theories of heteroglossia and dialogism, which state that a text is always in dialogue with other texts, Jameson asserts that a class discourse is always in dialogue with the discourse of an antagonistic class. He says that “the ultimate (or ideal) form of class relationship and class struggle is always dichotomous. The constitutive form of class relationships is always that between a dominant and a labouring class” (*The Political* 83). However, this antagonistic discourse is not apparent all the time. As a consequence, in the second horizon of the political unconscious, the analyst needs to deconstruct the discourse of the antagonistic class in order to find the traces of a suppressed and silenced oppositional discourse.

According to Bakhtin any dialogue takes place within a code shared by both interlocutors. Similarly, Jameson states that the dialogue between opposing class discourses is a fight that is carried out “within the general unity of a shared code” (*The Political* 84). As an example of this shared code, he mentions the English civil war of the 1640s where antagonistic classes were fighting against each other over the shared code of religion (*The Politics* 88). In *The Cement Garden*, this shared code is the problem of unity that turns into a burning issue for British society in the 1970s. It will be discussed that while the narrative foregrounds an imaginary and a symbolic unity of motherly or fatherly control that reflect two versions of an oppressive ruling class ideology, i.e. imperialism or neoliberal globalisation, the two oppositional positions of trade unionism and punk subculture are barely discernible in between the lines, challenging the ruling class versions of unity with their own alternative versions of unity. In *The Child in Time*, the shared code becomes time structure. The narrative movement in this novel yields to a masculine version of temporality that represents a capitalist version of accumulative-progressive time structure as opposed to a feminine version of temporality which offers a more cyclical and diffuse alternative to the former dominant version. Lastly, in *Amsterdam*, the shared code becomes morals. Through its preference for a self-serving amorality over a more reflective and responsible moral relativism, the narrative movement betrays an acquiescence to the hegemony of an unchecked free market that suppresses and denies the alternative politics of a more benevolent, responsible and balanced nature.

A further detailed discussion of how each of these horizons works will take place in the following analytical chapters.

CHAPTER I

THE CEMENT GARDEN:

THE EMPIRE'S DEMISE AND THE SEARCH FOR UNITY

At the outset of his career, Ian McEwan was considered an *enfant terrible*: a writer whose narrow subject matter was unconventional and shocking. His journey from that point to being considered one of “the best writer[s] of contemporary fiction in English in the world” (Wells 11) took several decades and took him through several transformative turning points in his career as a writer. His later work, especially his work in and after the 1990s, has received more critical attention as well as having been read by a wider readership in comparison with his earlier work. All this is generally attributed to the narrow and disturbing nature of the subject matter in his earlier fiction. David Malcolm states that McEwan’s earlier fiction was not really “engaged with the social, political, and historical” as was his later work after “the mid-1990s” (5) just as Dominic Head relates that “McEwan’s later works are more overtly political, more humane, and more ostentatiously literary than the early work” (*Ian McEwan* 2). Kiernan Ryan shares the opinion that “[McEwan’s] writing underwent a marked evolution,” and she points out how he got rid of “the clammy feel [that] fouled the atmosphere of his early fiction [and embraced] an emerging apprehension of the power of love” (2). Similarly, Lynn Wells points out the fact that the “commonly accepted explanation for McEwan’s rise ... is that he has ... ‘grown up,’ leaving behind the grotesque fantasies, sexual violence and freakish outsider characters” (11). A much earlier reception of McEwan’s work bears the traces of the same point of view: it states that McEwan’s “subject matter is often squalid and sickening; his imagination has a painful preoccupation with the adolescent secrets of sexual aberration” (Pritchett). In an interview as early as 1978,

McEwan articulates his surprise at his work's being described in such ways and openly states his discomfort in being "characterised as someone obsessed by certain forms of sexuality," which, he thinks, is a "limited way" of understanding his fiction ("Points of Departure" 15).

Compatible with McEwan's discomfort, such a tendency to describe his trajectory as that of an author "who gradually grows out of his nasty adolescent fantasies and into a responsible adult novelist" (Ryan 2) often presents an unacceptable readiness to dismiss his earlier fiction as 'irresponsible' or simply 'juvenile:' "a monochrome of violence and horror" (McEwan, "The Pleasure of Prose" 41). It must be noted that there are more than 'juvenile' fantasies to his early 'macabre' fiction.¹ The importance of realising the 'ethical' and 'moral' questions even behind 'the violent and macabre aspects' of McEwan's earlier work has already been pointed out by several critics (Nicklas 16; Müller-Wood 40; Weidle 61; Wells 11; Ryan 4-5, Head). Apart from the ethical and the moral, however, there remains a political dimension to his early work yet to be discussed and brought to light.

This chapter aims at exploring the political in *The Cement Garden's* (1978) unconscious in the light of Fredric Jameson's horizons of semantic enrichment which were briefly discussed in the introduction chapter.

As was discussed, Jameson indicates that in his first horizon "the individual narrative, or the individual formal structure, is to be grasped as the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction" (*The Political* 77). What Jameson means by 'real contradiction' is a contradiction in the structure of a society which that society is unable to resolve in praxis, as in the example of the Caduveo tribe that was discussed

¹ McEwan's early macabre fiction is considered to comprise *First Love, Last Rites* (1975), *In Between the Sheets* (1978), *The Cement Garden* (1978), and *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981)

earlier. This real social contradiction, which is engraved in the ways that contemporary society experiences itself, becomes engraved in the works of art and narratives produced in/by that society as well. Since these art works and narratives could not possibly engage with such a social contradiction directly (i.e. in praxis), they deal with it symbolically in the confines of their formal structure. This makes any such text a symbolic act. Once taken as symbolic acts, McEwan's earlier texts deserve a reading closer than that which the critics above deem them to deserve; a reading that merits a more penetrating understanding of the workings of their narratives.

Accordingly, this chapter will grasp *The Cement Garden*² as a symbolic act, a symbolic resolution to a real social contradiction which the text could not possibly engage with directly. It is this veiled social contradiction that will be uncovered from the text's unconscious by making use of Greimas' structuralist tools of 'actantial model' and 'semiotic square.' After a discussion of the application of these tools to texts, *Cement* will be interpreted accordingly, and it will be proposed that although not immediately visible beyond what the text means on the surface, *Cement's* political unconscious bears the traces of a nation that is trying to come to terms with the British Empire's demise and the painful metamorphosis of its self-image. The analysis will try to point out the central tension in the text's narrative paradigm, and it will be argued that the text's inability to resolve this tension indicates the nation's and at the same time McEwan's inability to deal with the problem of the Empire's disintegration and decline. The manipulation of the family structure by the text into a motherly (i.e. Lacan's Imaginary) realm hints at a reluctance to accept the demise of the Empire, the demise of the mythic mother of the nation. By refusing to bury the

² It will be referred to as *Cement* henceforth.

dead mother and to grow up, the children in the text become paralysed in a morbid inertia, just like Britain in general in the 1970s. In the same way, the children's resistance to outgrowing their childhood dreams and to mixing with the outside society echoes Britain's resistance to waking up from its imperial fantasies in the face of a rising neoliberal global order which presents itself as a historical necessity of the changing world order of the post-Second World War era. In Lacanian psychoanalytical terms, this resistance becomes discernible in the text's structural insistence on a 'unity of homogeneous dissolution,' as characteristic of Lacan's Imaginary order. Through the power the elder sister Julie and the dead mother holds over the family, the text tries to reinforce the imaginary unity of motherly love which actually belongs to a bygone stage of the children's development just as the fantasies of imperial totality belong to a bygone era. This is contrasted in the text with the possibility of a passage into a 'unity through difference' (as conceived in the model of Saussurean structuralism) as characteristic of Lacan's Symbolic order. The text forecloses the father figure and later plays down the role of Derek (Julie's boyfriend) who could have delivered the children into the Symbolic order, where they can construct their separate individual identities and explore a unity that arises upon their differences, just like the neoliberal global order that first decolonises empires into parts and then unites them within a neoliberal global village.

However, it should be noted that this study is not trying to work on the motherly Imaginary order as a psycho-pathological problem per se. The point is that, as will be discussed below, McEwan's *Cement* unconsciously engages with a real socio-political contradiction within the framework of the bourgeois nuclear family structure and hence invites a psychoanalytical reading of itself. In the present analysis, then, a resistance to leaving the Imaginary for a passage into the Symbolic order indicates a resistance to change and development. In other words, the socio-

political antinomy, i.e. holding onto an imperial image in the face of decolonisation and neoliberalisation that the historical moment compels, finds its ideological/symbolic playing out in *Cement* in an antinomy of Imaginary vs. Symbolic.

The story in *The Cement Garden* revolves around a lower middle-class English family which is made up of the unnamed parents and four siblings: two girls Julie (aged 17) and Sue (aged 13), and two boys Jack (aged 15) and Tom (aged 6). The story does not include many other characters, and only Derek (23), Julie's boyfriend, is named other than the siblings. Jack is the first-person narrator. Although the novel is set in a seemingly contemporary Britain, there is no information as to when and exactly where the story takes place. The setting is utterly confined to the family house, moving only once outside the limits of the immediate surroundings which, like the house itself, do not offer much to the inhabitants since the house stands "on empty land where stinging nettles [are] growing round torn corrugated tin" (*Cement* 27-28). Once part of a busy street with lots of other houses, the family house is now left engulfed by a modern wasteland when all the "other houses were knocked down for a motorway they had never built" (*Cement* 28). Adding to this desolation is the family's seclusion from the larger society. The family is never visited by anyone since each parent is an only child and all of their relatives are already dead at the time of the narrated events. Besides, neither the children nor the parents have "any real friends outside the family" (*Cement* 28).

Although the story is restricted to the events happening within the "claustrophobic environment" of the house and within the simple web of relationships "of domination among individuals" in a single family (Wells 18), it is also universal since McEwan's careful omission of reference to any time and place

“functions to generalise the novel’s action” (Malcolm 55). According to David Malcolm, not only the generality of time and place, but also the generic quality of the characters should be noted: “Characters, like time and place, are ... rather general. Names alone indicate their generic quality. The mother and father are never named; the reader never learns the family’s surname” (56). In addition to this, the characters are never fully described but are simply given formulaic traits such as Julie’s beauty and bossiness, Sue’s isolation, Tom’s regression, and Jack’s alienation and frustration (Slay 48). The reader is unable to visualise them in their full separate personalities.

For Malcolm, all these qualities of the setting and the characters, in fact, elevate the action from the limited specificity of a single family to a universal quality which encourages a “British national-political reading” of the story (65). Hence, he suggests an interpretation which, in the end, amounts to a reading of the wasteland around the family house as representing the post-Second World War state of Britain, and the children’s “indifference to social norms” as reflecting the “rejection of a sterile authoritarian and patriarchal past” (65). A reading such as this, although yielding some results, would probably overlook the problematic relation of art to the real, which is never really a direct relation: a one-to-one relation in which the artefact reaches out and touches the real, or in which the real reaches in and creates its reflection in the artefact. This is Fredric Jameson’s argument by which he regards it “utterly unacceptable” when a conventional social or historical criticism tries to “show how a given artefact ‘reflects’ its social background” (*The Political* 81). In the Jamesonian hermeneutic as it is detailed in his seminal *The Political Unconscious* (1981), the work of art cannot solely be taken in its face value as a ‘reflection’ of reality, but must first be grasped “as a *symbolic act*” (76), as “symbolic resolution of real political and social contradictions” (80). Therefore, *Cement*, as with any text,

should be read not as a direct reflection of a political or social context, but as a symbolic attempt at the resolution of that contradiction which is to be explored in its unconscious.

An artefact is a symbolic act because, first, as Kenneth Burke, from whom Jameson appropriates the term ‘symbolic act,’ explains it, there is a “radical difference between building a house and writing a poem about building a house” (8-9).³ While the first act is a *genuine* act which produces effects in the real, the latter is “an act which is ‘merely’ *symbolic*, its resolutions imaginary ones that leave the real untouched” (Jameson, *The Political* 81; italics added). Considering Burke’s example, the resolution which the genuine act of building a house serves may be a real one directed at the practical desire to have a shelter. Hence, the genuine act addresses this desire in the real. However, the poem’s resolution of having successfully built the house is acted out at an imaginary level. In other words, even though the narrative in the poem may feature the process of construction with all the necessary materials detailed and ending with the view of the house perfectly built, still the resolution of having successfully built the house by the end of the poem is simply symbolic action.

Yet, the poetic building’s being symbolic is not only in the sense that it builds a house only in ‘play’ but also in the sense that the underlying struggle being expressed may not be that of house construction: the successful construction of the house may be a resolution of an initially invisible desire in the unconscious. It is not that the poet was in need of a house and, being unable to have it in reality, he decided

³ Kenneth Burke’s example of a hypothetical ‘poem about building a house’ will be used during the ensuing discussions to outline Fredric Jameson’s idea of using the Greimassian Semiotic Square. In Burke’s original work, he never uses this example in the ways it will be used later in this study, and Burke does not refer to any real poem as such. This study expands on Burke’s original example.

to write a poem about it to satisfy his need. On the contrary, under radical scrutiny it may be uncovered that the poem was written, for example, by a young man who actually dreams intemperately of becoming a poet after finishing university but is afraid of doing so since he somehow has an unresolved fear that he will not be able to maintain his life by only writing poems. In that case, it may be interpreted that this contradiction the poet is experiencing—achieving future stability which is represented by the image of the house (supporting and providing for oneself and one's family) on the one hand and risking future economic insecurity which is represented by the image of poetry (a contemplative occupation that rejects the notion of material progress a primary place) on the other—finds expression in the disguise of a poem about building a house, since a house has a metonymic relation to family, stability and safety in the dominant bourgeois middle-class value system. In the end, it is his wish to maintain his house by writing poems that he fulfils by building a house *by* writing a poem.

This line of argumentation has certain parallels with what Freud said in his “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” in 1908:

[T]he day-dreamer carefully conceals his phantasies from other people because he feels he has reasons for being ashamed of them. ... [E]ven if he were to communicate them to us he could give us no pleasure by his disclosures. Such phantasies, when we learn them, repel us or at least leave us cold. But when a creative writer presents his plays to us or tells us what we are inclined to take to be his personal day-dreams, we experience a great pleasure ... [The writer uses artistic methods to overcome] the feeling of repulsion in us which is undoubtedly connected with the barriers that rise between each single ego and the others. ... The writer softens the character of his egoistic day-dreams by altering and disguising it, and he bribes us by

the purely formal—that is, aesthetic—yield of pleasure which he offers us in the presentation of his phantasies. (152-153)

Although suffering from a certain subjectivism, Freud underlines that creative writing might be seen as a wish-fulfilment process by which the creative writer is able to communicate his story, *but only* in disguise, by maintaining the secret under formal and aesthetic creation. The poet, in the hypothetical example above, has reasons to feel or know that he cannot come out and write a poem about his fearful wish on the face of it since it would repel and ‘leave the reader cold’ as it does in listening to someone’s dream fantasies. In a way summarising Freud’s exposition above, Jameson maintains that the literary work detaches itself from the real by using the powers of “Displacement and Condensation; gratification of the wish by its displacement and disguise, and a simultaneous release of psychic energy owing to the formal [play]” (Jameson, “Imaginary and Symbolic” 341). Therefore, writing a poem about building a house is different from building a house in the real because it emerges only as a symbolic reaction to a contradictory situation—becoming a poet and starting and providing for a family at the same time—which the poem both disguises and tries to resolve at the same time; just as smoking cigarettes in one’s dream may both disguise an urge for lovemaking and release the tension that arises from the lack thereof.

Thus, in essence, although David Malcolm’s insight that *Cement* encourages a British national-political reading of itself is convincing, his conclusions that some elements in the story are direct reflections of some characteristics of Britain, as a “mini twisted ‘Condition-of-England’ novel” (65) miss the symbolic nature of *Cement* as an artefact. It is not a mistake to adopt a notion of context since “[c]ritical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose” (Burke 1), but nevertheless that situation (along with the questions it poses),

which is nothing more than the literary text's "historical or ideological *subtext*" for Jameson (*The Political* 81), may not be immediately present as the traditional notion of 'context' connotes; it is always disguised behind formal play as Freud's words suggest. For Jameson, that context "must itself always be (re)constructed" through a realisation of the unconscious of the text at hand (*The Political* 81).

So far, the aim of analysis with Jameson's model appears to be psychoanalysing the creative writer to understand which element of his unconscious was symptomatically reflected through his act of writing. However, Jameson's exegesis is more than that. The problem for this study is not one of analysing Ian McEwan using a psychoanalytic method or a traditional biographical method to understand why he came to write *Cement*. Such an approach would reduce the text to McEwan's personal fantasy. As Kenneth Burke clarifies, grasping literary works as symbolic action should not be reduced to an analysis of individual psyches since the "situations are real; the strategies for handling them have public content" (1), strategies here meaning the imaginative works themselves. The strategies' having public content underlines their social essence. Therefore, rather than psychoanalysing the creative writer, a more fruitful approach would be focusing on the text and, in a way, psychoanalysing the text itself for its unconscious. Hence, in a more proper Jamesonian exegesis, this would mean piercing the surface of the narrative of *Cement* in order to obtain an understanding of its 'subtext' where the real socio-political contradiction, the text's *raison d'être*, is hidden.

To exemplify what may inhere in such a hidden subtext, Jameson turns to anthropology. In Jamesonian terms, Kenneth Burke's core idea of an imaginative work's being a symbolic answer to a real situation is understood to mean that any individual narrative arises as the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction which it was not possible to resolve in real practice. Jameson relies on the ideas of Claude

Lévi-Strauss to press home this relation between the text and its subtext. The important example from Lévi-Strauss' work *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) concerns the facial decorations of the women of a South American Indian tribe, the Caduveo. According to Jameson's summary of Lévi-Strauss' observations, Caduveo is a hierarchical society, like the neighbouring societies of Guana and Bororo. It is made up of relations of domination between endogamous castes. Guana and Bororo societies, on the other hand, make use of exogamous exchanges to cut across these relations of domination between castes. Hence, while they are able to mask the underlying inequalities of their cast system through exogamy, Caduveo society does not allow for exogamy or for any other institutional surface remedy. Therefore, Lévi-Strauss remarks:

On the social level, the remedy was lacking ... but [the solution] was never completely out of their grasp. It was within them, never objectively formulated, but present as a source of confusion and disquiet. Yet since they were unable to conceptualize or to live this solution directly, they began to dream it, to project it into the imaginary. ... We must therefore interpret the graphic art of Caduveo women ... as the phantasy production of a society seeking passionately to give symbolic expression to the institutions it might have had in reality. (qtd. in Jameson, *The Political* 78-79)

Lévi-Strauss' interpretation is very straightforward in indicating the unconscious of an artefact, which is a political unconscious. In his understanding, the real socio-political contradiction, which is insurmountable in its own terms, finds a formal resolution in a symbolic action. And in order to get a glimpse of that real socio-political contradiction, one has to, as Lévi-Strauss himself did, psychoanalyse the text of the artefact, which is always a formal/structuralist analysis in practice. Jameson asserts that the discussion of the Caduveo facial art is a discussion of a

situation in a 'so-called' primitive society, and a discussion of the political unconscious may not be that straightforward when it concerns modern society in all its complexities (*The Political* 79-80). This complexity originates in the ideological closures of modern societies. In the following excerpt, Jameson relates how there exists an ideological subtext between the subtext of real social contradiction and the narrative surface:

[T]he social contradiction addressed and 'resolved' by the formal prestidigitation of narrative ... cannot be directly or immediately conceptualized by the text. It seems useful, therefore, to distinguish, from this ultimate subtext which is the place of social contradiction, a secondary one, which is more properly the place of ideology, and which takes the form of the *aporia* or the *antinomy*: what can in the former be resolved only through the intervention of praxis here comes before the purely contemplative mind as logical scandal or double bind. (82)

According to Jameson's explanation, hence, there are not one but two subtexts to a contemporary literary artefact. The first subtext which a structural/formal analysis of any literary text reaches is actually the 'ideological' subtext. This ideological subtext conceals a nether subtext which is the subtext of the 'real,' similar to Lacan's Real or Althusser's Absent Cause. This nether subtext is the place where the real socio-political contradiction is located: the real contradiction which may only be resolved through praxis, that is, through practical destructive and/or revolutionary action. In other words, Jameson draws on the idea that we perceive the world through the lenses of certain ideologies; therefore, on the journey to reaching a text's political unconscious, the analyst needs to be concerned with the fact that a real social contradiction will be ideologically obscured when it features in a text's political unconscious.

Jameson contends that the subtext of the 'real' cannot be directly or immediately conceptualized by the text because the real—what Jameson terms 'History' in the Marxist sense—is fundamentally “non-narrative and nonrepresentational” (*The Political* 82). Yet, although non-narrative, paradoxically, it is only accessible to us in textual form: “it can be approached only by way of prior (re)textualization” (Jameson, *The Political* 82). Within this process of (re)textualization of the real, though, the ideological filter comes into play “shutting out the truth about History” (Dowling 77). Jameson calls this aspect of ideology a *strategy of containment* (*The Political* 10). Such strategies of containment do not so much close off or limit comprehension of the contradictions in the real as *repress* their existence. Dowling clarifies Jameson’s argument as “an idea of History intolerable to the collective mind, a mind that denies underlying conditions of exploitation and oppression much as the individual consciousness denies or shuts out the dark and primal instinctuality of the unconscious” (77-78). In short, in its relation to the nether subtext, the literary text cannot help but create a first subtext which transforms the real contradictions of the nether subtext into ideological double-binds. Therefore, as the cough is the symptom of flu, the logical double-binds become the symptoms of real contradictions. In the end, the text imprisons itself within this ideological closure and tries to resolve these symptomatic double-binds, leaving the real contradiction untouched.

Therefore, the argumentation above concerning the poem about building a house was worked out only as far as the first ideological subtext of the poem. In order to reach the political unconscious of the text, or the ultimate subtext—the intolerable History that was repressed—, the analysis must not end there. The antinomy of house/poetry (material security/contemplative idleness), which makes up the first subtext of the text, hence, must only be regarded as an ideological

double-bind which has arisen from a nether subtext which is the subtext of a real social contradiction. In order to reach this repressed subtext, Jameson makes use of the structural semiotics of Julien Greimas, especially his semiotic square.

The Greimassian Square (see Fig. 1) is made up of two axes: S axis and $\bar{S}$ axis. S axis is the Complex axis while $\bar{S}$ axis is the Neutral axis. Within each axis there are two semes, which hence yield four semes in total: S_1 is the positive, S_2 is the negative seme, and these are 'contrary' to each other, meaning, in Greimassian semiotics, that it is not possible for both of them to be 'true' at the same time. These semes have their 'contradictory' counterparts on the $\bar{S}$ axis: $\bar{S}_1$ and $\bar{S}_2$. These counterparts are also contrary within themselves, but since this $\bar{S}$ axis is the Neutral axis, both of these semes may be 'true' at the same time. The square relies on an original binary opposition (contradiction) on the S axis and starts firstly by an investment in the seme S_1 , which is the favoured or master seme, and proceeds by positing first its contrary S_2 , and then generating the contradictory semes $\bar{S}_1$ and $\bar{S}_2$.

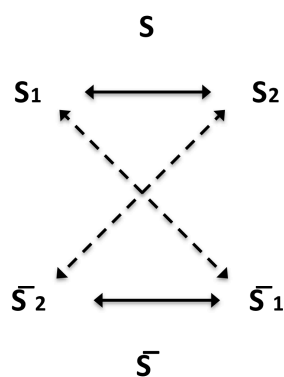


Fig. 1 The Greimassian Semiotic Square

Jameson has expressed his "passionate interest in" Greimassian semiotics, specifically for its "capacity to produce fresh problems" (Foreword vi-vii). However, he expresses his attraction with the proviso that the semiotic square does not

comprise a “deeper truth or rightness” in terms of reflecting reality (Foreword vii). His use of the Greimassian Square in *The Political Unconscious* is in parallel with this understanding:

[T]he semiotic rectangle becomes a vital instrument for exploring the semantic and ideological intricacies of the text—not so much because ... it yields the objective possibilities according to which [everything] ... must necessarily be perceived, as rather because it maps the limits of a specific ideological consciousness and marks the conceptual points beyond which that consciousness cannot go, and between which it is condemned to oscillate. (47)

In his own work, Greimas defines his working of the semiotic square, which is itself a reworking of the Aristotelian Traditional Square of Opposition (Parsons), as a mapping out of the logical status of the deep structures of reality, the objective possibilities, and urges it to be used to map “the fundamental mode of existence of an individual or a society” (87). Jameson, however, underlines that the Greimassian Square is not to be employed because it represents “the logical structure of reality itself” which, he says, is an erroneous “transhistorical” approach to reality (*The Political* 46). As his words above clarify, Jameson employs it for its functional value of laying bare the ideological closure in which the subtext of any literary text is generated. Once this ideological closure is laid bare, the critic can proceed with a *symptomatic analysis* which is a mode of interpretation that, in Dowling’s words, “reveals (1) the specific ways in which [literary texts] deny or repress History, and (2) what, once brought ... into the light of rational scrutiny, the History thus denied or repressed looks like” (78).

Returning again to the poem about building a house, it might be possible to interpret the subtext of the poem through Greimassian Squares. Greimas originally

schematizes three models using the Square: individual value systems, economic value systems, and the more fundamental one, social value systems (93-96). Individual value systems act on a model of desire/fear, economic value systems on one of profit/harm, and social value systems on prescription/prohibition. In the case in point (see Fig. 2 below), the young man *desires* (P_1) to be writing poetry in the future. However, he *fears* (P_2) that writing poetry will actually bring him economic insecurity: he thinks he will not be able to support himself and/or his family as a grown up by simply writing poetry. This *impasse* in axis P immediately generates the contradictions in axis $\bar{P}$: hence: he would *not-desire* ($\bar{P}_1$) losing poetry, whereas he would *not-fear* ($\bar{P}_2$) being secure.

Still, the contradiction between desiring to be a poet and losing economic security is not a primordial opposition. That is to say, there is no inherent contradiction between these two. Therefore, there has to be a certain cultural construct that creates such antinomy. That brings the critic to a deeper level of subtext which represents the norms outside the individual value system. That deeper subtext must be somehow reflecting itself, through ideological distortion, into the individual value system. The (mis)understanding that writing poetry is not a proper career, that an adult has to be starting a family, securing a stable salary (or profit in commerce) to provide for them, buying a house and a car and as such, is the reflection of a strictly bourgeois Capitalist idea. According to this economic value system (see Fig. 3 below) material security is seen to be *profitable* (E_1) while writing poetry may be *harmful* (E_2) since poetry does not conform to the Capitalist ideals of material progress and capital accumulation: the image of the poet who is not directly aiming at securing these conditions—especially with the images of the Romantic poet, alienating himself from the society, doing nothing but reflecting on the natural world (Lynch and Stillingner 13-20) and of the Modern avant-garde poet alienating

himself from the society in bohemian pubs or coffee-houses—is harmful for Capitalist ideals, and the Capitalist mode of production.

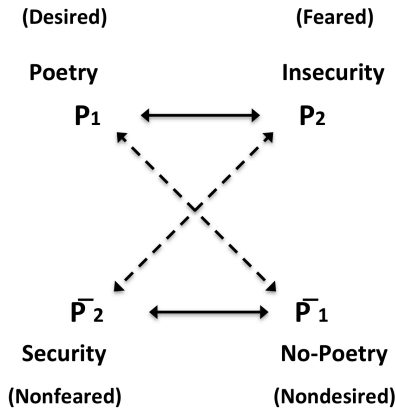


Fig. 2 Individual values of the poet

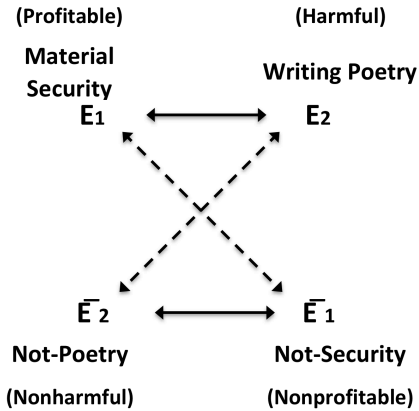


Fig. 3 Economic values of the society

Therefore, a projection of the two value systems together yields the following four overlaps:

- (1) $P_1 \approx E_2$ conflictual – a harmful thing is desired
- (2) $\bar{P}_1 \approx \bar{E}_2$ conflictual – nonharmful thing is not desired
- (3) $P_2 \approx \bar{E}_1$ balanced – nonprofitable thing is feared
- (4) $\bar{P}_2 \approx E_1$ balanced – profitable thing is not feared

As the relationships (1) and (2) indicate, there is a conflict between the young poet's desires and the economic value system. The ideal resolution of the contradiction in the individual value system would only be reached through a combination of the *desired* with the *nonfeared*: security together with poetry ($P_1 + \bar{P}_2$) hence creating the 'ultimate desire' (see Fig. 4). Such a combination, as shown in the four overlaps above, simultaneously means a combination of the *profitable* with the *harmful* in the economic value system: material security through writing poetry ($E_1 + E_2$). However, although there is, in the individual value system, no obstacle to a combination of $P_1 + \bar{P}_2$ since they are neither inherently contrary to each other nor

contradictory, in the economic value system the combination of $E_1 + E_2$ is not really possible because they are contrary categories; it is not possible for both of them to be true at the same time.

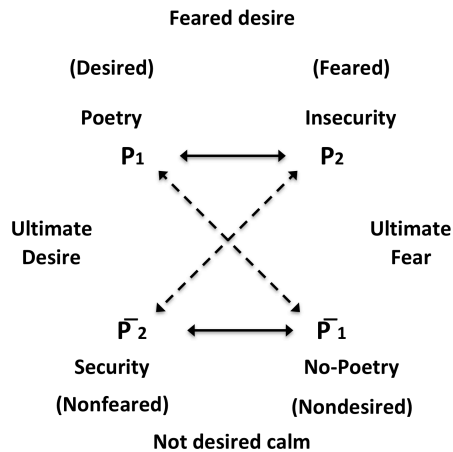


Fig. 4 The combinations in the individual value system

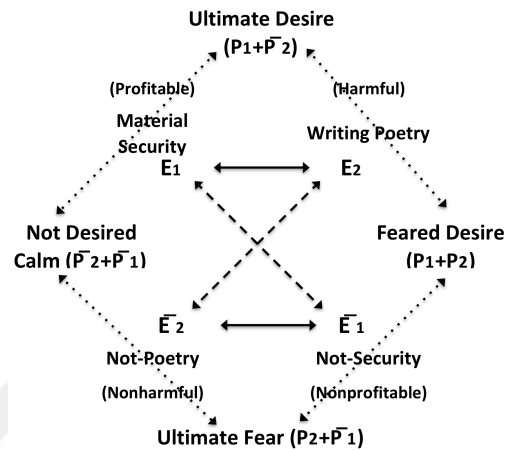


Fig. 5 The superimposition of the individual combinations over the economic value system

This relationship is an example of what Jameson describes in the long quotation from *The Political Unconscious* above. The contradiction in the economic value system may only be resolved through praxis, that is, through practical revolutionary activity which aims at changing the society altogether, from its basis. Only by demolishing the prevalent economic value system altogether, that is, only by changing the social formation from one which values everything according to the ideals of profit and accumulation to that which embraces a different value system, a value system that does not create such a contradiction, would it become possible for both $E_1 + E_2$ to be true at the same time and hence get resolved.

Therefore, the young man's poem shuts out the real contradiction which is embedded within the underlying economic value system of society because it is

unable to conceptualize it directly and immediately: the relentlessness of the capitalist mode of production becomes readily repressed for the individual through ideological colouring. Yet, as in the example of Caduveo facial decorations, repressed dissent concerning a real contradiction surfaces, in a distorted manner, in the shape of a contradiction within a seemingly purely individual value system. Hence, the poem overcomes the determinant social contradiction by only superimposing a symbolic resolution upon it, which is arrived at thanks to the projection of his individual value system over the economic value system (see Fig. 5). Thanks to the unproblematic combinatory possibilities of his individual value system, the poem helps him fulfil his wish and overcome the problem through the narrative apparatus of the poem he writes about building a house. Yet, this resolution remains merely symbolic because it leaves the real contradiction in the economic value system undisturbed.

In brief, the political in the poem discussed above, was not on the surface of the text. It was not reflected through simple metaphors or symbols either. The political was repressed behind layers of subtexts. It became visible only after realizing the text as a symbolic resolution of a certain contradiction which led the argumentation to a reconstruction of those subtexts on the basis of their fundamental contradictions. Therefore, a conventional close reading of *The Cement Garden*, in the sense David Malcolm has suggested, would only yield surface results such as grasping the desolate neighbourhood around the house as a symbol for post-war Britain, or the death of the parents as a metaphor for the death of tradition. In order to reach the political unconscious, the text must be grasped as a symbolic act first, which arises from the need to resolve a real contradiction. This contradiction should be visible in a semiotic interpretation of the text's structure as it was with the interpretation of the poem above. Then, these findings need to be re-evaluated

as an ideological closure, “a symptomatic projection of something quite different” (Jameson, *The Political* 83), namely, a determinant social contradiction.

Yet, the argumentation above was still somehow straightforward since the example was a hypothetical one. Jameson insists that a full analysis of the political unconscious may start only by articulating “a text’s fundamental contradiction” (*The Political* 80) which was, in fact, already apparent in the poem example: the poet was building a house by means of ‘words.’ With a real text, the argumentation has to follow a more intricate route since grasping the contradiction *within* a full text is a less straightforward task.

In conclusion, in an analysis of *The Cement Garden*, the first step must be identifying the contradiction in the text which will, then, allow the interpretative process to formulate the real determinant contradiction that underlies the text. An analysis of the family context, the dynamics of desire and Oedipal tensions that are central to *Cement*’s narrative will no doubt be relevant to the exploration of this contradiction in the text.

Indicating these dynamics and tensions, *The Cement Garden* opens with the narrator mentioning his father’s death in the very first sentence:

I did not kill my father, but I sometimes felt I had helped him on his way. And but for the fact that it coincided with a landmark in my own physical growth, his death seemed insignificant compared with what followed. ... I am only including the little story of his death to explain how my sisters and I came to have such a large quantity of cement at our disposal. (*Cement* 13)

The resounding Oedipal tension in this brisk but vexing account of the Father’s demise is reminiscent of McEwan’s own apprehension that “Oedipal situations recur constantly in [his] work” (“Points of Departure” 16). In the text, then, Oedipal

dynamics play a central role, hence also the context of nuclear family, since the Oedipus complex cannot be thought of separately from the family setting.

The relationships within and the workings of a family is a prevalent theme in McEwan's oeuvre. In *First Love, Last Rites* (1975), just as in *The Cement Garden* (1978), incest is a recurrent focal point. In *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981) and *Enduring Love* (1997), the dynamics of couples are at the core of the story. *The Child in Time* (1987) and *Saturday* (2005) try to deal with traumatic events and how they affect families. McEwan acknowledges his preoccupation with these relationships in different interviews. He clearly underlines that, while writing *The Cement Garden*, he had the "wish to examine power relationships in the family" ("PW Interviews" 69). He identifies his core idea by saying that "in the nuclear family the kind of forces that are being suppressed – the oedipal, incestuous forces – are also paradoxically the very forces which keep the family together" ("Points of Departure" 17). Thus, it is no surprise that the majority of the critical works on *Cement* read the text using a psychoanalytical approach. Like Peter Childs, who suggests reading *Cement* as a narrative about "familial norms" (34), most of the critics seem to be constrained by a psychoanalytical reading. This becomes an indication as to where to look for the ideological impasse in the narrative. It was already discussed above that a real social contradiction in a text's political unconscious is obscured by certain ideological conceptualisations and that Greimassian semiotics can be used in order to map how that ideological conceptualisation encloses the narrative movement within a central contradiction, an impasse. Hence, acknowledging the dominance of psychoanalysis as a master key in the narrative in *Cement* suggests a direction for the search for that central contradiction in the text.

In other words, the aim here is not a discussion of the reasons why the family context plays such a powerful role in McEwan's fiction, or specifically in *The Cement*

Garden. The reason might be that McEwan was trying to make sense of the conflicts in his own family; or, it might be due to the use of 'family' as a common analogy in explaining or justifying the organisation of the state since antiquity—it will be discussed below that the contradiction in *Cement*'s subtext is directly related to the problems of empire and state ("Family as a Model"). Or, it may simply be due to the emergence of the "broadly suburban ... nuclear-family units" as the "demographically and culturally dominant" experience in the 1970s (Hubble, "The Ordinarity" 43). The reason may be one of these or a combination of them. Yet, no matter what the reason(s) for the centrality of a psychoanalytical family context in the narrative are, it should not simply be taken as a setting that furnishes the story with a backdrop, but as the major actant within *Cement*, the actant that initiates and frames all the action.

Nor is the point to discuss whether McEwan was using this context on purpose or unconsciously. According to Kenneth Burke, the work of every writer, when examined as a whole, indicates a certain pattern of organisation which the writer unconsciously takes up every time he writes. It is his way of making sense of the problems (or urges) that motivate him to write: "The motivation out of which he writes is synonymous with the structural way in which he puts events and values together when he writes; and however consciously he may go about such work," as in McEwan's own declaration of his preoccupation with the family setting, "he cannot possibly be conscious of the interrelationships among all these equations" (Burke 20).

The aim of this study is to establish the fact that the family may be argued to be serving as an ideological interference in McEwan's *Cement*. In other words, it is the text's first (immediate) intermediary subtext. After laying bare the structure and the central contradiction in this first subtext, the analysis may then move from that

analysis towards an understanding of the text's deep structure, its second (nether) subtext, which is where the real social contradiction is located. In that case, starting off with a psychoanalytic approach would be what the text of *The Cement Garden* demands in order to reveal its first subtext: a psychoanalytic analysis of *The Cement Garden* would help penetrate through the family context which serves as the 'motivation' for McEwan's way of shaping the events and values into a structure in this first subtext. Once it has been laid bare, the contradiction here would be taken as the symptomatic projection of the real determinant social contradiction of the nether subtext.

Therefore, for the first step of the analysis of *The Cement Garden*, this study will make use of Greimas' actantial model to grasp the workings of the family context in the text's surface structure. This surface structure, as will be discussed shortly, is built upon (1) the role of the parents in the story, (2) the 'desire' of the narrator (Jack), (3) the essence of this desire, and (4) the resolution the text offers for the satisfaction of this desire.

As is clear from Jack's opening remarks above regarding his father's death, the first chapter of the novel acts like a 'preface' to what the narrator Jack sees to be the 'main' story. Jack briefly recapitulates, in this preface like opening, the last days of his father and the way he and his sisters used to consider him: "a frail, irascible, obsessive man with yellowish hands and face" (*Cement* 13). The Father is described as a horrible person whom little Tom literally "was scared of" (*Cement* 17). He always maintains a sullen silence and refuses to listen to anyone's ideas. He continuously humiliates his wife and children with insulting jokes based on their personal flaws, but the family knows that "[j]okes were not made against Father because they were not funny. He sulked" (*Cement* 20-21). Jack recounts that whenever one of the children had friends at home for a birthday, his father "liked to

have the children stand in neat lines, quietly waiting their turn at some game he had set up” because “children milling around without purpose, irritated him profoundly” (*Cement* 41). He is portrayed as an oppressive and cruel father.

The portrayal bears significant resemblance to McEwan’s real father, a “domineering” military man, whom McEwan, like Tom, admits being literally scared of: “As a kid, he scared the shit out of me. ... [W]hen I saw him, I’d run behind the settee and call to my mother to send him away. ... [H]e was an intruder into my rather intense, pleasant relationship with my mother” (“Points of Departure” 4). In another interview, McEwan admits the connection between his father and the Father in *Cement*: “I had very powerful and confused feelings about him. I loved him and I feared him. I enjoyed doing exciting things with him ... But I also shrank from his loud presence. ... In *The Cement Garden*, I killed him off early on” (“An Interview” 75). As he admits, McEwan has the narrator get rid of this figure very early in the story. The reader learns at the narrative’s opening that, apparently, the Father had had a heart attack some time ago, and he had been at home most of the time because of it. It is also learned that he died of a second heart attack triggered by the hard work of trying to cover the house-garden with cement although he was prohibited from doing any hard work ever again. A funeral ensues, which is hinted at only in passing, and the Father is never a topic of discussion again.

The Father’s disappearance not just from the family but also from the story turns out to be an important element for the narrative in *Cement*. Shortly after the Father’s unexpected death, the Mother, first, gets seriously ill and becomes bedridden. Then, she dies similarly unexpectedly. To avoid being separated and taken into foster care, the children decide to bury their mother in cement in the basement of the house and keep her death a secret. As Lynn Wells underlines, the cellar in a house is “the dark entity of the house, the one that partakes of

subterranean forces" (35). Therefore, by burying their mother in the basement, instead of, for instance, in the garden or in the desolate yard nearby, the children "contrive to banish their dead mother from their minds and preserve her nevertheless as the invisible foundation of their lives" (Ryan 20). In the end, the death of the mother—who is now buried in their unconscious—and that of the father—who is now foreclosed out of their psyche and the text—serve different functions in the text. They regulate the narrator Jack's *desire* in different ways, the desire that is at the core of the text's action (or inaction). The parents' influence on Jack's desire draws, at the same time, the frame within which that desire struggles for a resolution. Hence, before continuing with a discussion of how the parents' deaths fabricate the essence of Jack's desire and decide on the terms in which that desire has to be resolved, the study must identify Jack's desire in its visible form.

From the very beginning, it is made clear to the reader that Jack is obsessed with his sister, and this desire comes to occupy the centre of tension in the text. Jack mentions a game they used to play on Sue when they were smaller: "The game was that Julie and I were scientists examining a specimen from outer space. We spoke in clipped Germanic voices as we faced each other across [Sue's] naked body" (*Cement* 16). This sexually charged game involves touching and caressing Sue's genitals, an act which both Jack and Julie carry on "knowingly, knowing nothing" (*Cement* 16). During the game, however, Jack is not interested in Sue's body but "longed to examine [his] older sister [which] the game did not allow" (*Cement* 16). Even when fantasising about the game to masturbate later, it is not Sue's body parts that Jack is imagining but "Julie's pale-brown fingers between Sue's legs" (*Cement* 16). The same image of Julie's hands keeps appearing in Jack's masturbation fantasies as a repeating motif (*Cement* 23).

The text is profuse with instances that emphasise Jack's incestuous attraction to Julie. Two of these instances are very evocative in the manner in which they are discussed. The first instance takes place next to the bedridden Mother's sickbed. During Jack's sixteenth birthday party, the siblings gather in their mother's room around a cake, and Mother asks Jack to sing them a song for their amusement, which Jack refuses. Hence, Julie does a handstand to entertain everybody, and she is wearing a skirt. Jack narrates the scene as follows:

Her knickers showed a brilliant white against the pale brown skin of her legs and I could see how the material bunched in little pleats around the elastic that clung to her flat, muscular belly. A few black hairs curled out from the white crotch. Her legs, which were together at first, now moved slowly apart like giant arms. Julie brought her legs together again and dropping them to the floor, stood up. In a confused, wild moment I found myself on my feet singing 'Greensleeves' (*Cement* 45)

Another instance comes soon after, while Julie sunbathes in the garden. She asks Jack to help her with some sun lotion:

I knelt between her open legs and squirted from the tube a pale, creamy fluid on to my palm. ... Her shoulder straps were untied and trailed on the ground. If I moved a little to one side I could just make out her breasts, obscure in the deep shade of her body. When I had finished she called over her shoulder, 'Now do my legs.' This time I rubbed the cream on as quickly as I could, with my eyes half-closed. I felt hot and sick in the stomach. ... I hurried indoors and upstairs to the bathroom. (*Cement* 51-52)

Jack's narration of these instances is very straightforward and very graphic in style. His narration openly indicates his consideration of Julie as a desired object that frustrates him, and all these instances culminate in the climactic ending of the story

where Jack and Julie commit incest. The climax where Jack seemingly satisfies his long sought-after desire confirms the fact that Jack's desire acts as the fundamental tension in the text. Yet, according to the arguments of Burke and Jameson above, the text cannot simply be aiming at this surface remedy since it must always be a symbolic resolution for a determinant contradiction in the real. Hence, it becomes necessary to scrutinise the essence of Jack's desire in order to understand what its symbolic resolution in the climax attempts to resolve in the subtext.

In order to understand the textual 'grammar' of desire, Greimas' actantial model proposes identifying six roles that occur in relation to such a desire and three basic narrative patterns: (1) subject/object [desire, search, aim], (2) sender/receiver [Communication], (3) helper/opponent [Auxiliary support or hindrance] (Selden et al. 69). A diagrammatical model of the fundamental action pattern in *The Cement Garden* would then be as seen in Fig. 6.

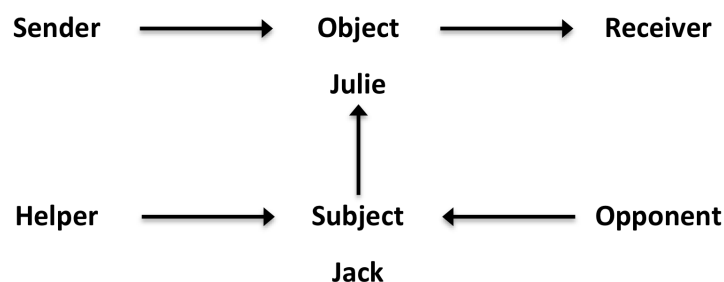


Fig. 6 Jack's desire for Julie, an interpretation through the actantial model

Investment in the empty categories in Fig. 6 would start by the 'sender' since "traditionally, sender is considered to be that which initiates the action" (Hébert): in the traditional fairy tale, the King announces that his daughter, the Princess, needs to be rescued and this generates a subject (the Knight) via generating an object of desire. In psychoanalysis, however, Desire is related not to a *presence* but to a *lack*

(Evans 44), and this process is tied to “[t]he Oedipus complex [which] represents the regulation of desire by the law” in Lacanian psychoanalysis (Evans 102). Thus, reducing Jack’s attraction to Julie to a simple arousal stemming from an adolescent’s proximity to a desirable object—sexual arousal stemming from the *presence* of a desirable object—would completely overlook the family context that calls for a psychoanalytical understanding of such desire. Therefore, interpreting Jack’s attraction as a Desire in a psychoanalytical sense would yield a better understanding of the forces underlying Jack’s desire for Julie.

For Hegel, human desire is always already attached to a desire to be recognised: “Desire is human only if the one desires ... the Desire of the other; ... that is to say, if he wants to be 'desired' or 'loved,' or, rather, 'recognized' in his human value, in his reality as a human individual” (Kojève 6). Even when a subject desires a thing (or a concept), it is mostly because someone else desires it; hence, the subject’s desire, in this case, is to be understood as an attempt to be recognised by this ‘other’ person: the subject tries to communicate ‘his Desire to be desired by’ the other person by appropriating the other person’s desire (Kojève 6).

In the Oedipus complex, the same process ensues when the child wants to be recognised by Mother in order for him to maintain the illusion of unity with her. In the first stage of the Complex, the child realises that Mother is a ‘desiring subject’ because she lacks something (the Phallus). Similarly, the child himself is a desiring entity since he lacks the unity that the prenatal womb used to provide. He desires to be loved and to be united with the Mother. Therefore, the child “seeks to become the object of her desire” by identifying with the imaginary Phallus which, the child thinks, is what the Mother is lacking and is thus desiring (Evans 131). This is marked as the first time, the beginning, of the Oedipus complex; the subject is still in the Imaginary order and the illusion of a possible unity is prevailing. However, in its

healthy functioning, “[t]he Oedipus complex is ... nothing less than the passage from the imaginary order to the symbolic order” (Evans 131). Therefore, the child needs to leave this imaginary unity behind at the resolution of the Complex in order to successfully finish his passage through the Oedipus complex into the symbolic social order.

Hence, while the child desires to be the object of desire for the Mother within the illusory unity of their dual relationship, in the second stage of the Oedipus complex, the Father’s Law interferes and prohibits the child’s access to the Mother, and this law is regulated by the fear of Castration. There is, however, a dialectical relationship between law and desire here since the law does not so much impose limits on desire as create it in the first place:

[T]he law creates desire in the first place by creating interdiction. Desire is essentially the desire to transgress, and for there to be transgression it is first necessary for there to be prohibition. Thus, it is not the case that there is a pre-given desire which the law then regulates, but that desire is born out of the process of regulation. (Evans 102)

Therefore, by prohibition, the law changes the shape of the child’s desire: the real form of the desire, which was a lack, is now obscured by the law, and it seems *as if* the possession of the Mother (as a presence/object) was the actual source of desire. This equation also creates a rivalry between the Father and the boy in a competition to possess this object.

Finally, in the third stage of the Oedipus complex, this process of rivalry develops into a contract because the boy realises that he cannot beat the Father’s Law and hence decides to identify with the Father. By giving up the Mother and the Phallus (hence accepting Castration), the boy “defers these gratifications to a later point [via] identifying with his father, who is distinguished by having both a penis

and a woman. Thus, the boy creates the strongest possible needs in himself to be his father" (Poster 18). And it is this identification with the Father which marks the boy's passage from the imaginary into the symbolic order because "[t]he father is ... more than a mere rival ...; he is the representative of the social order as such, and only by identifying with the father in the Oedipus complex can the subject gain entry into this order" (Evans 62). In this way, the child leaves behind the infant frustrations, anxieties and illusions of the imaginary order, and 'grows up' to be integrated into the social order under the "totalising, all-encompassing effect of the symbolic order" (Evans 204). Thanks to his integration into the social order, the child is now able to leave behind the feeling of loss of unity which he was anxiously trying to overcome by the futile means the imaginary order provided for him (i.e. ideal ego vs. ego ideal).

As specified above, hence, Jack's desire, in a psychoanalytical sense, does not originally arise from the presence of an object or an opportunity but from a lack, and this lack is a lack of unity that the subject discloses in his desire 'to be desired by another.' A recurring textual clue as to the fact that Jack is still in the imaginary order, where a lack of unity drives the boy's desire, is Jack's preoccupation with his mirror image. Jack spends too much time in front of mirrors, looking at himself, glorifying his own image, or masturbating: "I frequently stared at myself in mirrors, sometimes for as long as an hour" (*Cement* 26). His preoccupation with his mirror image paralyses him in a narcissistic attitude: "I felt noble and unique. I stared at my own image till it began to dissociate itself and paralyse me with its look" (*Cement* 27). In a way confirming the paralysing effect his own image has on Jack, Dylan Evans states that one's 'specular image' in the mirror has a seductive power over the subject which "imprison[s] the subject in a disabling fixation" (Evans 21). What gives the specular image this power is its illusory promise of unity. In

psychoanalysis, the Mirror Stage is a moment in the imaginary period, and it represents the time the infant realises, for the first time, “its reflection in the mirror as a wholeness, in contrast with the uncoordination in the real body: this contrast is experienced as an aggressive tension between the specular image and the real body” (Evans 6). Therefore, the promise of ‘wholeness’ and unity in the image both instigates the subject’s urge for unity and stirs up an aggressive impatience for the fulfilment of that promise. Jack is eager to be recognised by others and yearns to feel included. During one of the mirror scenes, his yearning is clearly indicated in his concern for how Commander Hunt (a fictional character in a sci-fi pulp) would think of him: Jack fears, looking at his image “in front of the mirror [that he] was not the kind Commander Hunt would have had on board his space ship” (*Cement* 43). He wants to be a part of something, wants to feel that he belongs and is accepted. He wants to be recognised and desired.

What objectifies this desire, on the other hand, is the intervention of the Father’s Law (Name-of-the-Father) in the second stage of the Oedipus complex. Hence, at this second stage, the object of Jack’s desire in Fig. 7 below is the Mother, and it is shaped into being by the Name-of-the-Father. The objectification of Jack’s desire in the shape of his mother is noticed in his act of spying on her through the kitchen window when she thinks the children have already gone to school. While watching her secretly, Jack expresses his surprise at realising “the obvious fact of her independent existence” outside his objectification of her: “She was not a particular invention of mine, or of my sisters” (*Cement* 31). Jack remembers feeling the same surprise years before, when he fakes being ill and comes “home to monopolize her while [his] father and two sisters were out of the house” (*Cement* 31). These instances underline the way Jack sees his mother as an object. Meanwhile, since this second stage is also marked by a rivalry between the Father

and the boy, the Father also appears in the opponent category (see Fig. 7): the opponent represents anything that threatens a successful unison between the subject and the object. In the text, acknowledging their rivalry, Jack confesses to the reader that despite knowing the dangers for his father of doing heavy work, he “made sure [his father] took as much weight as [he] did” while they were carrying the cement packs into the cellar (*Cement* 18). Jack acts as if their work is a competition, and he tries as much as he can to be the winner of this competition:

When we bent down and each took hold of a corner of a sack, I felt him delay, waiting for me to take up the strain. But I said, ‘One, two, three ...’ and pulled only when I saw his arm stiffen. If I was to do more, then I wanted him to acknowledge it out loud. ... My father leaned with one hand against the wall breathing heavily. Deliberately, I breathed as lightly as I could, through my nose, even though it made me feel faint. I kept my hands casually on my hips. (*Cement* 18)

The episode indicates that Jack sees his father as a rival, an opponent that he has to eliminate in order to possess the object of his desire.

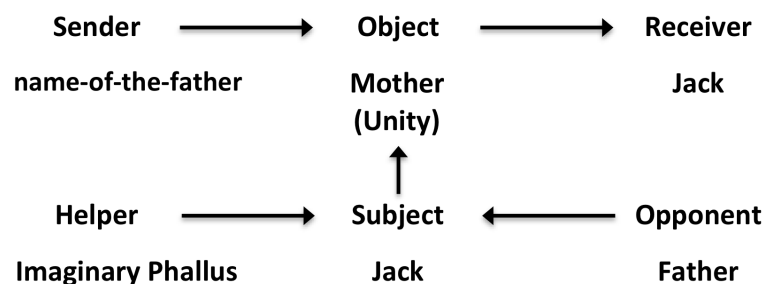


Fig. 7 The actantial interpretation of Jack's desire in the second stage of the Oedipus complex (before the foreclosure of the symbolic father)

In the end, however, what should follow this second stage, in the third stage of the Oedipus complex as a developmental necessity, is an abandonment of this desire and an act of identification with the Father, which will provide the subject's passage into the symbolic order. Yet in Jack's case, the Oedipal process is interrupted due to the exclusion of the Father from the family. Lacan interprets such an exclusion of the Father from the family, which reduces the family to a mother-child realm, as one of the causes of 'psychosis:' "the family group which is reduced to the mother and siblings presents a psychic complex in which reality tends to remain imaginary or at most abstract" (Lacan 35). Yet, what Lacan is suggesting here is not simply the death of the person who happens to be the 'male parent' but the disappearance of the *symbolic father* or the *Name-of-the-Father*.

Lacan identifies three types of father figures which are compatible with his 'orders:' the imaginary father, the symbolic father, and the real father. The most important one for Lacan's theory is the symbolic father. Dylan Evans describes the category of the symbolic father as follows:

The symbolic father is not a real being but a position, a function, and hence is synonymous with the term 'paternal function'. This function is none other than that of imposing the LAW and regulating desire in the Oedipus complex, of intervening in the imaginary dual relationship between mother and child to introduce a necessary 'symbolic distance' between them. 'The true function of the Father ... is fundamentally to unite ... a desire and the Law'. ... the symbolic father is not an actual subject but a position in the symbolic order. (Evans 62-63)

Therefore, the problem is not the disappearance of the real father but the *foreclosure* of the symbolic father, which is not so much the real father figure as the paternal function in the Oedipus complex that delivers the child from the imaginary order

into the social order. For Lacan, the “failure of the paternal function”, results in a failure in the subject’s entrance into the social world and a failure in his attempt to detach himself from the mother; the imaginary relation with the mother, for Lacan, is an “engulfing force” from which “the child must detach himself” (Evans 120).

The text emphasises the foreclosure of the symbolic father, hence the failure of the paternal function, starting from the very opening episode in *Cement*: Jack openly glosses over his oppressive father’s death by regarding it as “insignificant” (*Cement* 13). Upon finding his father’s dead body in the garden, his face sunk in wet cement, Jack is not moved even a little bit. He knows that he has to “run for help” but he lingers and watches “[a] light breeze [stir] a loose corner of his [father’s] shirt” (*Cement* 23). He relates what follows in a few short sentences: “Subsequently there was a great deal of activity and noise. An ambulance came ... Sue cried and Julie comforted her. The radio was playing in the kitchen” (*Cement* 23-24). The narration of the trivial details like the corner of the Father’s shirt or the sound of the radio help the reader understand how insignificant Jack feels this incident to be. The first chapter, which starts with “I did not kill my father” (*Cement* 13) ends with the last sentence “I did not have a thought in my head as I picked up the plank and carefully smoothed away his impression in the soft, fresh concrete” (*Cement* 24). First by announcing his father’s death to be insignificant and then by erasing the impression his father’s face made on the cement, Jack expels this whole episode from his psyche. Lynn Wells regards Jack’s act of erasing his father’s impression as an act of “erasing and thereby appropriating the inscription of his patriarchal power” (35). Yet, thinking about the fact that Jack does not take up on that patriarchal power in the rest of the narrative and the fact that he gives in to the imaginary unity of the mother-child realm which is what is left behind with the Father’s disappearance from the scene, it would be more appropriate to read Jack’s act as the Lacanian

foreclosure of the symbolic father, the Law of the Name-of-the-Father; therefore, an act that indicates the failure of the paternal function in and its removal from the equation.

Therefore, the Oedipal process, starting from (1) the emergence of a Desire out of a lack, moving to (2) its changing shape and reorientation to an object, and to (3) the ultimate abandonment of it during the passage from the imaginary into the social order, is interrupted at the second stage in *Cement* due to a failure of the paternal function. Such an analysis, which uncovers the altered nature of the Oedipal process for Jack, helps the re-investment in the actantial categories around Jack's desire (see Fig. 8) and helps an understanding of the essence of this desire in its full extent: although at first it seems to be a twisted incestuous desire, what Jack is seeking is, in fact, a unity, a wholeness, a personhood. It is merely a misdirected search due to a foreclosure of the symbolic father and the prolonged reign of the mother.

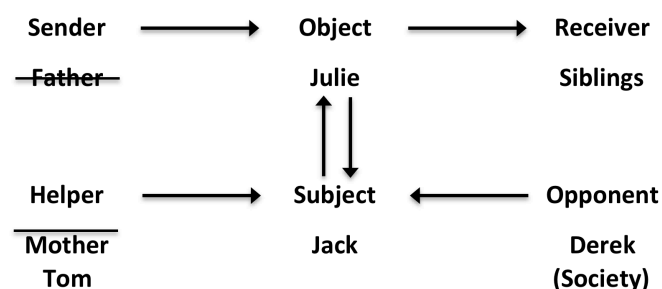


Fig. 8 The actantial interpretation of Jack's desire after the foreclosure of the symbolic father and the burial of the mother in the unconscious

As mentioned before, the death of the Mother and that of the Father take on different functions in the text, and they become the primary influences that shape Jack's desire. First of all, since this is the second stage of the Oedipus complex, the

law of the symbolic father has already reshaped Jack's desire into an object form. Therefore, the sender is the Name-of-the-Father as was seen in Fig. 7. Yet, the Father's death comes before the second stage of the Oedipus complex is through and done with. The foreclosure of the symbolic father, hence, deprives Jack of the possibility of abandoning his desire for the Mother-object (hence ~~Father~~ is strikethrough in Fig. 8) and allows that object to persist as the target of Jack's desire. Therefore, the symbolic father has created (while he was present) the object of Jack's desire and (because he is now absent) has also made it impossible for Jack to transcend that desire. His desire continues to appear to Jack as desire for an object, but the fact is that this is a false image of his real desire for unity and stasis; so, the text creates a tension in the image of a desire which seems impossible to satisfy. Even if Jack succeeds in getting hold of that object, it will not satisfy his actual desire for unity since the only possible way of overcoming the entrapment of this vain search for an imaginary unity would be a passage into the symbolic social order, as a complete Oedipal process indicates.

Secondly, the death of the Mother brings about another influence, namely, the protraction of the power of the imaginary order (hence the accented Mother in Fig. 8). By making the mother a constant figure in their psyche, the siblings close themselves to any possibility of change or development because of the 'engulfing force' of the mother figure Lacan points to. Kiernan Ryan states that "secreting her body in the home, the children deny her death and protract her sway, deferring the demise of their own childhood" (Ryan 21). As Ryan points out, whereas the foreclosure of the symbolic father marks the closing off of the symbolic, the secretion of the Mother marks the persistence of the imaginary. The persistence of the imaginary may best be explained by the difference between William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and *The Cement Garden* (1978). In an interview, McEwan

states that he was deliberately thinking about writing an urban version of *Lord of the Flies* when he came up with the kernel idea for *Cement* ("The Art of Fiction" 96). Peter Childs compares these two works by stating that "whereas Golding's children run wild ... McEwan's grow close together" (Childs 34). In another interview, McEwan makes a similar observation to that of Childs when he states that although free from any parental supervision and authority, the children are still "completely paralysed" in *Cement* ("Adolescence" 21). Despite their fundamental similarity, the difference between *Lord of the Flies* and *Cement*, in this respect, is that, in the former, the action takes place in the symbolic realm of power relations and therefore activity and change is possible, while in the latter, the action is restricted within a persisting imaginary order; hence, activity and change are paralysed. As stated above, Lacan argues that the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father results in a limbo where the reality becomes imaginary and abstract. The children are paralysed within the imaginary order, and they cannot move forwards, as when Julie observes, "I can't really imagine anything changing. Everything seems still and fixed" (*Cement* 149). Jack expresses a similar feeling when he says that "[e]xcept for the times I go down into the cellar I feel like I'm asleep. Whole weeks go by without me noticing" (*Cement* 149). Even their entrapment within the house, in Lacan's words, may be taken as an extension of "the imago of the maternal womb ... that of the pre-natal habitat, [which] finds an adequate symbolisation in the dwelling house" (22). The siblings are trapped in their house and in the imaginary order.

Therefore, stuck within this imaginary realm, and deprived from any possibility of transcending his objectified desire, Jack starts relying on an imaginary idea of unity represented by the mother figure. That is why, even during her sickness, their mother's "bedroom [becomes] the centre of the house;" the children spend all their time there even while their mother is fast asleep "talking among

[themselves] or listening to her radio" (*Cement* 49-50) or "eat [their] meals" there (*Cement* 56). Everything gets framed within an imaginary future of "when Mother gets up" (*Cement* 50). Due to their entrapment within the persisting imaginary order, Jack's understanding of unity reverts back to a more imaginary relationship based on the image of motherly love. The first time the reader witnesses this is the instance when their mother dies in her sickbed: "When Sue came in and Julie told her the news, both girls burst into tears and embraced each other. ... I felt excluded but I did not wish to appear so. At one point I placed my hand on Sue's shoulder ... but neither of them noticed me" (*Cement* 62). Jack now longs for a wholeness that he sees in the incommunicable unity between his sisters. He desires to be a part of their female harmony that he feels he cannot really be integrated into. He does not want simply to be together with them side-by-side, but to exist harmoniously, like a homogeneous ingredient of their group, completely dissolved and unidentifiable: "I had a strong wish to spy on my sisters, to be with them and be invisible" (*Cement* 85). Even when his sisters, as they did with Tom, try to dress him up like a girl, which Jack originally finds infuriating, he cannot help but conform to their manipulation because he likes the attention he gets: "I was rather enjoying myself, standing there being examined" (*Cement* 88). He fears that if he reacts, he "would become a spectator again" (*Cement* 87).

Jack's understanding of 'unity' at this precise moment contrasts with the first time Jack hints at his desire for a unity at the opening of the story, when the two workmen bring the cement sacks to their house. Impressed by the manly business-like dialogue, Jack admits his feelings by saying how "[he] liked this kind of talk" (*Cement* 14). Jack does "not wish to be placed outside this intense community of work"; hence, he "count[s] the sacks too, and when they were all done [he stands at his] father's elbow while he signed the delivery note" (*Cement* 14). Apparent from

this masculine episode, the unity he was looking for at the beginning of the story was of a more social nature thanks to the Father's presence: the paternal function makes integration into the social order possible.

The Mother's death also confers on Julie a new meaning in the narrative. She becomes the motherly figure in their mother's stead, and Julie's role as the new mother is reinforced above all by Tom who has "made up his mind that Julie was to take care of him" (*Cement* 79). Just like Tom, Jack and Sue are ready to see Julie as a mother surrogate from the very beginning. In the presence of Julie, they act like little children:

When I looked across at Sue she giggled. Julie would not look at us, and when she spoke it was in a low voice to Tom. When she left the room for a minute to take a tray of food upstairs, Sue and I kicked each other under the table and laughed. But we stopped when we heard her coming back down. (*Cement* 38)

Not long after their Mother starts to fade away in her sickbed, Jack begins to consider that Julie has become "remote from [her siblings], quiet, certain of her authority" (*Cement* 39). Together with this change of roles, Jack admits that he has started to see his sisters differently: "I did not really think of Sue as a girl now. She was, unlike Julie, merely a sister, a person" (*Cement* 40). Julie is more than a mere sister for Jack now because she has evolved into a motherly figure and hence replaced his mother in the object position of Jack's desire. Hence, now instead of his mother, Jack seeks to be united within this new motherly figure: he desires to be recognised and desired by Julie, and he seeks to be Julie's object of desire which, as was discussed above, is the only understanding that the persisting imaginary order allows for (hence the reciprocal arrows in Fig. 8).

Within this actantial positioning, in conclusion, the impasse in the text finds its surface expression in an incestuous tension between Jack and Julie. Then, the climactic lovemaking scene comes as the resolution the text is able to arrive at in order to dispel the tension it has created. The text foregrounds Jack's union with Julie as the only probable outcome of this actantial positioning. Such an outcome is considered as a 'successful' resolution in terms of the narrative movement by many critics since it means a reproduction of the familiar patterns of authority in the nuclear family in which Julie would act as the surrogate mother and Jack the surrogate father (Ryan; Childs; Wells; Malcolm). That is also why the receiver category in Fig. 8 is occupied by all of the siblings since they benefit from the reinstitution of the older patterns of authority in the house. Peter Childs interprets the act of incest as Jack's appropriation of "his father's vacated position as alpha male" (35), while Wells reads it as a successful completion of the Oedipal circle that prepares the siblings "to assume caring and responsible adult roles" (36), and David Malcolm regards it both as a literal and metaphoric balance of male and female: "the uniting of seeming opposites" (59). On the other hand, this study will discuss this resolution as a futile one, as has already been hinted above, because it does not resolve Jack's true search for unity and personhood that can only be resolved by an integration into the symbolic order. Although Jack seemingly satisfies his lust for Julie by sleeping with her, it is an inept resolution because Jack is unable to satisfy his need to pass into the symbolic order. Jack only satisfies a mirage that a misdirection of his desire for unity has created, misdirected by the effects of the roles of his parents as discussed above. The resolution the text hence tries to offer is predominantly a return to an imaginary idea of unity which can be contrasted to a developmentally truer form of unity that comes with a passage into the symbolic

social order which requires not a growing closer but a separation of the siblings from each other for their construction of their individualities in the society.

Having identified, therefore, the essence of Jack's desire, the analysis may now focus on the way in which this desire 'ineptly' satisfies itself; in other words, the analysis will now focus on the text's resolution for the narrative's surface tension. Grasping the workings of this resolution in the narrative's surface structure will illuminate the way the text works as a symbolic act that attempts to resolve a determinant social contradiction in its nether subtext. For this purpose, the study will make use of the Greimassian Semiotic Square.

It has been discussed so far that the narrative movement on the surface mainly depends, for its suspense, on Jack's incestuous desire for Julie. The central suspense element in the text does not emerge from a concern of 'whether people will find out about the mother's dead body' but from the tension in Jack and Julie's relationship. As McEwan himself recognises, the narrative does not obsess itself with the hidden body in the cellar, trying to portray the siblings "glancing over their shoulders all the time," as much as it concerns the oedipal and incestuous tension between Jack and Julie ("Points of Departure" 17). Hence, the conclusion, where the two make love in an attempt to relieve this tension, serves as the resolution of the surface tension in the text. However, it has already been revealed through the discussions above that there lies more beneath this surface tension and that Jack's desire is originally a desire based on an absence, which is a lack of wholeness and unity. On his way to overcoming this lack through the usual Oedipal development, Jack loses his father and the *Name-of-the-Father* is foreclosed to him hence ruining his chance to enter the symbolic order and develop his separate personhood. Through the end of the novel, Jack is presented with another chance of passing into the symbolic order. Derek's arrival does nothing more than invoking the second

time of the Oedipal complex where the subject sees himself in rivalry with the Father. Just as he defied his father during the episode where they carried the cement into the house, Jack now defies Derek when they go down to the cellar together to check the source of the stinking smell in the house. In the cellar, Derek, just like the others, uses a handkerchief to avoid the unbearable smell while Jack pretends not to be bothered by this challenging situation: "I was determined to use nothing and took quick breaths between my teeth" (*Cement* 133). Similar to his defiant attitude in the episode where he helped his father carry the sacks of cement, Jack pretends to be superior to Derek in this episode. Also, Jack states that he is "irritated" even by sharing "the sight of [Julie] with Derek" (*Cement* 140). Derek is clearly his new rival now. Nevertheless, Derek, since he is the father substitute in the role of the symbolic father now, is not a mere rival but a second chance for Jack to enter into the symbolic; Derek offers to act as the father surrogate and deliver Jack from the imaginary that is reigning in their house into the symbolic which is acted out in the very masculine world of the billiard saloon where Derek takes Jack to spend time together. Yet, Jack refuses this opportunity once again and is unable to adapt to the atmosphere in the billiard saloon. He feels out of his league in the male world of the billiard saloon and feels intimidated because of the manly banter. Thus, he hurries back home, crying (*Cement* 113-119). Julie, too, obstructs Derek's intervention as the father surrogate. She says that Derek "wants to be one of the family ... big smart daddy. He's getting on [her] nerves" (*Cement* 148). Losing the means that would help him detach himself from the imaginary order, Jack sinks back into imaginary stasis together with his siblings.

The symbolic order of 'progress' and 'change,' on the other hand, is dispelled from the realm of their house with the reign of the 'regressive' and 'immutable' imaginary. The siblings are incapable of change or progress due to this stasis: hence

in the text, just as Elleke Boehmer critically discusses in a study on how the apparatus of nation and nationalism works, men occupy “the dimension of time—linear, future-directed, associated with change and progress—[whereas] women preside over the static dimension of space—the past, tradition, nature” (32). In the reign of the imaginary order, their life seems to be deprived of meaning or telos: “there [is] not much point in getting up” for Jack, for instance (*Cement* 93). The siblings are constantly waiting for an “unsought-for time in the near future when the old patterns would be re-established” (*Cement* 50). Although they suspect that this time may never come, they still resist breaking away from this “enchanted realm of arrested infancy” (Ryan 22). Contrarily, breaking away from each other and their house might have made change and progress possible for them. As Lacan affirms, in order for a subject to maintain a full sense of personhood, he has to break the ties with his family and to struggle “to be recognised outside the family group” (22). Lacan calls this a second ‘weaning’ to differentiate it from the first weaning in infancy. He underlines the “ruinous consequences” that an inability to detach oneself from the “securities provided by the family” (22) could bring about. This reality is hidden in the way the siblings somehow feel that although they deliberately, in order to “keep the family together,” allowed their mother to hold the centre of gravity in their lives, “it might have been more interesting to be apart” from each other, building new lives elsewhere (*Cement* 98).

In that case, the contradiction lies here: what Jack (and also the other children) really need—in psychoanalytical terms—is integration into the symbolic order so that he can actually ‘grow up’ and become a complete person. The unity that the text offers in the end, however, exists only within the limits of the imaginary order; it only brings a prolonging of this impasse, not its resolution. Therefore, in the text’s surface structure (Fig. 9), an idea of imaginary unity occupies the category

of the desired seme (P_1) while the developmentally necessary entrance into the symbolic order (P_2) is placed in the negative seme category. These two semes in the complex axis bring forth the other two semes in the neutral axis. In contradiction to the divergence, branching out and difference that the symbolic order offers as a developmental necessity, there exists the idea of uniformity ($\bar{P}_2$) that the stable nuclear family structure offers. On the other side, unity is contradicted by an idea of separation ($\bar{P}_1$) that contact with the outside society would bring to the siblings, which would change their lives altogether.

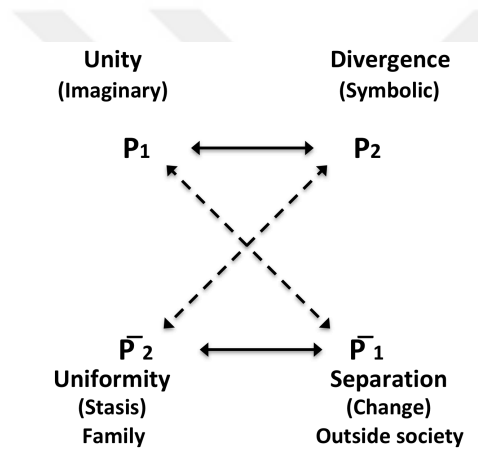


Fig. 9 The text's value structure

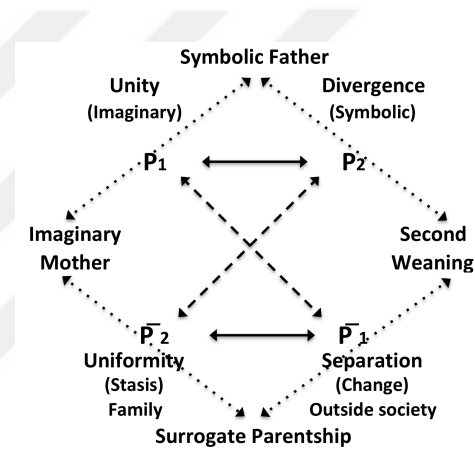


Fig. 10 The possible combinations

This structure of antinomies as seen in Fig. 9 represents the underlying contradiction (i.e. the Imaginary vs the Symbolic) that puts the narrative into motion. Hence, the resolution of Jack and Julie's lovemaking at the end of the story must be considered against this underlying system of antinomies with an eye on whether it really resolves the contradictions here or not.

Within this structure, a true growing up for Jack first requires a combination of P_1 and P_2 as shown in Fig. 10 (indicating the boy's identification with the symbolic father), which will then give way to a following combination of P_2 and $\bar{P}_1$ (which stands for the child's full integration into the symbolic social order through a second

weaning). These are the developmental necessities that growing up into a healthy selfhood requires in psychoanalytical terms: leaving behind the Imaginary, integration into the Symbolic and the process of the second weaning.

However, the text insists upon a combination of P_1 and $\bar{P}_2$ which is a combination of the idea of imaginary unity with the Mother figure (that is now taken up by Julie) and the idea of a reinstitution of the nuclear family patterns in the image of the surrogate mother Julie and the surrogate father Jack. In its insistence on imaginary unity and uniformity and on a quasi-development which merely reinstitutes the older family pattern, the narrative movement hence shuts out a true developmental change which would require separation and transition into the symbolic. Although the text offers its resolution as a 'successful' one, and although some critics argue that it makes the children "ready to assume ... adult roles" (Wells 36) or that it is "maturing initiation" (Malcolm 59), Jack only reaches Julie by reverting back to babyhood in the last episode. The incest scene openly underlines the fact that this is not intended as plain sex but as a process of getting recognised and trying to unify into a loving whole. Jack is only able to reach the object of his desire by regressing into infancy as Tom has already done. In the last episode, he gets completely naked and climbs into Tom's cot next to Tom. He curls into a foetal position and feels "an enveloping pleasure in being tenderly imprisoned" (*Cement* 146). Similarly, the lovemaking scene starts by Julie offering Jack one of her nipples (*Cement* 149), an act that Lacan associates with "the nostalgia for the nourishing breast ... [which] is ... connected with the weaning complex" (18). The real resolution that could have ended the children's morbid slumber is integration into society. Yet the text holds this possibility at bay in the image of the lights of the police cars that have arrived on Derek's call. In the last episode, Derek catches Jack and Julie in bed and gets furious. Derek then rushes downstairs to smash the cement that

is hiding the mother's body, hence, somehow, violently ending the reign of the imaginary order. He then goes out of the house to fetch the police. After Derek's forceful intrusion in the imaginary unity between Jack and Julie, like a symbolic father figure, and after the appearance of the police lights like the spectres of the Law of the symbolic order, the children start to "wake up and ... talk in whispers about" their deceased Mother (*Cement* 153). For the first time they start to have a true conversation which acknowledges the Mother's death and admits that so many things have actually changed since their childhood, in a way pointing at the inevitability of growing up. The last sentence in the text is Julie's when she asks, "wasn't that a lovely sleep?" (*Cement* 153). This somehow underlines the fact that the whole episode was a paralysing dream from which the arrival of the outside society has woken them up.

A resolution through a union of Jack and Julie (P_1 and $\bar{P}_2$), then, far from serving as the satisfaction of a desire, is a futile act which has no power to overthrow the stasis and the illusions that have imprisoned the siblings for so long. Therefore, it can be argued that the inept resolution that the text offers indicates *Cement's* futile attempt at resolving the underlying social contradiction in its nether subtext: the demise of the Empire. This study now turns to a discussion of this social contradiction in the text's nether subtext.

As Lynn Wells underlines, McEwan has lived through "a period covering some of the major political and social changes in England and around the world" (22), and *Cement* was written during one of the most troublesome moments of this period: the 1970s. Andy Beckett in his 2009 study on the 1970s describes the decade as "by common consent for decades now, the worst of the times" that Britain has been through (1), and there are several other critics who agree with Beckett and affirm his claim of 'common consent.' According to Neil Hamilton, the 1970s "have

been called the decade better forgotten” (vii). Malcolm Bradbury summarises the turbulent background of the decade as follows:

[W]ithdrawal from the Vietnam War, the political scandal of Watergate, and the resignation of an American president, the international oil crisis ... worldwide economic recession ... In Britain the mood seemed one of decline, especially once recession grew: growing conflict and terrorism in Northern Ireland, a miners’ strike, and then a serious balance-of-payments deficit, weakened successive governments, and all culminated in the Winter of Discontent of 1978. (379-380)

As with all tumultuous periods, the 1970s bring about radical changes to British society together with a problem of adapting to these changes. In Alwyn Turner’s words, the 1970s become the “the watershed years that saw the end of one Britain and the first tentative steps towards a new nation” (1). Bradbury portrays Britain as a nation “between a declining, traditional imperial past and an accelerating Americanizing” (339). The era saw not only “the promotion of egalitarianism through the ending of empires and the growing concern for human rights” but also “the retreat of the state from the management of national economies ... toward market economies and a more laissez-faire style of governance” (Borstelmann 214). Therefore, Britain and the British nation were changing radically, and this was happening faster than had ever been the case in the previous decades.

However, the fundamental problem was not that of change but the inability to accept, cope with, or adapt to that change, as most of the scholars researching the decade have put forward. The first hints of this change were noticeable in the aftermath of the Second World War, which shifted the global centre of gravity from the United Kingdom to the United States. The Suez Crisis of 1956, which cost Britain its global dignity, underlined the truth of this shift the more (Abernathy 139; Owen

809-810; "An Affair to Remember"). According to G. C. Peden, it is possible to analyse the effects of the Suez Crisis on Britain and on the British nation under three categories: "first, a loss of self-confidence, and a concomitant dependence on the United States of America (USA); second, decolonization, including loss of informal empire in the Middle East as well as independence for colonies in Africa and elsewhere" and third, the loosening of the ties with the Commonwealth (1073-1074). McEwan was only eight years old during the Suez Crisis, but he experienced it first-hand because he was in Libya, where his father was an army officer. He recounts those days by remembering how "for some weeks [he] lived in a tent with other children not so very far from a machine-gun nest" (Introduction, ii). All in all, as Bart Moore-Gilbert asserts, it was impossible for the novel not to be deeply "implicated in the sense of social and cultural crisis characteristic of the 1970s" ("Apocalypse Now" 152).

Nevertheless, it was not a surface matter; it took longer than it should have for the British to face the decline of their Empire: all this was "quite unexpected and puzzling" for the British society (Nairn 3). Overall, the nation was "re-examining the traditional narrative of British history and seeking answers to why the country that had until just recently governed a quarter of the globe had come to find itself in such a state of political decline, social division and economic paralysis" (Goodman 118). The state and the media were not making this transition any easier. The media was still heavily relying on the popular memories of heroism from the Second World War, especially the "mythic properties of the war to screen other historical realities, not least the end of empire" (Schwarz 15-16). Bill Schwarz criticises the media for delivering the historical process in a 'heavily mediated' way:

The chaos and violence generated by decolonisation barely touched metropolitan lives. One need only think of the dreamy newsreels, complete

with epic commentaries and stirring musical scores, to get a sense of the deep affective power of the mediations. Knowledge gleaned from the popular press, from the radio and from the newsreels, let alone from the more sensational medium of the cinema, did not encourage the making of an informed home population. (17-18)

Therefore, as Nick Hubble underlines: “Displaced from public consciousness, screened off by the vainglorious recall of wartime military triumph, full consciousness of Empire’s end was anxiously suspended” during the 1970s (“Introduction” 3). This was “the morbid culture of a once-imperial nation that has not been able to accept its inevitable loss of prestige in a determinedly postcolonial world” (Gilroy 117). Tom Nairn summarizes the state of the nation as being characterised by “the very archaism of the Anglo-British state - its failure to modernize and its slow competitive death” (56).

McEwan himself could not come to terms with this transition in the 1970s as he would later do in his *The Innocent* in 1990, twelve years after *The Cement Garden*. *The Innocent* clearly makes use of its protagonist and the images of childhood “to call into question a story of national identity and history that amounts to a romance” (Dodou 74) which is nothing more than “a politically-engineered vision of national greatness ... which in ‘popular imperialism’ since the nineteenth century has defined the Englishman as the morally justified” (Dodou 75). Although McEwan is able to deal with the waning of the Empire a decade later, *Cement* is devoid of such direct engagement either with the Empire’s decline and disintegration or with the changing notions of state, governance, and nation. While interviewing Milan Kundera, McEwan (the interviewer) asks Kundera if belonging to a small country has any effects on Kundera’s writing. Kundera confirms that there are different effects of belonging to a small country or a great one and remarks that “great nations

think of themselves as immortal. ... [I]f you're English, you never question the immortality of your nation Your Englishness will never be put in doubt. You may question England's politics, but not its existence" (Kundera 210). McEwan's response to this remark, although he was not directly asked to respond to it, is revealing: "Well, once we were very big. Now we are rather small. ... We ask ourselves who we are, and what our position in the world is" (Kundera 210). It is not really possible to describe McEwan as a proponent of a mythic image of Englishness. Yet still, having witnessed the sovereignty of the British Empire in Asia and Africa as a child in "army places abroad ... like small council estates anywhere in England" ("Points of Departure" 4), McEwan is vulnerable to the collective consciousness or unconscious as much as any other British citizen in the 1970s is. Hence, the inept resolution the text offers to Jack's desire for unity, for making sense of his personality and his life in general, can be analysed in relation to the struggle of the British society, including McEwan himself, to screen off, insulate, or suspend the fact of the disintegration of the Empire and the decline of all the narratives of Englishness. The old Empire is completely like the house in the story, "old and large. It was built to look a little like a castle, with thick walls, squat windows and crenelations above the front door" (*Cement* 28), and just like the house in the midst of desolation, forgotten, the Empire is still lingering in an imaginary world of mighty imperial armies, armadas and castles, an illusion which has already been abandoned by the new neoliberal governments around the globe. Just like the condition of Britain, the house in the story is lonely and looks "like the face of someone concentrating, trying to remember" (*Cement* 28) a past which is no longer there.

At this point, the overlaps begin to emerge between the contradiction in the text and the real social contradiction. A projection of the two value systems together (Fig. 9 and Fig. 11 below) yields the following four overlaps:

(1) $P_1 \approx E_2$	strong conflict	– a harmful thing is desired
(2) $\bar{P}_1 \approx \bar{E}_2$	weak conflict	– a nonharmful thing is not desired
(3) $P_2 \approx E_1$	strong conflict	– a necessary thing is feared
(4) $\bar{P}_2 \approx \bar{E}_1$	weak conflict	– a nonprescribed thing is not feared

As the relationships (1) and (3) indicate, there is a strong conflict between the text's value system and the prescriptions of contemporary political history. The text's aforementioned preference of the female over the male underlies these conflictual relationships. As Elleke Boehmer underlines, "[t]he image of the mother invites connotations of origins – birth, hearth, home, roots, the umbilical cord" (27) and hence in general, "the woman – and usually the mother – figure stands for the national territory and for certain national values" (29). There are many other critics who underline the metonymic relation between the mother figure and the nation and the national myths. Women and mothers are discussed as the "physical reproducers of the nation" (Klug 21) or "the guardian of the traditional order" (Mosse 17) and "the symbolic bearers of the nation" (McClintock 62). This indicates that underlying the text's insistence on the mother figure and a motherly imaginary unity, there is a resistance to breaking away from the Empire and its protectionist attitudes, and at the same time a resistance to what is represented by the fatherly symbolic unity. Just like the relationship between the mother figure and the Empire, there is a similar relationship between the father figure and the constitutional reorganisation of the nation. The constitution, the egalitarian law that the market economy requires, represents a new political system in contrast to the fantasies of totality that the Empire rests upon. This new law has a metonymic relation to masculinity because of the pervasive androcentrism in state affairs, Peterson points at (872; also Kaufman and Williams). Modern citizenship bases itself upon "a hegemonic masculine position" (Prinsloo 45; also Nagel) and "in the state, as in the

new workplaces, as also in the new middle-class home, lines of control [emanate] from the feared and/or revered figures of fathers” (Boehmer 32). Therefore, an attempt at repudiating the emergence of neoliberalisation and decolonisation of the old Empire may be read as underlying the text’s shutting out of the symbolic father and the integration into the symbolic order.

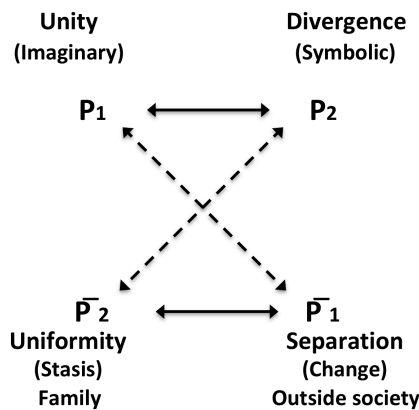


Fig. 9 The text's value structure

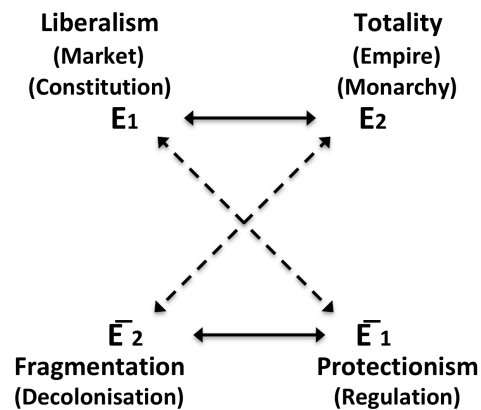


Fig. 11 The socio-political contradiction

It was already pointed out at the beginning of this chapter that a narrative is a symbolic act that emerges as an attempt to symbolically resolve a determinant social contradiction that, in reality, can only be resolved in praxis. Therefore, it can be argued that the determinant social contradiction as laid out in Figure 11 above finds its symbolic representation and resolution in *Cement* in the psychoanalytical playing out of the tensions of imaginary-symbolic orders as laid out in Figure 9. In other words, in the text’s attempt (in Fig. 10) to disregard the possibilities of integration into the Symbolic order via an identification with the Symbolic father ($P_1 + P_2$) or an integration into society via the second weaning ($P_2 + \bar{P}_1$), there underlies the resistance (in Fig. 12) to the emergence of the global market and the neoliberal global village ($E_1 + E_2$) and the resistance to the prevailing ideology this globalisation requires, i.e. the ideals of bourgeois middle-class egalitarianism ($E_1 +$

$\bar{E}_2$). On the other hand, the text's insistence (in Fig. 10) on a resolution that stresses the triumph of a return to the Imaginary Mother ($P_1 + \bar{P}_2$) and on a return to the existing family structure through surrogating Jack and Julie ($\bar{P}_1 + \bar{P}_2$) indicates a resistance to giving up the imperial image (in Fig. 12) that is only an anachronism now ($E_2 + \bar{E}_1$) and to giving up nationalist protectionism that is at odds with the emerging global market ($\bar{E}_1 + \bar{E}_2$).

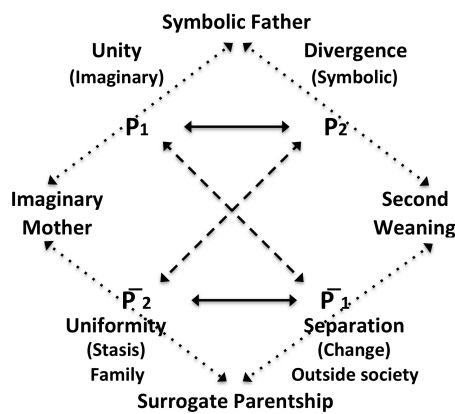


Fig. 10 The possible combinations in the text

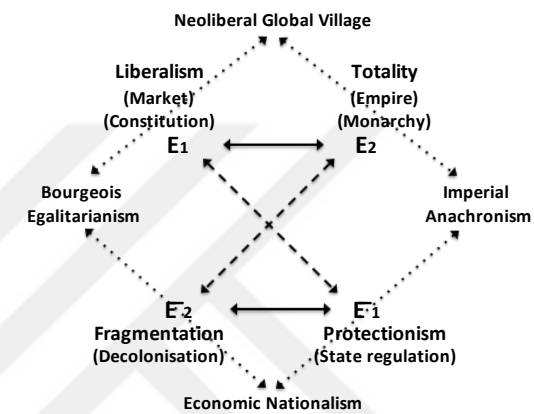


Fig. 12 The possible combinations in the real

Having thereby completed the first horizon of Jamesonian hermeneutics, the analysis can now proceed to the second horizon where the essence of this symbolic resolution will be laid out in order to indicate how it functions as an ideologeme. To begin with, it needs to be noted that, although the subtext of the narrative places 'imaginary unity' in the dominant P_1 position (Fig. 10), the nether subtext registers the corresponding idea of monarchical totality in the E_2 position (Fig. 12). Therefore, the narrative's intermediary subtext becomes a kind of reversed image of the nether subtext. Within this relation, even though S and $\bar{S}$ axes represent the same syntheses, the deictic axes correspond to opposite directions. This explains why the

narrative ends with its resolution of $P_1 + \bar{P}_2$ (imaginary order Fig. 10) being threatened by the approaching “hurried footsteps of several people coming up [the house’s] front path” (*Cement* 153): this is the sound of the footsteps of the symbolic order $P_2 + \bar{P}_1$ (second weaning Fig. 10) coming to put an end to the children’s resistance against moving from the imaginary to the symbolic. In the E universe (Fig. 12), this coincides with a threatening of the imperial anachronisms ($E_2 + \bar{E}_1$) by the rise of bourgeois middle-class egalitarianism of the neoliberal globalisation ($E_1 + \bar{E}_2$). That is to say, since the resolution in the narrative’s P universe does not coincide with the dominant deictic axis of the E universe, the narrative fails to end on a hopeful note. *Cement*, therefore, ends with a denouement that falls far short of providing a wish-fulfilment. Although it insists on prolonging the reign of the imaginary, it somehow registers the impossibility of maintaining this. As an ideologeme, this corresponds to the narrative’s final take on the identity crisis the British Empire experiences in the 1970s. Although there is a tendency, as discussed earlier in this chapter, to resist acknowledging the fact that the British Empire is now an anachronistic ideal and that British hegemony over world politics and economy is merely a memory, this same tendency registers in its heart of hearts that eventually letting go is inevitable: the country and the society have to concede to the rise of the neoliberal global village in the end. Simultaneously, the fact that the narrative movement seems to be stuck between these two options as if no other alternatives were possible, hence framing out any other possible resolution to the crisis of the 1970s, will take the present analysis further into the second horizon of Jamesonian political unconscious.

The second horizon takes the analytical process beyond the contradiction within the text in order to include another contradiction in the analysis, namely that between antagonistic classes. Jameson emphasises that classes in a society do not

exist and develop in isolation from one another in order to point out the necessity of a historical and relational approach when analysing class dynamics. He argues, as several other contemporaries of his do, that class and class discourse should not be analysed in isolation: they have to be seen within their historical and relational position within a struggle between classes. According to Jameson, that battle between classes or class discourses takes place fundamentally in an antagonistic relation between a dominant and a labouring class. All the other class fractions, the “ec-centric or dependent classes” such as petty bourgeoisie or peasantry, are positioned only in terms of this dichotomous axis (*The Political* 83-84). Again according to Jameson, within this antagonism, “a ruling class ideology will explore various strategies of the *legitimation* of its own power position, while an oppositional culture or ideology will, often in covert and disguised strategies, seek to contest and to undermine the dominant ‘value system’ ” (*The Political* 84). In other words, what defines the warring ideologies of differing classes, their positions and their discourses is this constant antagonistic give and take. As Jameson says: “the very content of a class ideology is relational, in the sense that its ‘values’ are always actively in situation with respect to the opposing class, and defined against the latter” (*The Political* 84). A dominant ideology and discourse will forever shape and reshape itself to appropriate and/or marginalise an oppositional discourse which, in its turn, will forever try to undermine the dominant power position in yet newer ways.

Borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin to expand on this idea of warring class positions, Jameson says that, within the second horizon of his semantic enrichment, class discourse is to be considered “essentially dialogical in its structure” (*The Political* 84). He states that “the individual utterance or text is [to be] grasped as a symbolic move in an essentially polemic and strategic ideological confrontation

between the classes" (*The Political* 85). Hence, he calls the text (thought of as an utterance in a dialogue) an *ideologeme*: "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (*The Political* 76). According to this definition, now the text will be analysed as a single utterance within a wider class discourse, just as any sentence would be analysed as a single utterance within a given language.

Still, although the text is to be regarded as an utterance in an antagonistic dialogue between two classes, Jameson here does not seek to bring another utterance, i.e. another text, into his analysis in order to reveal the dialogue. Just as he does in his first horizon, he locates the analytic task within the individual text itself. Bakhtin states that, in order for a dialogue to exist, there does not have to be an openly discernible exchange between two clearly identified interlocutors: "dialogic relationships can permeate inside the utterance, even inside the individual word, as long as two voices collide within it dialogically" (*Problems* 184). This helps us to understand Jameson's idea better: the text is to be seen in the same manner as Bakhtin sees 'the individual word.' It is an individual utterance within which two antagonistic voices of a dominant and a labouring class 'collide dialogically.' Therefore, the analyst is not looking outside the text for the evidence of class dialogue, but inside the text itself.

With this move, Jameson's second horizon brings in a deconstructive element into the analytical task. Although a text will seem to consist of one unified single voice, there will exist the traces of a suppressed voice within it that is continuously resisting the narrative closure's unifying power. It is only that a cultural, political and ideological hegemony will permit the reader to hear only one voice. The hegemonic ideology suppresses the antagonistic class discourse(s) or marginalises them so that only one side of the dialogue is audible. Yet, since any class discourse

is forever bound to its opposing discourse to exist, the hegemonic voice cannot completely do away with the opposing voice and has to let it lurk beneath its claims to unequivocal signification. This hints at how the analytical job in the second horizon should proceed, namely through a deconstructive reading of the text in the way Barbara Johnson describes:

If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not meaning *per se* but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. This implies that a text signifies in more than one way, that it can signify something more, something less, or something other than it claims to (204)

What a text signifies more or what it signifies less can indicate the antagonistic dialogue within its texture. The text is a dialogic conflict, and its narrative closure serves as a symbolic move within this dialogic conflict; a gesture towards both maintaining the hegemony of the ruling class-discourse and suppressing the antagonistic discourse of the labouring class as irrelevant or simply as marginal.

Before the discussion can move back to *Cement*, it also has to be noted that any dialogue needs a shared code to function as a dialogue. In other words, if the interlocutors in a dialogue are not talking about the same thing, dialogue does not occur. In a similar manner, for there to be dialogic interaction between warring class discourses, they have to be engaging with each other over a shared code (Jameson, *The Political* 84). In his *Marxism and Form* Jameson says that a text in its capacity of an ideologeme “proves to have had a functional and strategic value as a weapon of a determinate kind in a concrete and local struggle” (382) in order to point out that a narrative as an ideological product does not necessarily encompass the entire class conflict. Instead, the conflict is limited to a certain local struggle and here lies Jameson’s idea of a shared code.

The analysis of *Cement* in the second semantic horizon can hence continue with the identification of this shared code, around which the dialogue would be observed to be shaped. The discussions so far have already revealed that this shared code is best understood as 'unity.' The narrative in *Cement* seeks to address the problem of unity and belonging in the transition from an imperial past into a neoliberal future by dealing with it in the allegorical context of Lacanian identity politics within the relations of power in the bourgeois family context. As was discussed above, the narrative movement is stuck between an imperial anachronism and a transition into the neoliberal global order as if no other alternatives were possible, and this indicates a framing out of any other possible resolution to the crisis of the 1970s. Both of these positions of unity, which draw their power from the bourgeois family form in the narrative, indicate the voice of a dominant bourgeois class which merely suggests another oppressive mechanism to replace an older oppressive mechanism. This coincides with the manner in which Fredric Jameson analyses the historical transition to market economy elsewhere:

Market ideology assures us that human beings make a mess of it when they try to control their destinies ('socialism is impossible') and that we are fortunate in possessing an interpersonal mechanism—the market—which can substitute for human hubris and planning and replace human decisions altogether. We only need to keep it clean and well oiled, and it now—like the monarch so many centuries ago—will see to us and keep us in line.
(*Postmodernism* 273)

In both of its subtexts, the whole semantic universe of the narrative in *Cement* registers only family identity politics and hence bourgeois class politics, suggesting, as Jameson's quote above shows, that no other option is available to the human society, which would end up in chaos without the mother or the father serving as a

watchman. This position simply disregards two other oppositional voices that were undeniable components of life in the 1970s Britain, namely trade unionism and punk subculture. When thought in terms of the same allegorical context the narrative resorts to—the context of bourgeois family structure in its power politics as shaped by the mother and the father figures—, these oppositional but silenced forces may suggest a different kind of unity formed solely through the relations among the siblings without any parental supervision or control.

The first oppositional voice comes from the fundamental form of organisation of the labouring classes, namely the trade unions. Trade unions represent basically the organised workers in different trades or professions, and their prime objective is to protect the workers' rights against the ruling, capital-owning classes. Trade union strikes were sporadic in the first half of the twentieth century Britain. However, as Andy Beckett points out, they reach their most powerful state in the 1970s:

In 1970, the unions were approaching their zenith. ... Their total membership increased every year during the forties, fifties and sixties. During the late sixties and seventies, this growth accelerated...; by 1978, the figure was 54 per cent. Although this was not an especially high proportion by international standards ... the power of British trade unionists was magnified by their willingness to use it. (xx)

According to Beckett's figures, more than half of the labouring class throughout Britain were organised under trade unions and trade union confederations by 1978. Yet, there was more to the working class organisation in Britain than numbers: it was the feeling of solidarity and the power drawn from that solidarity that mattered the most. They were aware of their power as a united force, and they were willing to use this power against the ruling classes. There were dozens of small-scale strikes

that were happening at local level or against a single employer during the 1970s in Britain, yet there were also five nationwide ones (“List of Strikes”), three of which were to forever take their place in British history, politics and psyche. These were the UK miners’ strikes of 1972 and 1974, which caused the Three-Day Week period, and the 1978-1979 Winter of Discontent.

Therefore, as Alwyn Turner states, “the biggest political issue of the day was the role of the trade unions” (12), and “the everyday political world was almost entirely dominated from the outset not by [the Prime Minister’s] actions but by those of the trade unions” (31). The fact that *Cement* hardly registers this oppositional political power which takes the central stage in the everyday life of 1970s Britain, hence, can be read as an act of silencing and suppression. Yet, as discussed above, the hegemonic voice of the ruling classes in any antagonistic class dialogue cannot completely do away with the oppositional voice as is the case in *Cement*. At one point in the novel, the narrator Jack describes the state of the streets he is passing through by saying that “[i]n some places there were rotting vegetables piled in the gutter” (*Cement* 112). Not much later in the novel, he again describes a similar scene: “Outside there was a cloud of flies round the overflowing dustbins which had not been emptied for weeks. We thought there might have been a strike but we had heard nothing” (*Cement* 135). These are unmistakable references to the 1978-79 Winter of Discontent when millions of workers from numerous different trades and professions were on strike, including the refuse collectors. Although this nationwide unrest was very diverse in its essence, the resonant image that came to define it was “piles of rotting rubbish on the street” even in central locations like the Trafalgar Square (“Your 1970s”). This reference becomes a tear in the fabric of ideological closure that dominates *Cement*’s narrative and reveals the suppressed voice lurking in between the lines. The fact that, although expressed in a very

offhand way by Jack, the children automatically consider the possibility of a strike indicates how infused the social psyche was with the practices of trade union power in the 1970s Britain.

Working class solidarity, through the practices of trade unions, offers an alternative both to the imperial anachronisms of conservative ideologies and to the neoliberal ideologies of the Tories under Thatcher's guidance. As Alwyn Turner argues, this was not necessarily "the spectre of communism" (177) since "[t]he unions were not revolutionary institutions, but precisely the opposite; ... the function of trade unions was to achieve an accommodation within a capitalist society to the advantage of their members, and there was little appetite for anything more" (181-182). That is to say, trade unionism, in its social aspects, offered a sense of solidarity and unity for the labouring classes. Raphael Samuel explains this, saying that

[t]rade unionism in the 1970s was not only a cause. For its most fervent defenders – young workers radicalized by the industrial struggles of the time ... – it was also, in the absence of socialism or communism, something approaching a workers' faith Beneath the militant rhetoric, ... it is possible to discern a quasi-religious impulse at work: ... a search for self-transcendence; the claim to collective dignity by reference to the past; the joy of a wider belonging. (*The Lost World* xx)

This is why the working class people who experienced the 1970s trade unionism remember the soul of the times with references not only to the economic victories (Dhall; Chu; Turner 38; "1974: Heath") but also to "the victory for workers' solidarity" (Mullins) against "the System" (Johnston; see also Scargill; O'Grady; Medhurst). As Matt Myers concludes, it was because trade unionism in the 1970s represented more than mere industrial action that Margaret Thatcher argued in

1981: “[e]conomics were the method, ... but the object was ‘to change the heart and soul’ — to create neoliberal subjects, without class belonging.” The Tories did everything they could to destroy the trade unions during the 1980s in order to destroy this sense of unity among the working class masses.

Apart from the two references to trade union action in the narrative mentioned above, there are also other subtle references to this alternative form of unity between the siblings. After the Mother’s death, the children use the kitchen every now and then to nibble on whatever they can find in the fridge. Yet, they never clean up after themselves, just as they fail to clean anywhere else in the house. Consequently, after several days, the house, especially the kitchen, turns into a filthy dumpster. On a lazy afternoon, Jack casually suggests that they clean the kitchen, and with this suggestion, he and his two sisters start cleaning the whole house thoroughly. Upon this, Jack says: “for the first time in weeks I was happy. I felt safe, as if I belonged to a powerful, secret army. We worked for over four hours and I was hardly aware of my existence” (*Cement* 95). Jack’s interpretation of how he bonds with his siblings through organised labour resounds with Raphael Samuel’s account of trade unionism in 1970s Britain above. Jack’s assertion that he was ‘hardly aware of his existence’ points at Samuel’s ‘search for self-transcendence,’ while his words on safety, belonging and an army coincide with Samuel’s ‘quasi-religious impulse, collective dignity and belonging.’ Also, there is a clear parallelism between Jack’s happiness and Samuel’s joy in both accounts.

A few other references to this kind of unity, which is fundamentally a working class unity, come from Jack’s encounters with manual work and people of the working class. In the opening pages of the novel, Jack watches the cement delivery men, who “were covered in a fine, pale dust which gave their faces a ghostly look” (*Cement* 13) as they stack packs of cement in their cellar in accordance with his

Father's instructions and supervision. While watching them, Jack imagines himself to be a part of this proceeding even though he is clueless as to what is happening. He says, "I liked this kind of talk. ... I did not know what the cement was for, and I did not wish to be placed outside this intense community of work by showing ignorance" (*Cement* 14). He sees, in this organised labour, an opportunity to fulfil a community feeling that he is seeking. He similarly feels happy when he is recognised and greeted by a group of workmen passing their house through the end of the novel (*Cement* 136-137). The same thing helps him build a sense of solidarity with his otherwise alienated father as well. While he is helping his father out with the latter's garden project, he feels at ease with his father for the first time: "Apart from his infrequent, terse instructions, we said nothing. I was pleased that we knew so exactly what we were doing and what the other was thinking that we did not need to speak. For once I felt at ease with him" (*Cement* 22). And lastly, the same prospect of bonding through work appears to Jack in the fantasy world of the Commander Hunt novel. He is fascinated to read how Commander Hunt organises labour on his ship and how all the crew members work in harmony (*Cement* 91), and he fantasises about being a part of this community, afraid that "[he] was not the kind Commander Hunt would have had on board his spaceship" (*Cement* 43).

The second oppositional voice in the narrative comes from the emerging punk music subculture of the 1970s. Although it starts more or less simultaneously in different parts of Europe and the US, its chief representatives on the global scale come from the British stages, especially the Sex Pistols. From its early emergence on, punk is not only a musical subgenre. It, in fact, represents a highly influential subculture which is very political in its antagonism towards the establishment. Michael Ray emphasises the political essence of punk by saying that "[o]ften politicized and full of vital energy beneath a sarcastic, hostile facade, punk ... spread

as an ideology and an aesthetic approach, becoming an archetype of teen rebellion and alienation” (283). In the highly polarised socio-political world of 1970s Britain, punk hence offers the young generation a different feeling of unity that is based upon their shared angst, disaffection and reduced expectations. One of the most active bands of the time, Sham 69, in the lyrics to a still very frequently covered song of theirs called ‘If the Kids Are United,’ points at this promise of a youthful community that can overcome the feeling of alienation the young generation is suffering from:

Just take a look around you, what do you see?

Kids with feelings like you and me

Understand him and he'll understand you

For you are him and he is you (YouTube)

The catchy chorus backs this vision up by announcing that “[i]f the kids are united, / They will never be divided” (YouTube). The whole idea in the song, which starts with the lines “For once in my life I’ve got something to say. / I want to say it now for now is today” (YouTube), is that the young generation is alienated from the establishment that is represented by their parents, and the way to fight back against this is to build a community of kids as opposed to the establishment of the parents. Hence, the song ends, “I don’t want to be rejected. / I don't want to be denied. / ... If we stand together, it will just be the start” (YouTube).

In reference to its importance in the youth politics of the time, Alwyn Turner underlines the ongoing legacy of punk by asking

[w]ho would have predicted that in the twenty-first century, the legacy of the

Sex Pistols would be more influential on new bands than that of the Beatles?

Or that the prime minister would one day walk into his party’s conference to

the sounds of Sham 69 singing ‘If the Kids Are United’, as Tony Blair did in

2005? These things have become as significant in perceptions of the period as are the memories of political crises. (9-10)

Therefore, featuring four teenagers as its central characters, the failure of *Cement*'s narrative to refer to the punk subculture that was highly prevalent among the youth of the 1970s seems suspicious. Yet, just like trade unionism, as discussed above, the traces of punk subculture can be found lurking in between the lines in the narrative of *Cement*.

Punk, from the very beginning, becomes a form of expression for the young generation. It is a statement not only in musical style but also in fashion and attitude. It is a revolt against any settled norm: it represents the youth's "fantasies of conflict and revenge on a decaying culture" (Savage 22). A punk artist, Shanne Hasler, expresses her disposition in the early days of punk in Britain with the following words:

I hated the world. I had a terrible childhood. I came from a middle-class background, brought up in Ware, Hertfordshire. ... I hated that thing of everyone trying to be nice and well-mannered, and behind the scenes, people weren't really. I didn't want to be part of it, so I ripped my clothes, scalped myself, pierced my ears. I was dyeing my hair; I used to get old grannies' corsets and things from thrift shops. I just wanted to be noticed, but I was very shy at the same time. It was my hatreds coming out with a sense of humour. (qtd. in Savage 25)

Although the reader does not hear punk music or the names of the defining punk bands of the 1970s in *Cement*, such rebellious statement in fashion and attitude that Hasler mentions finds its place in the narrative. Jack describes his older sister Julie as one of these rebellious youths as follows:

She was one of a handful of daring girls at school who wore starched white petticoats beneath their skirts to fill them out and make them swirl when they turned on their heel. She wore stockings and black knickers, strictly forbidden.

... Her closest friends were girls, the most rebellious, the ones with reputations.

(*Cement* 25-26)

Julie's daring character is also obvious in her relationship with Derek, whom she constantly keeps at bay and whom she refuses to give the chance to take control of her in the masculine way he dreams of (*Cement* 148). A hint of the punk fashion statement is also revealed in the scene where Derek takes Jack to the billiard saloon. There, Jack meets Greg who is to play billiards against Derek and who "had a brown leather jacket with a big tear in one arm and his hair was tied at the back in a ponytail" (*Cement* 115). Greg's insistence on wearing a leather jacket with a big tear in one arm, together with his carefree attitude, would be a clear reference to the punk fashion of the time.

Jack's youthful defiance is also a reference to his underlying angst that, although not openly expressed in punk terms, is still experienced in a punk attitude. Jack finds, in his punk-like defiant attitude, a form of expression that liberates him from the oppression he feels. Very early in the novel, he says: "I no longer washed my face or hair or cut my nails or took baths. I gave up brushing my teeth. ... I now felt proudly beyond ... control. If people really liked me, I argued, they would take me as I was" (*Cement* 26). Through the end of the novel, this attitude is at its highest as the following account indicates:

I felt stifled. ... I opened wide the doors of my wardrobe and threw in all the debris from the floor. I pulled the sheets, blankets and pillows off my bed and put those in too. I ripped down pictures from the wall that I had once cut out of magazines. Under the bed I found plates and cups covered in green mold. I

took every loose object and put it in the wardrobe till the room was bare. I even took down the light bulb and light shade. Then I took my clothes off, threw them in and closed the doors. The room was empty like a cell. I lay down on the bed again and stared at my patch of clear sky till I fell asleep. (*Cement* 141)

In a fit of defiance, Jack rejects everything that is represented by the objects attached to himself. He bares his room and himself of all identity until he, just like the room, becomes empty of any identifiable attachments. He finds a sense of contentment in this defiant act and falls asleep. These two instances echo Hasler's depiction of the defiant statement of fashion and attitude, and they reflect the double objective of defying the existing establishment and seeking a newer sense of unity and community in a new expression as it is represented in the Sham 69 lyrics above. As Jon Savage says, this is a "youth eager to smash the old guard and make the world in their own, Warholian image" (4).

With the exploration of these silenced oppositional voices in *Cement's* narrative, the analysis completes its move in Jameson's second horizon. When it is considered as an ideologeme in the antagonistic class dialogue of the 1970s, *Cement* registers how a hegemonic middle-class bourgeois discourse prevails over the emergent working class defiance against it. As discussed, the whole semantic universe of *Cement's* narrative registers only the family identity politics and hence the bourgeois class discourse in both of its subtexts while ignoring, suppressing and marginalising the two undeniable components of the socio-political life in 1970s Britain, namely trade unionism and punk subculture. While the bourgeois family structure in its power politics as shaped by the mother and the father figures represents an oppressive unity under the hegemony of the dominant classes, the silenced oppositional voices suggest the possibility of a liberating kind of unity represented solely by the siblings without any parental supervision or control.

In conclusion, *The Cement Garden*, as a symbolic act, indeed offers a symbolic resolution to a real socio-political contradiction which emerges during the turbulent decade of the 1970s. In its political unconscious, *Cement* engages with a real socio-political contradiction within the framework of the bourgeois nuclear family structure, and, in the allegorical resistance to leaving the Imaginary for a passage into the Symbolic order in its narrative, it registers a resistance to change and development, i.e. holding onto an imperial image in the face of decolonisation and the neoliberalisation that the historical moment compels. In other words, although not immediately visible beyond the surface meaning of the text, *Cement's* political unconscious bears the traces of a nation that is trying to come to terms with the British Empire's demise and the painful metamorphosis of its self-image. In the end, although the narrative movement insists on prolonging the reign of the Imaginary, it also registers the impossibility of maintaining it in the long run because, as soon as Jack's desire of an imaginary unity is fulfilled in the last scene, it is threatened by the approaching footsteps of the symbolic, i.e. the footsteps of the police coming to take the children away and to possibly separate them.

Taken in its capacity as an ideologeme, this can be read as the narrative's final take on the identity crisis the British Empire experiences in the 1970s. The fact that the narrative movement seems to be stuck between either an anachronistic imperial ideal or an integration into the neoliberal global village represents a dominant class position since both options disregard the voice of the labouring class. This antagonistic class voice that gets to be framed out by the ideological closure in *Cement's* narrative universe is represented by two powerful and important movements of 1970s Britain, i.e. trade unionism and punk subculture. The traces of these movements are to be found lurking in the possibility of a different shape the relationship between the siblings can take outside the dominion of a fatherly or

motherly unity and in the scarce interaction the siblings have with other youths and with the members of the working class outside their family.



CHAPTER II

THE CHILD IN TIME:

A MOVE INTO THE NEOLIBERAL/NEOCONSERVATIVE

At the onset of his career in the 1970s, Ian McEwan was known as Ian Macabre for he was notoriously preoccupied with repugnant topics such as paedophilia, incest, the dismembering of human bodies, and all kinds of similar violence. Almost half a century later, he is now seen in a completely different light: his writing is more social and political. His later novels like *Saturday* (2005) and *The Cockroach* (2019) are the most obvious examples of how responsive he is to the contemporary political context and how he always tries to locate that political context within the ordinary lives of his fictional characters. For instance, he openly states that the production of *The Cockroach* was a response to the Brexit crisis: “As the nation tears itself apart, constitutional norms are set aside, parliament is closed down ... and when many Brexiters in high places seem to crave the economic catastrophe of a no deal ... a writer is bound to ask what he or she can do” (McEwan, *Cockroach*). His third novel *The Child in Time* (1987)⁴, which comes after two short story collections and two short novels, is widely accepted as the “watershed” in his oeuvre (Malcolm 90) when this turn in his writing took place.

Just a few years before the publication of *The Child in Time*, McEwan declares that he is attracted to “[n]ovels and films where the private and the political can be resolved inside one situation” (Kundera 216). Almost coincidentally, he writes a political film script for television, *The Ploughman’s Lunch* (1983), and the no-less political lyrics for Michael Berkeley’s oratorio *Or Shall We Die?* (1983). Around the

⁴ The novel will be referred to as *Child* henceforth.

same time, McEwan starts stating in interviews his wish to explore wider social and political concerns in his novels, and *Child* finds its way to the bookshelves as the outcome of that wish (McEwan "Preface" vii; Taylor 58 [on the relation between these works]). Compared to his two more recent novels, *Child* is certainly more covert in its argument—probably because it was his first attempt at this stated goal. However, it was still clear that in his first attempt to resolve the political and the private inside one situation, he was responding to the right-wing government of the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Wells 40).

Academic and critical literature on *Child* is quite rich. This goes along with the fact that the story itself is rich in the variety of themes, images and motifs it brings into play. As Nicholas Spice states, the "book is about many things: about loss and its effect upon love, about the nature of childhood and how adulthood betrays it, about being a parent and being one's parents' child, about the mysteries and magic of time" (8-9). Still, among this profusion of concerns, as it can be understood from Spice's statement, two strike the reader and the critic as being central: childhood and time.

Considering the former, McEwan—in conversation with another contemporary writer, Martin Amis—explains how, while trying to make his wish to explore wider social and political concerns come true, he found 'children' as *the* subject to help him "encompass the intimate and the social" (McEwan, "Writers Talk" 48). It will be this function of the child motif that the present study will be dealing with.

It is true that images of children and childhood occur frequently in McEwan's previous fiction. Katherina Dodou draws attention to the meanings attached to this recurring motif in McEwan, some of which she lists as "moral innocence and virtuousness, naivety and weakness" and also "a romance of Englishness" (73). Yet

in *Child* it acquires, for the first time, titular importance and a completely different substance which is more social and more political, as McEwan expresses it to Amis.

In various other interviews, McEwan makes clear to both the reader and the critic alike that the image of the child in this novel needs to be taken in its wider socio-political connotations. Such a reading is further encouraged by the absence of children in the plot (Tonkin 28): the fact that the “presence of children is removed at the start of the novel and only reintroduced on its closing” may help indicate how the novel is concerned with the child and childhood as a concept rather than with children themselves (Childs, *The Fiction of Ian McEwan* 65). This feature contrasts with McEwan’s previous fiction where children usually occupy the central scene, as protagonists in most cases. It becomes clearer, thereby, that McEwan is not interested in children as agents or event-making characters in this work—unlike his previous fiction—, but is rather interested in them for their representational value: their ability to stand in for concepts which are to be discussed later below.

In addition to this, it is important to note that “the image of childhood is a cultural construction that changes over time and within societies” (Pifer 1). This means that not only how one deals with these images but also the images of the child and childhood themselves can *be* and *are* political. This, then, once more strengthens the role of this motif: together with McEwan’s treatment of it in his narrative, the given historical and political nature of ‘childhood’ itself encourages the present study to address it as a concept rather than as a simple thematic concern.

Time becomes the second important concept in *Child*. Time—especially as modern physics conceives it—mainly represents McEwan’s personal interest in physics, which was strong enough in him to make him write an introduction for a scientific work although he is not a scientist (McEwan, “Introduction” xi-xv). McEwan plays with the notion of time at many points in the novel—he slows it

down, accelerates it, sometimes even breaks its continuity to get a glimpse of the past and the future. Via a magic-realist treatment of it every now and then in the story, he seems to be borrowing from the theories of relativity and quantum mechanics to indicate the existence of a fabric of realities beyond our grasp of daily existence. He tries to make use of this notion of time and reality to come up with an explanation for the complexity of our lives (Childs, *The Fiction of Ian McEwan* 65); to suggest ways to deal with the 'unpredictable' and to find meaning.

However, beyond the treatment of time as a thematic concern, this study is interested in it more for its relation to the concept of child/childhood. Jack Slay, like several other critics, points out that the concept of time receives as much consideration as child and childhood in the novel, and adds that the two concepts are intricately connected (117). Amis similarly observes that the novel combines McEwan's interests in childhood and politics with his "cosmic interests ... [in] time" (McEwan, "Writers Talk" 47). Yet, despite their mutual importance, the concept of childhood in its relation to the concept of time is an issue that has so far been overlooked by the body of critical literature on *Child*. But it is, after all, its 'intricate' connection to the images of childhood that makes for the *sui generis* treatment of time in *Child*. Therefore, such a relation calls for careful consideration.

Scrutinizing the text in terms of how it develops and contains this relation in its narrative, it becomes possible to observe that the relation centres on two contradictory meanings: (1) child/childhood in relation to the capitalistic market's instrumental 'time' conceptualised as linear progress, project and reproduction, and (2) child/childhood as innocence, being outside of time and hence being resistant to linearity.

The present study aims to show that, in the light of what Fredric Jameson's notion of semantic enrichment asserts, although the relation between these two

contradictory meanings is originally a complementary or dialectical one (Dawson 145), it is taken up as an antinomy by the text on the grounds of its allegorical capacity to fill in for a real socio-political contradiction. Therefore, the text's treatment of this antinomy must first be grasped as an imaginary (symbolic) resolution of that real socio-political contradiction behind it, in the manner demonstrated in the analysis of *The Cement Garden* in the previous chapter.

Therefore, *The Child in Time* will first be analysed as a symbolic act according to Fredric Jameson's first analytical horizon: the symbolic resolution of a real social contradiction which the text could not possibly engage with directly. It is this veiled social contradiction that will be uncovered from the text's surface structure by means of an allegorical reading projected upon the Greimassian semiotic square. Within this initial analysis, it will be suggested that, although not immediately visible in the text's surface antinomy (the two contradictory meanings of childhood mentioned above), the text bears the traces of the contradictions Thatcherism brought to Britain of the 1980s: the two contradictory meanings of childhood become allegorical positions representing the contradiction between relentless Thatcherite neoliberalism on one hand and the evocation of traditional values by Thatcherite neoconservatism on the other. The text's inability to resolve the antinomy it created in its own narrative paradigm will thus be discussed as an indication of the irreconcilable nature of this contradiction within Thatcherite politics or, in other words, within the neoliberal state as "an unstable and contradictory political form" (Harvey 64). Still, although they are irreconcilable, the text offers a wish-fulfilment—through the magical resolution in its dénouement—by way of holding onto an almost archetypal narrative of loss of innocence and onto the romance mode that always ends with the retrieval of what was lost. Yet, as

mentioned, this dénouement obviously falls short of reconciling the contradictions and remains merely a wish-fulfilment at the symbolic level.

This initial analysis will ensue a second analysis which will take place in the second and wider horizon of Jamesonian hermeneutics. For this ensuing analysis, the text will now be taken as an *ideologeme* in the light of what has been found in the first horizon. Within this second horizon, it will be argued that the magical resolution the text offers at the end betrays a conservative-neoliberal outlook that McEwan was unable to avoid. Let alone producing a viable solution to the real contradiction (i.e. Thatcherite politics) by way of resolving the antinomy it created in itself, the text ends up helping that real-contradiction conceal itself behind the promising happy ending of the text's wondrous romantic wish-fulfilment. The essence of this romantic wish-fulfilment will be laid out in order to indicate how it functions as an utterance within the antagonistic class discourse between a dominant and a labouring class, that is to say in Jameson's words how it functions as an ideologeme.

Yet, the analysis cannot stop here since each ideologeme must be regarded as making up part of a dialogue between opposing classes. Therefore, it will be necessary to lay bare the role of this ideologeme in the antagonistic dialogue of opposing classes, and also to lay bare the other voice which it is a response to, in other words, the *opposing ideologeme* it is targeted at. The study will try to demonstrate that this opposing (targeted) ideologeme resists the narrative of 'a lost innocence' or the idea of recovering a lost Eden which is a basic characteristic of the romance narrative (Frye, *Anatomy* 186), and suggests a way out of the ideological closure in the text's structure by way of hinting at a 'monumental' understanding of time, space and history. And this ideologeme is represented within the glimpse of a

more feminine understanding of these concepts, an understanding which the romance of the text tries to usurp in order to suppress it.

The main plot in *Child* features Stephen together with his wife Julie and their three-year-old child, Kate. On an ordinary Saturday morning, Stephen leaves his oversleeping wife in bed and goes to the supermarket across the street, taking his daughter with him for her amusement. At the cash till, Kate disappears all of a sudden, and after some time of hectic search it is understood that she has been abducted. This unexpected turn of events ensues a trauma which basically shatters the couple's ability to live a normal life. The narrator follows Stephen during his journey through this trauma. Stephen is a children's books author, forcibly made so by his publisher and friend Charles Darke, though Stephen had always wanted to be 'a great fiction writer like Thomas Mann or James Joyce' (*Child* 28). After the traumatic event, he lives off his earnings from the national and international sales of his first book, doing nothing else. Left alone after Julie's escape to the countryside, he never leaves his apartment and watches television while drinking all day. He is described as "sprawled out with his Scotch on the couch in pyjamas and thick cardigan, watch[ing] the game shows with an addict's glazed patience" (*Child* 124). Later, he starts attending the weekly meetings of a governmental sub-committee on 'child rearing and education' (*Child* 10) which supposedly would shape national child rearing policies. Yet, in the end, it turns out that the committee was a sham since the right-wing government had already made Charles Darke—already a junior government minister by the time Stephen loses Kate—write an extremely harsh and conservative *Authorised Childcare Handbook*.

Although slightly similar to the enclosed atmosphere of McEwan's previous work—in the sense that the core plot is shaped exclusively to deal with a family

trauma—*The Child in Time*, for the first time in McEwan's oeuvre, broadens its setting to the wider society. This is important because to be able to realise the allegorical potential McEwan invests in the images of child and time, it is necessary to grasp how these images, beyond their surface appearance, are shaped by the wider socio-political setting. This allegorical reading will help invest in the semic categories of the Greimassian semiotic square which, in its turn, will help us to understand how the text functions as an ideologeme as outlined above. Therefore, it is necessary first to show the contradiction on the text's surface, which was already hinted at in the introductory remarks above—the two contradictory meanings of childhood that appear in their relation to two different concepts of time. Secondly, there will follow an exploration, through an allegorical analysis, of the hidden meaning behind the surface structure. This second step will help make visible 'the political' behind what seems to be 'the private' of the text. The rest of the analysis will move into the second analytical horizon, where the third step in the analysis will be re-defining these findings as an ideologeme; and, as a last step, this ideologeme will be placed within the antagonistic class discourse it is a part of. As already outlined, the study will now turn to the contradiction on the text's surface.

Central to the story in *The Child in Time* is a lost daughter. Her abduction seems to be the narrative's *raison d'être* since it is located at the plot's core and it is her abduction that drives the narrative with questions as to whether Kate will be found, or whether she is alive or not. However, when asked about how he came up with *The Child in Time*, Ian McEwan points at a very different instance in the story. And he overemphasises the importance of this instance in the fabric of the text, saying:

[*The Child in Time*] had its origins in ... a recurrent dream, the sort of dream that you only remember that you've had before when it comes again ... This

dream was of myself on a drizzly day walking along a country footpath and coming to a bend in the road and pausing there, with a very powerful premonition that if I walked off to my left I would come to a place ... a pub or a meeting place of some sort, and I would find out something very important about my origins. (McEwan, "Interview with Ian McEwan" 10)

This dreamy event takes place—in an episode with elements of magical realism—in the third chapter of the novel. In the interview, McEwan defines the 'recurrent dream' he has as though it was an archetypal image that was encoded in him and he could not help but see it, in a way that recalls the primitive instinctual dreams that the man in Jack London's *Before Adam* is haunted by. He specifies that the images he 'powerfully' feels to have known beforehand are related to his 'origins.' In the text, accordingly, it turns out that the pub he mentions (named the Bell in the text) was where Stephen's parents once met to discuss for the first time whether to have him (Stephen) or opt for an abortion.

Although this at first seems to be irrelevant to a discussion of the surface contradiction—already said to be between two different meanings of childhood—, it in fact helps to locate the centre of tension in the text. As pointed out, although the lost daughter seems to be occupying that centre, this study argues that this only conceals the essence of the conflict. If taken in terms of a romance narrative, it can be argued that the quest in the text is not simply for a lost daughter but for something larger than this concrete 'trophy;' it is for something more atavistic in the way McEwan describes it, an instinctual search for origins which will help find meaning and help the hero root himself in a teleological individual continuity (a *history*), as happens in almost all romance narratives (Frye, *Anatomy* 198). Therefore, it can be argued that for McEwan—in his capacity as the implied author—and Stephen, the search for the lost daughter becomes a pretext for a

search for something more conceptual: a larger loss, a loss of meaning and “vitality,” of “a sense of hope for the future” and, in the sense of the Romantics and conservative Anglicanism, of our “original innocence” that exists in a “transcendental realm inaccessible to mortal memory and adult experience” but accessible to our previous ‘child’ selves (Pifer 20-21). Ellen Pifer traces the development of the idea of original innocence and its relation to the image of childhood from Puritanism through Anglicanism to 18th-century Romanticism. Although *Child* does not register any of this religious essence of the image, Pifer’s account helps understand the narrative within a larger framework of discussions concerning the clash between adult experience and childhood innocence, or in other words between children and “ex-children” as the narrator refers to the adults (*Child* 8). To conclude, it can be argued that *Child* is not simply a missing child novel. It tries to explore childhood as the source of meaning, vitality, hope and innocence.

Then, in order to grasp the surface contradiction in the text, it becomes necessary first to discuss how this interplay between a physical search for the lost child and the more conceptual search for a lost childhood is maintained; for only when the analysis is able to transcend the traumatic physical search and to see the ‘child’ taking up a conceptual role can the contradiction between the two meanings of childhood be discussed. In order to do this, this study aims to explore how the text ties the image of the lost child first to a more general feeling of loss, then to Stephen’s own lost boyhood and also to the childlikeness of the adult. Here, the lost daughter recedes into a secondary position whilst the lost childhood as a concept emerges over it. Further analysis will show how this emerging concept becomes fixated in an antinomy the text creates for itself. Childhood, in its capacity as a concept, becomes torn between its meaning as innocence and its meaning as project. Within its meaning as innocence, it encompasses a sense of timelessness, which is further

reinforced by the images of the pastoral. Opposed to this unchanging innocent child, the text locates a growing child, or the adult, which is further reinforced by the images of the urban. Therefore, in a sense, the child-within-the-adult—the innocent child *outside of time*, and hidden inside the adult—is opposed to the adult-within-the-child—the experiencing/growing child *within time*, the incipient adult within the child.

In the following two subsections, this study will first work on the central quest in the narrative in order, as pointed out above, to indicate that it is a quest for a concept in its essence. Then, the next step will be examining this concept in the heart of the quest in order to show how it is torn by an antinomy and how this antinomy can be used to furnish a Greimassian square.

From the very beginning, the narrative subsumes Kate's loss within a more general and prevalent feeling of loss. The narrator opens the story with the following descriptive and summative statements:

Subsidising public transport had long been associated in the minds of both Government and the majority of its public with the denial of individual liberty. The various services collapsed twice a day at rush hour ... It was late May, barely nine-thirty, and already the temperature was nudging the eighties. He strode towards Vauxhall Bridge past double and treble files of trapped, throbbing cars, each with its solitary driver. ... Ringed fingers drummed patiently on the sill of a hot tin roof (*Child 7*)

From the outset, the narrator creates a feeling of discomfort with its depiction of a not-so-right Britain, an unease hanging in the air. There is the mention of collapsing services, solitariness, uncomfortable 'wrong' weather, suffocating traffic and the public majority's disturbing/ironic acceptance that public transport can be a threat to individual liberty. This tone never dissipates until the last chapters and is further

underlined by other catastrophic events, making many critics consider the text “generically a dystopia” (Malcolm 96). This study will not focus on the dystopic elements within the narrative in themselves. Yet the fact that there is a dystopic tone existent in it underlines the feeling of loss in general since at the heart of dystopia there is always a fundamental loss of happiness or concord. It is immediately after the tone is set as such that the reader meets Stephen in the midst of this chaotic London setting and learns why he is ‘on the watch’ all the time. He is looking for a girl: walking on the streets, “Stephen remained as always, though barely consciously, on the watch for children, for a five-year-old girl. It was more than a habit ... This was a deep disposition” (*Child* 7). The description points at something more substantial than a habit. As it is described, being constantly on the search, lacking something, and having an inherent void, has become embedded in the very character of Stephen. This idea, in fact, proves useful in maintaining the feeling that in this ‘dystopic’ setting everyone is in search of something they have lost (see also Stamenkovic 329 for the idea of ‘collective loss’). Stephen’s father is in search of the old England, Charles Darke searches for solitude, and many other Londoners are searching for peace and quiet. Searching for something, lacking something, has become a part of who they are. Lynn Wells highlights this idea, stating that in the Britain of the text “any form of innocence seems to have been irrevocably lost” (40). People are in search of something that was essential to their humanity: their innocence, a pleasure in life; or, in other words, they are engaged in a “search for the child that exists in every individual” (Slay 115) because, in the end, what is pleasurable and innocent will get attached to an image of romanticised childhood in the value scheme of the text. Hence, assimilating the child’s loss into a larger feeling of loss, the text effectuates a transition from a single physical loss into a more conceptual one that will be portrayed as the loss of a romanticised childhood.

Apart from this all-encompassing feeling of loss, Kate's loss is associated with a more particular loss for Stephen, which is his own boyhood. As mentioned, the first time the reader meets Stephen he is described as someone who is always "on the watch for children, for a five-year-old girl" (*Child* 7). In the couple of paragraphs following this description, it is revealed to the reader that this girl he is searching for is, in fact, Stephen's own daughter Kate. However, the narrator does not yet reveal the reasons either for this search or for Kate's absence until much later in the same opening chapter. The first occasion in which the reader learns what became of Kate comes while Stephen is in one of his committee meetings. In the meeting, he is unable to pay attention to the proceedings, and he surrenders to his daydreaming. One memory leads to another, and he remembers the day Kate was abducted. The following extract is from that moment in the story:

Through the window [Stephen] saw not an enclosed car-park and baking limousines but, as from two floors up, a rose garden, playing fields, a speckled grey balustrade, then rough, uncultivated land which fell away to oaks and beeches, and beyond them the great stretch of foreshore and the blue tidal river, a mile from bank to bank. This was a lost time and a lost landscape – he had returned once to discover the trees efficiently felled, the land ploughed and the estuary spanned by a motorway bridge. And since loss was his subject, it was an easy move to a frozen, sunny day outside a supermarket in South London. He was holding his daughter's hand. (*Child* 12)

The day he remembers holding his daughter's hand is the day when she was abducted. So, as the extract shows, the very first instance when Kate's abduction features in one of Stephen's daydreams in the narrative—and the first time it is revealed in the narrative itself—appears not for its own sake but as an extension of Stephen's memories of his own lost boyhood in a boarding school. Looking out of

the window of the government building during one of his committee meetings, Stephen casts his mind back to his boyhood in the boarding school which, in line with the extract above, comes to him in the image of a regrettably lost landscape, a lost Eden. Only then, and only in relation to that, he is able to dream about Kate. This becomes a central aspect of Stephen's daydreams throughout the story. Whenever it seems he is daydreaming about Kate, it is actually his own childhood he is thinking about. Whenever he wants to think about Kate, he immediately strays into his own memories as a boy. For example, trying to remember Kate only brings "back to him the taste of an only childhood in hot countries" (*Child* 69), or, in another instance, what his daydreams portray to him is "not his daughter showing him her head-over-heels, but" his own memories with his own parents (*Child* 47). This connection between the lost child and the lost boyhood becomes, as Jahanroshan also notices (69), the most apparent when Stephen "stray[s] into the boys' section" in a toy shop despite supposedly being there to buy a birthday present for his lost daughter in the hopes that he may make 'the universe' bring her back to him (*Child* 128). Thus, by spending most of his time in the boys' section, he seems to be trying to bring back not only Kate but also his own boy-self too. These instances indicate that for Stephen, Kate's loss is inseparable from his own lost boyhood.

His attachment to his child-self is further underlined by Stephen's childlikeness and how he is unable to break free from it. Although he seems critical of his friend Charles' regression, which will be discussed below, a similar childlikeness haunts Stephen throughout the story. Stephen is constantly referred to as a child: He takes "childish – or boyish – pleasure" watching the railroads (*Child* 50); a taxi driver who is a "motherly woman insist[s] on fastening his seatbelt for him" (*Child* 193); people talk to him "as though to a child" (*Child* 31); he likes the experience of painting together with school children to make "his schoolboy

daydream" come true (*Child* 146); and while preparing for his lunch with the Prime Minister, he, "in a mood of political, or *childish*, defiance [chooses] the most worn and least clean" suit in his wardrobe (*Child* 139; emphasis mine).

Stephen's childlikeness and his attachment to his childhood is once more emphasised in Charles Darke's analysis of Stephen's first novel *Lemonade*. Darke observes to Stephen that his "book is not for children, it's for a child, and that child is [him]. *Lemonade* is a message from [him] to a previous self which will never cease to exist" (*Child* 33). Interestingly, McEwan expresses a similar opinion about his *The Child in Time* in an interview where he states that his novel was "an exploration, an investigation of childhood and how it sits within us all our lives, and how in some respects, ... it seems to be in a perpetual present" (McEwan, "Interview with Ian McEwan" 13). While Darke's observations about Stephen's book indicate that the act of writing becomes a communicative act between the adult and his childhood, McEwan's observations about his own text demonstrates that this is definitely a major argument he wanted to explore. This communicative and explorative side of the writing act manifests why it was somehow inevitable for Stephen to write *Lemonade*, a children's book, despite setting out to write a masterpiece as "a potential Joyce, Mann or Shakespeare ... [in] the European cultural tradition, the grown-up one" (*Child* 30). Although he starts with such ambitions, when he actually sits down to write, this explorative side takes over and, as the narrator reports to the reader, Stephen decides to include a chapter about his protagonist's childhood. Yet, this "opening chapter stubbornly refuse[s] to end. It [takes] on a life of its own" (*Child* 29), and it eventually becomes *Lemonade*:

a novel based on a summer holiday he had spent in his eleventh year with two girl cousins, a novel of short trousers and short hair for the boys, and Alice bands and frocks tucked into knickers for the girls, with unspoken

yearnings, coyly interlacing fingers in place of crazed sex, bicycles with wicker hampers instead of day-glo Volkswagen buses, and set not in Jalalabad but just outside Reading. It was all done in three months and he called it *Lemonade*. (*Child* 29)

Consequently, it can be argued that *Child* “is more than a missing-child novel,” and in searching for Kate, Stephen is actually searching “for the child that exists in” him (Slay 115). He is searching for that image of himself in ‘short trousers and short hair’ with his ‘unspoken yearnings’, just as in the above description of the background to his *Lemonade*. And although he sets out to write a novel that will be based on his adventures of exploring the East by a ‘day-glo Volkswagen bus,’ it is not those times that he craves for but his adventures on his ‘bicycle with wicker hampers’ in a summer camp (*Child* 29). In this sense, yearning for Kate is, for Stephen, one and the same with yearning for his own childhood. As Goldstein states, “the instantaneous and inexplicable loss of [Kate]” may metonymically represent how time ‘violently’ snatches from the adult the child within him (9). Therefore, Stephen did not only lose Kate but he also, “as an adult, has lost the child within himself” (Childs, *The Fiction of Ian McEwan* 65) and is now searching for that boy alongside his search for Kate.

However, here the narrative movement does not replace an object (Kate-the-lost-daughter) with another one (Stephen-the-boy) but displaces that initial object with a general concept (the concept of *childhood*) because it has to be noted that Stephen’s yearning creates a nostalgically altered past. It has already been stated that he is not simply after his lost daughter, but now it also has to be noted that he is not simply after his own boyhood either simply because this boyhood that he yearns for does not reflect the reality of his childhood but is a romanticised modification of it. The relationship between nostalgia and trauma is apparent from

the evidence from many clinical experiments which “favour a functional account of nostalgia by showing that nostalgia promotes psychological resources that facilitate well-being” (Routledge et al. 453). As Adams says, nostalgia facilitates healing since it “connect[s] the past with the present, pointing optimistically to the future.” And within this function of nostalgia, the past is altered through nostalgic recalling. It becomes re-built upon memory that is altered either through careful selection/picking or tendentious interpretation. This is exactly how, during the biggest crisis of his life, Stephen’s relation to his past works in the text. As Lotfi summarises in her study, Stephen “desires to reach the lost order of his life by recalling past, as a remedy” (147), as a tool to help overcome the trauma of losing his daughter. Therefore, each time, Stephen’s past comes to him in altered versions, versions that are carefully tailored to his needs at that moment. What is valuable here for the present discussion is the essence of Stephen’s recalled boyhood. The fact that Stephen is not simply in search for a ‘concrete’ past but a romanticised version of the real thing entails an explanation of how childhood needs to be read as a concept rather than an object in the narrative. And this concept, as discussed, is an abstract childhood in its two contradictory meanings.

By the same token, Stephen’s passivity can account for the argument that what is happening in the narrative is not simply a search for a kidnapped daughter but the search for a more abstract ‘lost childhood.’ *The Child in Time* is not one of those stories where there is a kidnapped child and a parent who becomes ruthless in his/her search for the child and succeeds. Passivity stands out as an important feature of Stephen’s character, which makes even his tennis coach scold him harshly in a later chapter: “You’re passive. You’re mentally enfeebled. You wait for things to happen, you stand there hoping they’re going to go your way. You take no responsibility” (*Child* 157). Portrayed as living in an enfeebled state after the trauma

of losing his daughter and wife, Stephen is depicted as someone “sprawled out with his Scotch on the couch in pyjamas and thick cardigan” (*Child* 124) giving himself up to nostalgic memories. He daydreams “in fragments, without control, almost without consciousness” (*Child* 11-12). When the narrator says that “Stephen ran memories and daydreams ... Or were they running him?,” he makes it clear that Stephen does not even pursue Kate in his daydreams (*Child* 10). He simply lets the nostalgic memories of his own childhood haunt him every now and then, and he is actually aware of his passivity in this sense: “He [waits] for the pictures, the ones he could only dispel by jerking his head” (*Child* 47). That is to say, he is not dedicated to a search for Kate. On the contrary, he sits around and tries in vain to fight off his own childhood plaguing him in various memories and daydreams that are ‘running’ him (*Child* 10). And this circles back to the above discussion concerning his inability to think about Kate without drifting into his own boyhood. Thus, as Chalupsky says, there is a lost child in the novel “both physically, through the abduction of little Kate, as well as metaphorically” through the disappearance of the child within the adult (55). Stephen’s passive contemplation indicates a more abstract, more conceptual hide-and-seek where he is searching for a lost childhood more than he is searching for his missing child. Stephen’s over-stressed passivity underlines the idea that McEwan is interested more in a conceptual search than in a physical one.

The discussion so far may be summarised by stating that Kate’s loss clearly functions as a kind of pretext for the pursuit of lost childhood. By discovering the relation of the lost child first to a more general feeling of loss, then to Stephen’s own lost boyhood and childlikeness, the analysis is able to grasp the ‘child’—by transcending the traumatic physical search—as a concept rather than an immediate presence in the story. Within this interplay between a physical search for the lost child and the more conceptual search for a lost childhood, Stephen’s search for his

lost daughter Kate, which at first takes up central importance, is quickly reappointed to a secondary position in the narrative while the search for childhood as a general concept comes to predominate.

Having established hence that the quest in the novel is fundamentally for a concept and not an object, the study can begin investing in the semiotic square that will ensue from the exploration of the essence of this concept. The study now aims to analyse the antinomy that the text creates for itself: in its capacity as a concept, childhood is torn between its meaning of innocence and its meaning of project. Turning first to its meaning of innocence, the study aims to discuss how this meaning emerges in the narrative and how it builds a relation between innocence, timelessness and pastoral harmony.

Transcending Kate's physicality helps see the child as a concept. Yet it first has to be noted that replacing the physical child with a concept of childhood as the primary object of the quest does not mean that childhood here is taken as a stable concept. It has already been suggested before that not only how one deals with it but also the image of child/childhood itself can be and is a construct "that changes over time and within societies" (Pifer 1). As Margarida Morgado states, "[i]t is fluid and economically determined," and for this reason it "has to be approached as a cultural and historical ideological concept that changes in time" (249). Thus, within its conceptual form, childhood should now be seen for the political and social meanings it was meant to carry across by the value scheme of the narrative.

Central to these political and social meanings is the idea of 'innocence.' As James Wood contends, the lost child "inaugurates a loss of innocence" in *The Child in Time* (183). This overall loss of innocence was already mentioned while discussing how McEwan places Stephen's feelings of loss within the larger frame of loss and discomfort that characterises the setting in the narrative from the very

beginning. The “ex-children”—as the narrator refers to the adults (*Child* 8)—are in search of something that is essential to their humanity: their innocence, the pleasure they have in living because—reiterating Lynn Wells’ comment—in the Britain McEwan creates within the text, “any form of innocence seems to have been irrevocably lost” (40). The time and place where this innocence can be recovered, hence, becomes a romanticised childhood, as the description ‘ex-children’ hints at. Here, the adults are described not as grown-ups; they do not have a positive identity. They are regarded only negatively, only by the thing they lack: their child-selves.

This relationship between childhood and innocence first becomes noticeable with Kate’s characterisation. She is never fully described in the narrative and Stephen refers to her only in passing and in recollections that are themselves fuzzy since they are always subsumed under his recollections of his own boyhood. Still, these fuzzy recollections of the ‘stolen’ three-year-old daughter are bursting with references and allusions to her portrayal as innocent and pure. For example, Stephen describes Kate’s body as “compact, so unblemished. ... The little body smell[s] of bed warmth and milk” (*Child* 13). Her total existence of five years diminishes into the silhouette of “a lovely daughter, a lovely girl” (*Child* 214). That is to say, all the trials and tribulations of raising a human being are caricatured into an unchanging innocent figure, which is reminiscent of *Peter Pan* whose title character is an innocent little boy who never ages. Jack Slay remarks that in “multiplying these images of the child,” these caricatured images of pure innocence, “McEwan emphasises the innocence and purity of childhood” (118). In fact, Kate’s abduction gains its characteristic as an ‘evil act beyond comprehension’ directly from its sharp contrast with the innocence and purity of the victim. Morgado maintains a similar idea by stating that the “[n]arratives of the disappearance of children are capturing our contemporary imagination because they represent a

‘nostalgic worship of childhood innocence’ through being an attack on, a seduction or an abandonment of the child as the image of innate good, innocence” (252). By extension, this innocence of the particular child extends to the concept of childhood in general, which is very convenient for the narrative since Kate is not there to contradict the meaning bestowed upon her. The absence of Kate and of any other child character in the narrative helps create the conditions necessary for romanticising the condition of being a child.

Katherina Dodou traces this pattern of ‘childhood innocence’ in McEwan’s oeuvre. In referring to McEwan’s uses of the childhood image in her analysis of McEwan’s *The Innocent* (the novel that follows *The Child in Time*), Dodou remarks that the “evocation of the past in terms of a childhood suggests a Golden Age of prelapsarian innocence—of uncomplicated joy and intimacy, of being carefree and in love—before the fall to corruption and guilt” (81). The corruption and guilt Dodou mentions relate to the experience that growing up and becoming an adult brings about. Hence, she adds that this nostalgic childhood represents something “which is irrevocably lost to the adult and to society” (82). Katherina Dodou is not the only critic who expresses this insight into McEwan’s prevalent uses of the images of child and childhood. Ellen Pifer offers a similar reading of McEwan’s uses of these images and underlines that they hint at “a persistent faith in childhood innocence” that is indebted to the Romantic Wordsworthian sense (2). In fact, McEwan himself suggests that he maintains a faith in childhood innocence—which he describes as “an age of lost innocence”—when talking in an interview about the differences between adult and children’s fiction (McEwan, “The Art of Fiction” 106).

The most striking passage in the novel that points at a romanticised view of the child and childhood as lost innocence is from a session in one of the weekly committee meetings. A man who is left unidentified—Stephen could not catch his

name and credentials since he was daydreaming again—delivers a presentation in front of the committee in order to convince them that teaching literacy to children before they are eight has negative effects on them. He says, “[b]y forcing literacy on to children between the ages of five and seven, we introduce a degree of abstraction which shatters the unity of the child’s world view” (*Child* 76). He further defines this as “nothing less than a banishment from the Garden” because, in his opinion, such “[p]remature literacy makes for adults in whom an unforced, intelligent empathy with the natural world, with their fellow beings, with social processes, is stunted” (*Child* 77). Based on this, the man compares adults, “for whom the apprehension of the unity of creation will remain a difficult, elusive concept” to children for whom “this apprehension is a gift” (*Child* 77). Here, the concept even exceeds the idea of innocence. Now it implies completeness, almost a unity with the ‘Spirit’ in a Golden Age, a unity that reflects the life of man in the Garden of Eden before the fall. This calls to mind once again Peter Pan “who could neither write nor spell” and his Neverland where he lives in complete harmony with the natural world, with his fellow beings (Barrie 172). Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, in this respect, aligns very well with the position of lost childhood innocence in *The Child in Time*. Peter Pan the character exists forever in this Golden Age which is represented by the timeless and boundless Neverland where he lives.

The narrative supports this parallelism between the Golden Age and childhood by coupling infancy with pastoral motifs. The action in the novel takes place in both urban London and its rural surroundings, Stephen being the main agent who ties these spheres together by frequently travelling across the borders of the two. Hence, Stephen’s descriptions and perceptions of these two spheres become decisive in terms of their characterisations. This creates an “urban/rural divide” (Wells 52) in the narrative, and while the city is constantly undermined for

its chaos and unhappiness, the country is always promoted for its tranquillity and harmony. In addition to Stephen's perceptions of the city's chaotic atmosphere, Stephen's father provides a description of London through the end of the novel that supplies a testimony to Stephen's version: what the father sees once again underscores the chaos of the city. He describes London by drawing attention to the "filth on the streets, the dirty messages on the walls, the poverty" and he concludes that "it's all changed in ten years. ... It's a new country. More like the Far East at its worst" (*Child* 177). Stephen's fascination with the country, on the other hand, creates a direct contrast with this description. On his way to visiting Julie for the first time in the timeframe of the narrative, Stephen gets off the train in the countryside and starts walking to Julie's cottage. The narrator describes this walk:

He set off, and within minutes found satisfaction in this new landscape. He was marching across a void. All sense of progress, and therefore all sense of time, disappeared. The trees on the far side did not come closer. ... The lack of hurry, the disappearance of any real sense of a destination, suited him. (*Child* 52)

The country is portrayed as an escape from the chaotic atmosphere of the city: "the haven of pastoralism is appealed to as the escape from corruption" (Wood 183), corruption that the narrator subtly defines in terms of 'hurry', 'progress', 'time' and 'destination'. Here, McEwan relies, in the words of his fellow author Kazuo Ishiguro, on the myth of "an England with sleepy, beautiful villages, with very polite people" (Ishiguro 74). In contrast with the indifferent crowd on London streets that Stephen tries to shoulder through every day (*Child* 3), a stranger in the country "smile[s] and lift[s] his hand as Stephen passe[s] and this cheer[s] him" up and he says he has "forgotten how friendly people were in the country" (*Child* 51). This pastoralism fabricates a strong foundation for a romanticised childhood. The fact that the two

important women characters, Thelma and Julie, live in the countryside; that Charles Darke moves to a cottage in the country to (re)live his childhood; and that Stephen's visits to the country always bring to his mind his childhood memories and give him 'boyish pleasure' in comparison to the pitiless city that 'steals' his daughter, makes the relation between *childhood innocence* and *pastoralism* stand out more clearly. In line with this, Darke's repressed childhood cannot surface in the city, but blooms in the country woods. The country heals Julie and helps Thelma expand her knowledge so that she is able to write a new book, and a depressed Stephen becomes childlike whenever in the countryside.

Its pastoral associations help the concept of childhood maintain a further meaning other than innocence: a meaning of timelessness. Raymond Williams in his *The Country and The City* discusses the implications of such pastoralism at length, together with its history, its flaws, and its differing uses. He warns against idealising the feudal past and points out how that past is usually bent to purpose to create the myth of a pastoral state unblemished by materialism. He then rejects the existence of such pure periods or places in history altogether. What is pertinent to the discussion here is Williams' brief explanation that a pastoral evocation of an imagined mythical past is in its essence a "reaction to the fact of change" (35). Williams underlines that this change can especially be understood as the effect of the new capitalist order. Clinging to a pastoral state which is nothing more than a construct against the socio-political changes that time brings eventually means resisting the forward movement of social development by idealising feudal and post-feudal values which were as blemished by class antagonism as their capitalist counterparts according to Williams. Therefore, it can be argued that the sense of lost innocence, in its guises of the prelapsarian Golden Age and pastoralism, inevitably attaches itself to a sense of being against change and so being against linear time. As

Jago Morrison also states, “lived time,” or simply ‘growing up,’ represents “a passage from innocence to experience” (72). Innocence attaches itself to a sense of being outside of this ‘lived time,’ outside of ‘growing up’ and hence inside a realm of timelessness. In the face of the cruel grown-up world, childhood thus comes to represent a safe timeless harbour into which the adult might escape by stepping out of the “dispassionate ... unstopability” of linear time (*Child* 7).

The text discusses this sense of timelessness of childhood, its being an antinomy to bourgeois linear time, mostly through Charles Darke and his opinions. Darke, trying to persuade Stephen to publish his first novel as a children’s book, tells Stephen over their first business dinner that “[f]or children, childhood is timeless. It’s always the present. ... Today is what they feel, and when they say ‘When I grow up ...’ there’s always an edge of disbelief – how could they ever be other than what they are?” (*Child* 65). This vision of childhood as the anti-temporal diffusion of time in an eternal present—just as it is in the *Neverland* of Peter Pan—helps the concept of childhood emerge as ‘timeless innocence.’ A time and place where the ‘ex-children’ try to find sanctuary from the grown-up world.

The discussion up to this point helps invest in seme P_1 (the desire) in the semiotic square, as can be seen in Figure 13 below. Yet, it must be noted that this view of childhood, as discussed above, should be seen not as self-evident but as historically specific. In other words, childhood is constructed in terms of innocence, timelessness, or pastoral peace not because these are inherent in it but because its binary relationship to another historical construct, adulthood, necessitates its being positioned so—as will be discussed below.

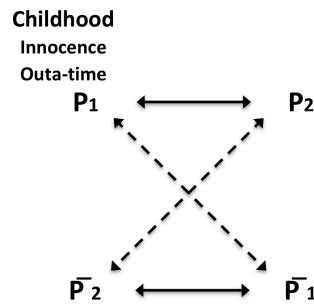


Fig. 13 The seme of desire

Nodleman argues that “the childlike can be constructed and understood only in relation to that which it is not—the nonchildlike or, more directly, the adult” (206). Therefore, it needs to be understood within this binary give-and-take with adulthood. This may be discussed by referring to Charles Darke again and to his condition. Charles’ wife Thelma explains Charles’ opinions to Stephen when Stephen visits them for the second time in their country-house to which the Darkes moved for Charles to be able to live like a child. She says:

He wanted the security of childhood, the powerlessness, the obedience, and also the freedom that goes with it, freedom from money, decisions, plans, demands. He used to say he wanted to escape from time, from appointments, schedules, deadlines. Childhood to him was timelessness, he talked about it as though it were a mystical state. He longed for all this, talked to me about it endlessly, got depressed, and meanwhile he was out there making money, becoming known, creating hundreds of obligations for himself in the adult world, running away from his thoughts. (*Child* 201)

It is apparent in the description that the sense of childhood that Charles is ‘longing for’ is only a projection of the negation of all the things the adult world exhausts him with. He wants to escape from ‘appointments, schedules, deadlines,’ so he projects a ‘mystical’ childhood where he can be free from all these. The idea of childhood as

such, it may therefore be argued, emerges out of a necessity for a compensatory narrative to set against the ruthless adult world of modern capitalism that alienates the individual to himself with its interminable 'going-on' of material accumulation, business relations and expansion. As is clear in *Thelma's* last sentence, the fact that this going-on and this mystical childhood 'endlessly' coexist indicates that childhood functions as an incentive for the adult to keep going: 'hope' which makes the burden a bit more bearable, something similar to the new year lottery that helps maintain hopes for a better life one more year.

Jack Slay's reflection on Stephen captures almost the same idea. He says that "Stephen is unashamed, even willing, to express his child-self, succumbing to the youthful innocence, the harmless naïveté that dwells within him. By doing so, McEwan suggests, the adult-self is better able to survive the turmoil and chaos of adult society" (123). This may be the reason why "many adults have much stronger ties to the children they used to be" or why a "lost childhood, lost childhood hopes and dreams remain present in the seemingly mature adult" (Smoodin 19). And this is the idea behind Margarida Morgado's observation that the "child is no more principally physically concrete, but the discursive production of adults interested mainly in reliving their pasts or using the child to articulate fears and wishes" (247). As with any binary relation, the terms require each other's existence to maintain the balance in the violent hierarchy. This then circles the argument back to Nodleman's statement that childhood can only be fully understood in its relation to adulthood.

Two things become clear here: the first is the originally dialectical link inherent in this binary opposition, of which Ashley Dawson reminds us by stating that "the image of the innocent child was a product of, and attempt at psychological compensation for, the savage capitalism of Victorian-era Britain" (145). The fact that childhood innocence is in a compensatory, hence dialectical, opposition to the harsh

capitalism of the adult world already suggests the possibility of a Hegelian move towards an ideal synthesis of the two. The second is a more deconstructive insight regarding the violent hierarchy in the binary opposition. It is a deconstructive insight because it may be seen as an instance of “signifying conflict” or an “incompatibility” in a text as Barbara Johnson names it (205). As is discussed above, the value system of the narrative movement in the text puts ‘childhood innocence’ in the privileged P_1 position of the binary relationship. However, it becomes clear that childhood innocence does not have the power to occupy this dominant position as a negation of which—or more broadly according to which—the less favoured P_2 position is created. This relationship brings to mind the postcolonial analysis of the occident/orient binary, in which the occident is the dominant position and the orient is constantly created and recreated as the not-occident. The occident claims knowledge of the orient, and this claim is in the orient’s absence. Reminiscent of this dynamic, in the narrative it is in fact the ‘child’ that is created and recreated as the ‘not-adult;’ and it is conversely the adults who claim knowledge of the child in the latter’s absence—it was already pointed out that children are completely absent from the plot. That is to say, although adulthood appears to be the dominant position in practice in this violent hierarchy, the text reverses this order in the narrative value system. This incompatibility between what the text seems to be doing and what it actually does becomes symptomatic of a political unconscious which is in fact directly related to the point made above about the dialectical link. Both of these points will become useful in the discussion below. At this point, though, this helps invest in some P_2 in the square, as seen in Figure 14 below.

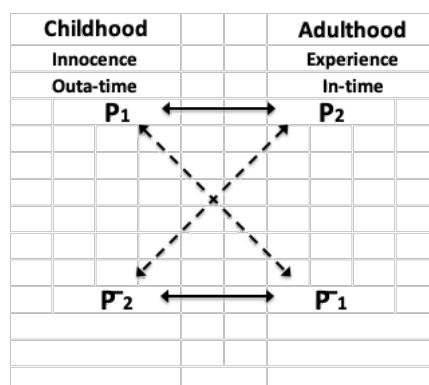


Fig. 14 Relationship between childhood and adulthood

The last move in the investment in the square is defining the axis of contradictories. It is with this axis that the square gains movement more clearly in terms of the two contradictory meanings of childhood in relation to time. The semes $\bar{P}_1$ and $\bar{P}_2$ in this neutral axis are the contradictories of P_1 and P_2 and also, while $\bar{P}_1$ implies P_2 , $\bar{P}_2$ implies P_1 in the structural dimension of the square; therefore, they are the intermediaries between the semes P_1 and P_2 of the complex axis.

It has been discussed that childhood is endowed with a meaning of timeless innocence: existing outside of time, never changing, remaining intact by being against growing up, just as in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Yet childhood as such is also described in McEwan's work as "a sleep from which everyone must awaken to face an adult world" (Childs, *Contemporary Novelists* 179). That is to say, on the opposite pole from childhood, adulthood represents being 'in-time,' yielding to the linearity of time which means growing up and accepting responsibility (Edemariam). In the text, *The Authorised Childcare Handbook*—an extract from which opens each chapter in the novel—is the most obvious representation of this view that sees childhood as the unhealthy and adulthood as the healthy condition. One of the extracts from the *Handbook* maintains that there is a "time-honoured analogy between childhood and disease – a physically and mentally incapacitating condition, distorting emotions, perceptions and reason, from which growing up is the slow and difficult recovery"

(*Child* 179). This idea positions adulthood as the cure for childhood. Therefore, in contradiction to childhood's attraction, there arises a force that seeks to undermine it. As Peter Childs says, childhood becomes "a realm adults seek to control" but "to which they also seek to return" (*Contemporary Novelists* 179).

This undermining and controlling force creates a conflict of its own. It seeks to destroy childhood but at the same time needs it to give meaning to adulthood. This is the conflict behind Charles's frantic behaviour: "what he needs is quite at odds with what he does, what he's been doing," as his wife Thelma describes it (*Child* 46): "He want[s] to be famous, and have people tell him that one day he would be Prime Minister, and he want[s] to be the little boy without a care in the world, with no responsibility" (*Child* 200). This vacillation Charles is suffering from, the conflict in the binary give-and-take between childhood and adulthood, helps an investment in the remaining semes of the semiotic square as in Figure 15 below. With reference to Charles' vacillation, the force that seeks to control childhood focuses on undermining it to its reproductive capacity ($\bar{P}_1$): here, the focus is on the incipient adult within the child who will grow up to 'be famous,' 'be Prime Minister,' that is to say, be successful in neoliberal and capitalist terms. As an adult, as a grown up, he will assume his responsibility in the narratives of work and success the system upholds and will work hard to reproduce them. On the opposite pole, an orientation towards childhood focuses on the forgotten child within the adult ($\bar{P}_2$) who represents an escape from 'the cares of the world' and 'responsibilities,' in other words, from what P_2 embraces. This is how the value system of the text invests in the semes $\bar{P}_1$ and $\bar{P}_2$ respectively with "the incipient adult within the child [and] the forgotten child within the adult" as Charles himself expresses it in the novel (*Child* 31).

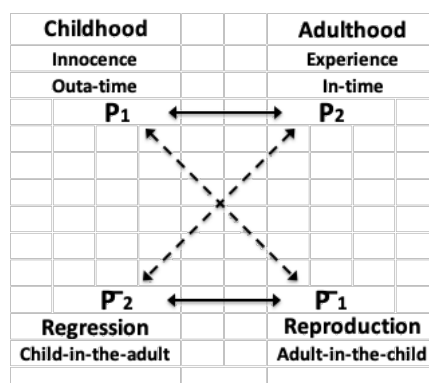


Fig. 15 The semic universe of the text

Before elaborating on how the square gains movement, more can be said about $\bar{P}_1$, the reproductive aspect of childhood or the adult in the child. In the text, the reproductive aspect of childhood makes itself visible with the collateral idea of ‘meaninglessness in the absence of the child.’ The text does not offer much in terms of describing the family life of the Lewises before the abduction, but bits and pieces hint that there was ‘nothing wrong’ with it. Everything was on track till Kate’s abduction after which the couple falls out with each other. There is bitterness over their inability to console each other and the “nuclear-family bliss ... is shattered and superseded ... by the ancient charade of man and woman misunderstanding and failing to communicate with each other” (Schoene-Harwood 157). Stephen and Julie first blame each other and then stop talking altogether, which then leads to their separation. Julie first retreats to a monastery then buys “a place of her own” near a pine plantation (*Child* 49). In other words, without the child’s presence to glue the family together and to give it a reason for being, the couple is unable to continue being together. They are not able to move on with their lives individually, either, especially Stephen, as was described at the beginning of this chapter. He turns into a passive-contemplative cynic, a couch potato in his indulgence in drinking and watching low-quality daytime shows on television.

In this sense, the child becomes a necessary constituent of adult life, so necessary that, without it, adult life and its institutions lose their meaning, direction and purpose. Stephen states how much he relies on his daughter's presence by thinking to himself that Kate's "phantom growth ... was not only inevitable ... but necessary. Without the fantasy of her continued existence he was lost, time would stop" (*Child* 8). Stephen's reaction to the threat of a worldwide nuclear-war that takes place during the Olympic Games exemplifies this very well. Stephen watches the events take shape on television at home: During the Games, American and Soviet athletes "rub shoulders" (*Child* 34) and this being during the height of the Cold War, the simple squabble quickly develops into a large-scale conflict where each side starts threatening the other with using their atomic bombs, hence, hinting at an 'end of the world' scenario. Watching the threat of extinction enfold him, Stephen is completely ignorant and does not even worry if the world ends. The narrator reports that Stephen "honestly did not mind" whether the world ended or continued (*Child* 36). However, later in the narrative, the reader gets to hear another character recount his experience of the same crisis as follows: "Morley talked about his children. ... During the height of the Olympic Games crisis he and his wife had lain awake all night, speechless with fear for the boys, horrified by their own helplessness to keep them from harm" (*Child* 163). This point of view supplied by Morley acts as a foil to Stephen's ignorance and hence underlines the importance of children's presence in the family to make the adult world meaningful.

This idea gets openly expressed by the Prime Minister later in the text. During their second meeting, the Prime Minister confesses to Stephen her sexual attraction to Charles Darke, and upon this, Stephen protests that Charles is married and that the Prime Minister is *the* "upholder of family values" (*Child* 188). However, she replies by saying that "[Charles] has no children and one would hardly describe

what he has with his wife as a family" (*Child* 188). For the Prime Minister, and the politics she represents, family is only possible and meaningful on the condition of the presence of children. Without them, as exemplified in Stephen and Julie's drifting apart, the modern family suffers from an expanding void in its foundation. According to Morgado, this diagnosis is applicable to almost all modern narratives of child abduction. She states that the "disappearance of children, daughters, is the starting point for gripping narratives of parental grief, emphasizing the hurting void left by children in the family, the purposelessness of adult lives without children" (248). She further states "[u]nlike the traditional family, which presuppose[s] a wider community, ... the modern family is characterized by an emotional and domestic unity ... and by 'home' as the protected haven from an aggressive and dangerous outside world" in order to underline that this narrative of meaninglessness functions around family-as-a-modern-construct (249-250). Hence, the domestic ownership of the child and the violent hierarchy of home/outside inherent in the construction of modern family can be understood as the two reasons causing Stephen's unwitting description of Kate's abduction as 'being robbed': in the heated moment of searching for his daughter, Stephen "hear[s] himself pronounce the word 'stolen' " (*Child* 18). This completes the investment phase, and with all the semes in place, the discussion can now return to how the square gains movement as was already hinted at.

In the narrative structure of the text, as it is represented by the semiotic square, the movement starts in the interaction between semes P_2 , $\bar{P}_2$ and P_1 . The connection between the search for a child, one's childhood (the child within the adult), and a general childhood innocence has already been touched upon. From the very beginning in the novel, the reader meets an adult who is looking for a child, but quickly this search is shown to be a 'regressive force' that dominates everyone,

especially Stephen and Charles Darke. To open up the relation between semes P_2 , $\bar{P}_2$ and P_1 , and to witness how the narrative puts this regressive force at play, one can focus more on Charles Darke since Stephen's regression into childhood has already been discussed.

An important fact about Darke is that, although he is only a few years older than Stephen, his demeanour makes him look and sound much older most of the time. This may stem from the role he comes to fulfil in the narrative: he is the ultimate grown-up in the story, the ultimate neoliberal man. Darke possesses all the qualities neoliberalism esteems: the adjective that defines him is not 'happy,' 'comfortable' or 'contented' but 'successful.' The meaning of this 'success' is best represented through his professional career that has an incredibly high trajectory: he starts in the music business and makes a fortune, then moves into publishing and becomes even more successful, later engages in politics and gets immediately elected as an MP and, in the end, he climbs up to a ministerial position to become the Prime Minister's favourite. In personal matters, he is as successful as in business: he has social ties, he is utterly charismatic and respected, and even his marital life is described as 'successful.' "[Darke] was also unfashionably *successful* in his choice of a wife twelve years his senior" (*Child* 32, emphasis added). In short, he belongs unambiguously to the realm of P_2 in Figure 15 above.

This initial image he has in the narrative makes his later metamorphosis more appalling. Somewhere through the middle of the novel, the reader is made to realise that Darke is actually hiding a 'childlikeness' behind his demeanour of the ultimate adult. Maybe as comically foreshadowed and symbolised by the "ungovernable plume [of hair] which rose from the back of the crown" of his head repeatedly, no matter how hard he tries to straighten it, this repressed childlikeness forces itself to the surface in the end (*Child* 31). The semiotic map laid out in Figure

15 explains why Darke is portrayed as someone who has been repressing his childlikeness so fiercely. The relationship between P_2 , $\bar{P}_2$ and P_1 positions childhood as that which works to undermine adulthood through its regressive power. Childhood (P_1) means the negation of adulthood (P_2) through its relation of implication with the child-in-the-adult ($\bar{P}_2$). As a matter of fact, at the peak point of his career, Darke unexpectedly quits everything, sells all his property, moves to a rural cottage together with his wife and regresses into childhood. Unable to resist the undermining powers of the child-in-the-adult, he lets himself go and starts acting literally like a child, dressed up in shorts, playing with his slingshot and marbles. His new role is further encouraged by his relationship to his wife who is “twelve years his senior” which makes him, in turn, “young enough ... to be her son” (*Child* 32). His wife Thelma herself frequently refers to him as “her difficult child” (*Child* 40). Both Stephen and the reader are shocked in the face of this unfathomable vision. His wife Thelma explains Charles’ regression to Stephen as follows: “He couldn’t square it ... He wanted to be famous, and have people tell him that one day he would be Prime Minister, and he wanted to be the little boy without a care in the world, with no responsibility, no knowledge of the world outside. ...” (*Child* 200). Thelma also adds that this was not a passing whim but a fundamental inner conflict that had followed Darke all through his adult life.

This is the representation of the movement from P_2 to P_1 through $\bar{P}_2$: focusing on the child within the adult, an over-indulgence in nourishing it, will result in the negation of what defines adulthood: “the world of responsibilities and appointments” (Slay 118). Yet, there is another force in the narrative that brings the negation of childhood and that is the focus on the adult within the child, i.e. seeing the child for its reproductive capacity as the growing-up-adult.

This is represented in the movement back from P_1 to P_2 through $\bar{P}_1$. To observe this movement in the narrative, one can focus on the government's childcare policies that the narrator mentions in passing. These policies represent (a) the move against childhood that tends to stay out of progressive linear-time and (b) the tendency that expects that same childhood to pass (vanish) and fulfil its reproductive function. At one point, for instance, the narrator points out a general understanding: "It was generally agreed that the country was full of the wrong sort of people. There were strong opinions about what constituted a desirable citizenry and what should be done to children to procure one for the future" (*Child* 10). This shows that for the government and the general public children simply exist as the raw material that they want to shape in accordance with their liking. They are a source for the kind of adulthood the authorities would like to permit. In fact, they are so eager to accelerate this process that the narrator informs the reader regarding how "schools were up for sale to private investors, [and] the leaving age was soon to be lowered" (*Child* 28). In Schoene-Harwood's words, it seems that "the Government is interested not so much in the care of children as their swift and efficient transformation into easily manipulative adults" (164).

In fact, that transformation starts very early. The reader learns that national education policies advocate "fun [to be] peripheral" in primary education while saying that "[t]eachers and parents should embrace the fact that at the heart of ... learning [is] difficulty" (*Child* 22). The education policies function to engrave a Thatcherite neoliberal and neoconservative work ethic into children's very character. It is underlined that "[t]here was only one way to learn[:] ... [d]iligence ... application, discipline and jolly hard work" (*Child* 22). These are the qualities that authorities want future adults to have: "Puritan discipline and bourgeois exactitude" (Thompson, "Time" 56). The *Handbook* in the novel advises parents to "[m]ake it

clear to [their children] that the clock cannot be argued with and that when it is time to leave for school, for Daddy to go to work, for Mummy to attend to her duties, then these changes are as incontestable as the tides" (*Child 27*). As can be understood, the child is here forced to adapt itself to the obligations of the adult world and is asked to accept these obligations as *natural* phenomena. This includes the strict gender roles that the statement is obviously imposing on them. The child is denied its childhood and is already seen within the process of its integration into the future adult world, a situation which regards the child as 'project.'

The term 'project' explains the quasi-paradoxical co-existence of (a) the view that sees children to be in the grasp of a sickness that needs to be eliminated quickly together with (b) the fact that the same children are lamented over when they are lost. Regarding this tension, Margarida Morgado points out the following:

Because of childhood's value as an idea of continuity and of the future, the disappearance of a child also becomes the disappearance of a wholesome utopia ... The disappearance of a child stands thus, in modern social moment, when things are wrenched out of joint suddenly and unpredictably. It threatens stability, human faith in action, it imposes grief and penalties on the adults in charge, and, ultimately, it demands a change of habits or a readjustment of projects. (252-253)

As Morgado states, since children are not valued for what they are but for what they will fulfil in the future for the adults, losing children means a loss of investment on the adults' part even though losing childhood is a necessary step for that investment to yield profit. Therefore, when Morgado talks about unpredictability and human faith in action, it may be interpreted as human faith in a predictably progressive-accumulative understanding of life. A capitalist lays out investment plans, trusts—thanks to law and order that the neoliberal state provides for him— in their

workability and expects to get profits in the end. The same philosophy applies to the modern family, the smallest unit of bourgeois capitalism, as well. The family invests in their children, trusts that they will grow up just fine, and expects the end product to be adults who turn out as they have planned morally, philosophically and career-wise. These new adults secure the continuity of the family which would be meaningless without this trope—as was already discussed above. Children's existence helps create an image of the family as a stable and continuous entity, so all that material wealth seems worth accumulating. Without children, the family faces its evanescence and hence all acts of toiling, buying, borrowing, crediting, leasing and as such lose their necessity. It is similar to when a company stops a branch of operations or the production of a good because it is not profitable anymore. Without children, the bourgeois family unit is not profitable anymore. This message lies hidden when Stephen in the novel remarks in free indirect thought that “[w]hile Stephen and his friends were in Goa and Kabul with their frisbees and their hashish pipes, Charles and Thelma had a man who parked their car, a telephone answering service, dinner parties, hardback books. They were grownups” (*Child* 31). Being grown-up in neoliberal terms requires all these materials and services. The system wants more of Charles and Thelma and less of Stephen and his friends, idling away their lives in day-to-day entertainment. It wants more of the likes of Charles and Thelma who settle down and accumulate and so help the system maintain itself, but less of Stephen who “could get all his stuff into two suitcases” (*Child* 31).

With this move, the narrative movement over the square completes a full circle: the movement from adulthood to childhood through the child in the adult (P_2 to P_1 through $\bar{P}_2$) reverses itself in the movement from childhood back to adulthood this time through the adult in the child (P_1 to P_2 through $\bar{P}_1$). The quest that starts with Stephen's search ends with Stephen finding not his child or childhood but his

own adulthood which has become a stronger image by now since it has gone undergone a whole quasi-dialectical process within the confines of the narrative's semiotic universe. This circulatory movement within the square of logical possibilities indicates that the narrative has locked itself within its own confines. This movement is neither dialectical nor deconstructive: it neither progresses through synthesis nor abandons the original binary opposition that it starts with. Yet, Jameson explains this circulatory-movement-within-the-closure-of-the-semiotic-square as follows:

The semiotic square is ... not static but dynamic: The significance of positionality within it is only one index of the way in which it can just as easily be considered to map a temporal process as to register a conceptual blockage or paralysis; indeed, the latter can most often be grasped as the very situation that motivates the former, namely, the attempt, by rotating the square and generating its implicit positions, to find one's way out of the conceptual or ideological closure, out of the old or given—into which one is locked—somehow desperately to generate the novelty of the event, or of breakthrough ... (“Foreword” xvi-xvii)

Jameson asserts that the square offers ‘process’ and dynamic movement, but this happens along the axis of ‘a conceptual blockage.’ As becomes clear in his words, the Greimassian semiotic square offers a desperate possibility for novelty or breakthrough. This is shown by the semic combinations (see Figure 5; and Figure 16 below) that would seemingly provide the narrative with an opportunity to resolve the antinomy that is at the core of its semiotic universe and hence with a way out of this impasse. To quote Jameson again, this means that the semiotic square can ... “reduce” a narrative in movement to a series of “cognitive” or ideological, combinatory positions; or it can rewrite a cognitive text into a

desperate narrative movement in which new positions are generated and abandoned, and in which terms ceaselessly amalgamate in order to achieve the release of this or that ideal synthesis (“Foreword” xvii)

Greimas names two of the amalgamations that are generated: $P_1 + P_2$ creates the ‘complex’ term, and $\bar{P}_1$ and $\bar{P}_2$ creates the ‘neutral’ term (49). Yet, these are not the only possible combinations. Jameson explains: Thinking about S_1 as white and S_2 as black, their combination becomes S , and the combination of their contradictories nonwhite ($\bar{S}_1$) and nonblack ($\bar{S}_2$) becomes $\bar{S}$; based on a square of this kind,

the two compound or “synthetic” positions of S and $\bar{S}$ offer still greater conceptual enlargements, S standing as a complex or utopian term, in which the opposition of “white” and “black” might be transcended ..., whereas $\bar{S}$ stands as the neutral term, in which all of the privations and negations are assembled ... *Finally, the transversal axes map the place of tensions distinct from the principal or binary one, while the synthesis hypothetically proposed by uniting the two sides of the square ... designates alternative conceptual combinations.* (“Foreword” xiv; italics added)

In other words, the narrative forces its way out of the square through four combinations, but—in accordance with the workings of the real socio-political antinomy behind the surface impasse—the narrative movement leans towards a certain synthesis while trying to achieve its breakthrough.

As in Jameson’s explanation, the complex and utopian term S , the position that would subsume the core binary semic positions looks like the ideal synthesis that can resolve the original antinomy by uniting the binary semes. Therefore, since it is expected of the narrative movement to have resolved in its denouement this binary opposition it has started with, the narrative movement is first of all directed towards this combinatory position. Yet, this is “a conceivable but impossible

synthesis” as Jameson says (“Foreword” xx). In the narrative’s semic world, it is not possible to exist in states of childhood and adulthood at the same time or being in and outside of time coincidentally. Similarly, the direct opposite of this complex term, the neutral $\bar{S}$ is also logically impossible since it “is merely the empty wiping out of that content and the place of the global, mechanical negations of both terms of the initial opposition” (Jameson, “Foreword” xx).

Jameson explains that all of these four synthetic positions can be manifested within the text in actantial terms: “the two planes of narrative—“characters” or, better still, systems of characters, and cognitive complexes or contradictions—can be coordinated and transcoded into one another” (“Foreword” xx). In *Child*, the two actantial designations for the two major combinations can be taken to be Charles Darke and the lost daughter Kate respectively (Figure 17). Yet, both of these designations are eliminated early on. The elimination of these characters indicates the text’s inability to resolve the antinomy it created in its own narrative paradigm. Therefore, having exhausted those possibilities, the narrative movement now turns towards the deictic (or lateral) syntheses. Here, the manifestations become Julie and Stephen. Ideally, the favoured position is, or should be, $P_1 + \bar{P}_2$ (Julie) because it is a synthesis on the deictic axis of preference; it is a synthesis of the dominant binary seme and the negation of this dominant binary seme’s negation. Also, in Jameson’s words, $\bar{P}_2$, the negation of negation, is as important as the dominant P_1 because it is “the place of novelty ... its identification completes the process and, in that sense, constitutes the most creative act of the construction” (“Foreword” xvi). Yet, of the two deictic syntheses, the narrative in *Child* prioritises Stephen in the denouement. To be able to do so, the text has to eliminate Julie just as it did with Darke and Kate. Therefore, it has Stephen usurp Julie’s position and role, thereby exhausting its

movement and offering a magical resolution for the antinomy that it could not really resolve.

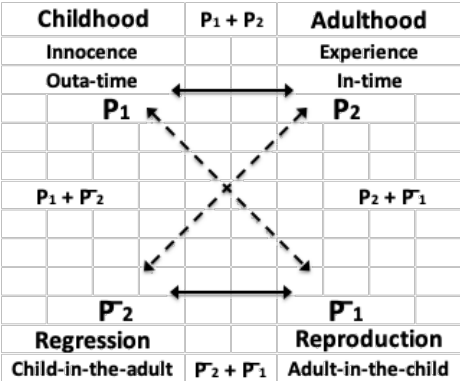


Fig. 16 Semic structures

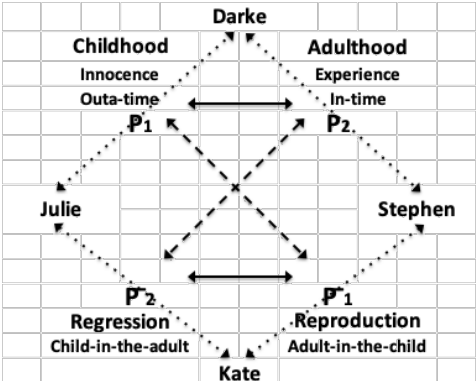


Fig. 17 Actantial manifestations in the narrative

Before elaborating on how these four characters occupy these synthetic positions and how the magical resolution emerges through Stephen, the discussion has to move to the deeper structure behind the surface movement of Figure 17. Referring once again to Jamesonian hermeneutics, the formal analysis up to this point was not a “mere explication de texte but an attempt to locate aesthetic contradiction as disclosing the presence of an underlying social contradiction” (Dowling 128). As was discussed at the very beginning of this chapter, although not immediately visible on its surface, the antinomy here bears the traces of the contradictions Thatcherism brought to Britain of the 1980s: the two contradictory meanings of childhood become allegorical positions representing the contradiction between the relentless Thatcherite neoliberalism on the one hand and the evocation of traditional values by Thatcherite neoconservatism on the other. The text’s inability to resolve the antinomy it created in its own narrative paradigm—the two different conceptualisations of childhood on the text’s surface—will thus be discussed as an indication of the irreconcilable nature of this contradiction within Thatcherite politics.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, compared to his later novels, *Child* is more covert in its political argument, but it is still clear that McEwan wanted to respond to the right-wing government of the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Wells 40). Although never directly revealed, one can easily read the deplorable sexless Prime Minister in the novel as Thatcher herself. Throughout the text, McEwan craftily avoids using pronouns when talking about or describing the Prime Minister, but the fact that this is a highly conservative government helps make the connection, along with certain similar characteristics of the fictional Prime Minister to the real one: for instance, he or she is “the nation’s parent” (*Child* 83), an image Thatcher tried to establish firmly. Also, although the story is set in the 1990s, McEwan stresses that he “never thought of it as a novel set in the future. [He] simply thought that [he] was writing in a satirically distorted present” (McEwan, “Writers Talk” 49). Some scholars read the novel’s future time-frame as a dystopic element; to Wright, for instance, the novel is “a dark millennial projection of Margaret Thatcher’s England into the last years of the century” (222). Others take the novel to be “categorizable as a ‘Condition of England novel’ ” in which “the private and the public are systematically intertwined” (Head 70). All these crystallise the covert relation between *Child* and the Thatcherite government.

Yet, regardless of the time frame and the sexless PM, it is still clear that the novel “offers McEwan’s view of Thatcher’s England” (Massie 51) and based on its depiction in the novel, it can be argued that he “deplores the condition of England” under Thatcherite rule (Delrez 12). It is no news that McEwan is against Thatcherism: He openly states his opposition, though mostly speaking in mild terms. His opposition may be summarised in his statement: “England under Mrs Thatcher leaves me with a nasty taste” (McEwan, “Ian McEwan” 43). However, a journey into the political unconscious of a text may reveal surprising insights as to how the

aesthetic or narrative act can grow to be discordant with the professed political prejudices of the artist, as Engels saw in the case of Balzac.

The literature on Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism across disciplines is extremely rich and diverse, but this simple fact, the fact of her ‘unparalleled domination’ over Britain and the British way of life, is a common argument almost everywhere. Horton, Tew and Wilson point out this fact by saying that “[t]o an unparalleled extent in the history of post-war Britain, the 1980s were dominated by one political figure and one political ideology, Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism” (“Critical Introduction” 1). Somewhere else, Joseph Brooker states a similar idea by saying that

discussions of the British life in the 1980s are randomly diverse. A dominant theme persists; pervasive, almost inescapable. This is the influence of the Conservative governments [on] British society and its historical trajectory. One word gathers these themes: Thatcherism. Thatcherism is not the only fact about Britain in the 1980s. But it is the central one, which will interact with and inflect any story. (*Literature* 2)

It is possible to find numerous similar accounts of Thatcherism. Its domination over and centrality in the British culture and way of life is definitely undeniable. Yet, this study does not aim to take up this point of view. Although some sources discuss Thatcherism in terms of its topical or thematic manifestations in the fiction of the 80s (Brooker, “The Art” 75-76), Jamesonian exegesis tries to uncover how the political features in the unconscious of the text; even in cases where it is not observable as a topic or a theme in the text. Jameson specifically refuses such “conventional sociology of literature” as “utterly unacceptable” because it “limits itself to the identification of class motifs or values in a given text, and feels that its

work is done when it shows how a given artifact 'reflects' its social background" (*The Political*, 80-81).

Jameson refuses this approach mainly because he sees it as "vulgar materialism" if the analysis attempts to "stress the imaginary status of the symbolic act so completely as to reify its social ground, now no longer understood as a subtext but merely as some inert given that the text passively or fantasmatically 'reflects' " (*The Political*, 82). Jameson insists that the *real social contradiction* "of political history, in the narrow sense of ... a chronicle sequence of happenings" (*The Political*, 75) must be seen "not immediately present as such, not some common-sense external reality, nor even the conventional narratives of history manuals, but rather must itself always be (re)constructed after the fact" (*The Political*, 81). With this statement, Jameson tries to underline the 'active role' of the text in generating its own subtext. He states that history "is *not* a text, for it is fundamentally non-narrative and nonrepresentational" and for that reason it is "inaccessible to us except in textual form, or in other words, ... it can be approached only by way of prior (re)textualization" (*The Political*, 82). That is to say, because of this active role of the text in generating (by (re)textualizing) history as its subtext, the analysis needs to start not from the outside of the text then to move inside it but within the boundaries of the text itself to articulate the contradiction in its formal structure which will help lay bare the historical in the subtext; this is the reason why Jameson professes the "methodological requirement" which asserts that "to articulate a text's fundamental contradiction [is to] be seen as a test of the completeness of the analysis" (*The Political*, 80). Once fulfilling this methodological requirement, and with the knowledge that this contradiction is an ideologically informed (re)textualization of an historical reality, the analytic work proceeds to reveal this contradiction (together with the entire system of ideological closure attached to it

and discovered through a Greimassian semiotic analysis) “as the symptomatic projection of something quite different, namely of social contradiction” (*The Political*, 83). Put briefly, then, although this section of the chapter started with allusions to the dominance of Thatcherism in 1980s British culture and to McEwan’s declared position against Thatcherism, Jamesonian analysis does not start from these facts in order to move into the text to show how it reflects them. In other words, starting the analysis by taking socio-political issues (i.e. Thatcherism, neoliberalism, right-wing politics) that exist outside the text and only then reading the text (i.e. *The Child in Time*) to see if it reflects these issues is the direct opposite of what Jameson wants to do. His analysis starts from inside the text by locating a fundamental contradiction in its narrative form just as the previous section of the chapter did. However, reference to Thatcherism in the 1980s is also necessary according to Jameson since he declares it to be wrong to assume that there is nothing outside the text. As he warns against vulgar materialism, Jameson also warns against sheer structuralism in the process of analysing a text as a symbolic act in this first horizon. He says that the analyst would be driven into the trap of “the ideology of structuralism” if the analysis “overemphasise[s] the active way in which the text reorganizes its subtext (in order, presumably, to reach the triumphant conclusion that the ‘referent’ does not exist)” (*The Political*, 82). Such an emphasis would preempt the move into the wider horizons of Jamesonian hermeneutics and would leave the text stripped of its historical-political essence.

Consequently, Jameson’s analysis in the first horizon means being aware of the historical reality but always starting from the text to reach it. He defines two different subtexts in order to guide the analytic process as such. In order to help avoid tending towards “either of the two inseparable yet incommensurable dimensions of the symbolic act without the other” (*The Political* 82), that is neither

structuralism nor vulgar materialism, Jameson offers a more direct explanation of the types of subtext to be constructed in the analytic process:

We have implied, indeed, that the social contradiction addressed and 'resolved' by the formal prestidigitation of narrative must, however reconstructed, remain an absent cause, which cannot be directly or immediately conceptualized by the text. It seems useful, therefore, to distinguish, from this ultimate subtext which is the place of social *contradiction*, a secondary one, which is more properly the place of ideology, and which takes the form of the *aporia* or the *antinomy*: what can in the former be resolved only through the intervention of praxis here comes before the purely contemplative mind as logical scandal or double bind, the unthinkable and the conceptually paradoxical, that which cannot be unknotted by the operation of pure thought, and which must therefore generate a whole more properly narrative apparatus—the text itself—to square its circles and to dispel, through narrative movement, its intolerable closure. Such a distinction [posits] a system of antinomies as the symptomatic expression and conceptual reflex of something quite different, namely a social contradiction. (*The Political* 82-83)

Jameson clearly distinguishes a subtext that is the place of real social contradiction which exists outside the text and as an absent cause from another subtext which exists inside the text and is the place of an antinomy. For Jameson, a real social contradiction is the historical reality of the society that the text was created within. This is generally a socio-political or socio-economic contradiction which defines that society at that given point in history. For instance, in his analysis of the Caduveo Indians' facial decorations Jameson identifies the social contradiction as the "relations of domination: the inferior status of women, the subordination of youth

to elders, and the development of a hereditary aristocracy” which defines the Caduveo society and creates inequalities and conflict of different sorts in the Caduvean life (*The Political* 78). Following Jameson’s formula here, it becomes obvious that the discussion in this chapter only moved from the text into the secondary subtext which is the place of the *aporia* or the *antinomy* that was mapped onto the Greimassian square in Figure 15 above. Then if the discussion so far is read backwards, it can be interpreted—using Jameson’s words above—that since the text of *The Child in Time* could not directly or immediately conceptualise the real social *contradiction* of its ultimate subtext, it (re)textualized it in a secondary subtext where the social *contradiction* finds its symptomatic expression as logical scandal or double bind of two contradictory meanings of childhood in relation to time: (1) child/childhood that is *in* time, conceptualised as linear progress, project and reproduction, and (2) child/childhood that is *outside* of time, an unchanging innocence that resists linearity.

Based on this, the discussion now has to turn to that ultimate subtext. In that case, the two contradictory meanings of childhood in relation to time become symptomatic expressions of the real socio-political contradiction that is inherent in the Thatcherite state. This contradiction may best be understood as the logical scandal of “embracing a stripped down capitalist ethos that reject[s] versions of community and collective solidarity ... an active dismantling of traditions and customs (often locally based) ... [through] radical market policies” on the one hand, while resorting to a neoconservative celebration of “the strong work ethic and reverence for tradition” on the other (Dawson 138; 146). Somewhere else, Joseph Brooker summarises it in the following remarks:

Thatcherism became associated with enterprise, freedom, the iconoclastic assault on old pieties and allegedly moribund institutions. Yet it also

deployed a rhetoric of authority, tradition, firm governance, national identity and security, prudent financing and family values. It was thus alternately conservative and radical, reactionary and revolutionary. (*Literature* 11)

Although neoliberalism and neoconservatism are dialectically interconnected and mutually compensatory, their coexistence ‘comes before the purely contemplative mind as logical scandal or double bind.’ Therefore, this finds a symptomatic expression in the double bind of two contradictory meanings of childhood in the text’s secondary subtext.

Thatcherism may be regarded as part of the cross-Atlantic rise to power of right-wing neoliberal governments. Although its rhetoric was always built upon the good of the nation, it “explicitly represented moneyed interests. ... [U]nder Thatcher’s governments the income growth of the poorest groups ... lagged behind. ... [T]he income growth of the richest group was over eight times that of the poorest” (Horton, “Critical Introduction” 2). McEwan shares the same point of view while analysing Thatcherism. Here is how he sees Britain under the rule of the neoconservative neoliberal government in his preface to *A Move Abroad*:

Money-obsessed, aggressively competitive and individualistic, contemptuous of the weak, vindictive towards the poor, favouring the old American opposition of private affluence and public squalor, and individual gain against communal solutions, indifferent to the environment, deeply philistine, enamoured of policemen, soldiers and weapons. (“Preface” xxiv)

This is a very dystopic impression of the neoliberal programme and is shared by many. It implies the destruction of all the communal ties and concord in favour of the affluence of the few, as pillarized in Thatcher’s notorious statement, “there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women” (Brooker, *Literature* 10). The title “Society Must Be Dismantled” that Wendy Brown chooses for a chapter

in her book where she gives an account of how Thatcherism destroys society summarises this (23). Yet, with such a programme arises the question of ‘the social glue;’ in the face of this chaos of individual interests and radical free market policies, what would hold the British society together? Thatcherism had to create a strong rhetoric in order to successfully replace the post-war consensus of welfare government with its relentless restoration of class power and class oppression. Therefore, it balanced its neoliberal programme with a neoconservative discourse, just as its US counterpart the Reagan government did.

In the process of oppressing the majority in favour of the few, exploiting all social and natural resources, dismantling the welfare state, strengthening its repressive apparatuses (the police, the law, the prison system) and making the poor poorer and the rich richer, the neoliberal programme finds neoconservative morals and nationalism to be not only a useful tool in ‘deflecting challenges’ to this process (Zamora and Olsen) but also a “necessary component” for its own survival and continuance (Cooper 18). Therefore, neoconservatism becomes, even when it adopts an anti-capitalist rhetoric, a compensatory-integral part of the neoliberal state, albeit a contradictory discourse.

Peter Osborne criticises Marx and Engels for not being able to predict this and relates that even though they expected the elimination of all forms of conservative currents—religious fervour, chivalrous enthusiasm, nationalism or moral righteousness—in future capitalism, “it has turned out to involve, not their elimination, but their *transformation* and *contradictory reintegration* into the fabric of social relations in capitalist societies” (164-165). Melinda Cooper directs a similar criticism against Karl Polanyi since, she states, Polanyi tends to see the neoconservative “countermovement as external to the dynamics of capitalism” (14). Like Osborne, Cooper goes on to explain how, instead, this contradiction is, in fact,

“fully internal to the dynamic of capital” (15). Neoliberalism needs neoconservative moralism to support itself; neoconservatism provides “the neoliberal bourgeoisie with the ‘politics of support’ ” they need (Overbeek and Pijl 15). David Harvey states the same by underlining how neoconservatism serves to “counteract the dissolving effect ... neoliberalism typically produces” and how it seeks to create “social control through construction of a climate of consent around a coherent set of moral values” (83). Harvey indicates that these ‘moral values’ are the products of the coalition “between elite class and business interests” and they are “centred on cultural nationalism, moral righteousness, Christianity (of a certain evangelical sort), family values, and right-to-life issues” (84).

Drawing on this brief description of a neoliberal state, the real socio-political contradiction behind the fundamental semiotic categories of *The Child in Time* can be mapped more clearly as in Figure 18 below: the antinomy that is integral to the Thatcherite state is given in the S axis as the contrary relation between the neoliberal programme (E_1) that deploys time as an entrepreneurial project and the neoconservative currents whose narratives rely on a mythologised and timeless past (E_2). Obviously, E_1 is occupied by neoliberalism since that is at the centre of the Thatcherite programme while neoconservatism is a tool to make sure that that centre holds. Following this initial investment, the contradictory semes on the $\bar{S}$ axis find their designations: contradicting the progressive—the neoliberal time-as-project—and implying the timeless neoconservative narratives, $\bar{E}_1$ is occupied by a pastoral cyclical understanding of time (with its feudal connotations); $\bar{E}_2$ on the other hand is occupied by the linear temporality of capital that contradicts the diffused timelessness of neoconservative narratives and implies the neoliberal time-as-project.

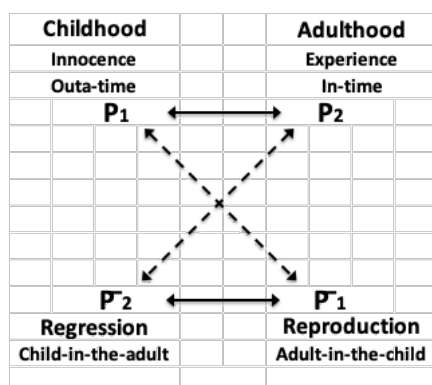


Fig. 15 The semic universe of the text

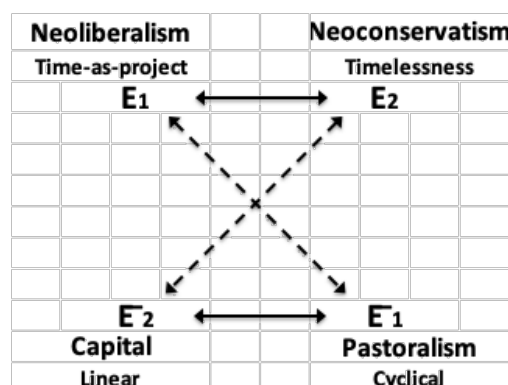


Fig. 18 Thatcherite politics

Referring once again to Jameson's formula, it can be argued that the social contradiction in the ultimate subtext (the Thatcherite state) turns into a symptomatic antinomy in the secondary—or surface—subtext (two meanings of childhood in relation to time) which then generates a whole narrative apparatus, a symbolic act, to dispel, through narrative movement, this intolerable closure: the text itself, a symbolic act “whereby real social contradictions, insurmountable in their own terms, find a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realm” (*The Political* 79). Therefore, when *Child* reaches its denouement and provides a magical resolution “within the structure of romance” (Diemert 216), this functions as a solution not only to the antinomy in its surface subtext but also to the real contradiction in its ultimate subtext. Yet, as was discussed above, since the text is nothing but a *symbolic* act, it leaves the real social contradiction untouched and, through its wish fulfilment, it even fulfils an ideological function and deflects the attention that might have been directed towards the real social contradiction. Hence, the satisfaction that is derived from its imaginary resolution serves, in the last analysis, to (re)affirm the status quo in the ultimate subtext.

The text, as already mentioned, starts its narrative movement as an attempt to dispel the intolerable closure of the antinomy, and it starts by working on the possibilities of syntheses in the *S* and $\bar{S}$ axes. The complex term in the *S* axis becomes

Charles Darke and the neutral term in the $\bar{S}$ axis becomes the lost daughter Kate (who also stands in for Stephen's lost boyhood as was discussed earlier).

It would be useful to once again quote Thelma's explanation for Charles' problem in order to explain how Charles serves as the complex term in the semiotic universe of the text. Thelma says:

He wanted the security of childhood ... the freedom that goes with it, freedom from money, decisions, plans, demands. ... Childhood to him was timelessness, ... a mystical state. He longed for all this, ... and meanwhile he was out there making money, becoming known, creating hundreds of obligations for himself in the adult world (*Child* 201)

Characterised as split between two contradictory directions, Charles Darke becomes the complex synthesis of a timeless childhood and a time-bound adulthood: a Peter Pan who has "no sense of time" and at the same time a Hook who is ceaselessly chased by "the terrible tick-tick of the crocodile" (Barrie 268; 240). However, such a project is doomed to fail and Charles Darke is erased from the text after his appalling regression into a childish state. Just like Stephen does in the story, readers see the regressed Darke, who dresses up as a boy and spends the day playing around in the woods, as "quite mad" (Sheppard 76), "ridiculous" (Malcolm 105), "pathetic" (Ryan, *Ian McEwan* 51) or "grotesque and false" (Wells 49).

Unable to reconcile the innocence of childhood and the experience of adulthood, Charles, in the end, chooses to regress into a "meticulously researched" version of childhood (Malcolm 105). He fabricates a conception of childhood "that is close to Wordsworth's, but his attempt to live this state is simply an imitation of Richmal Crompton books" (Edwards 43). Wordsworth's conception of childhood, one of the best representations of which is his "Immortality Ode" (1807), is an idealisation of it in perfect harmony with nature, untarnished by the social,

prelinguistic and immaculate (see Austin; for a more thorough analysis of this subject). Although Charles tries to aim for this version, its being an unattainable condition causes him to end up as an imitation of Crompton's character William from her *Just William* stories, a mischievous and disobedient boy. That is to say, Charles' response to the irreconcilable coexistence of childhood and adulthood in his life is regressing into a version of childhood which is not what a real child would genuinely be experiencing but a researched and planned 'adult' version. Hence, just like the Victorian past that Thatcher wants the country to return to (Samuel, *Island Stories* 330-348), Charles' childhood cannot go further than being a fabricated and invented version of what it proposes. In the end, based on the requirements of the semic categories of the narrative movement, Charles is able to do nothing but die, thereby closing the possibility of a synthesis in the *S* axis. As Dawson points out, "Charles's mental breakdown and ultimate suicide [becomes] an index of the violence of [Thatcherite] project" of synthesising neoliberal and neoconservative discourses and is doomed to fail (145). In the ultimate subtext, then, this represents the impossibility of a synthesis of $E_1 + E_2$. Although complementary in political terms, a synthesis of $E_1 + E_2$ resembles a Charles Darke in boy's clothes: 'quite mad,' 'ridiculous,' 'pathetic,' 'grotesque and false.'

On the opposite $\bar{S}$ axis of the neutral term, Kate plays a similar role. As was discussed early in this chapter, Kate represents not only herself but Stephen's regression into his own childhood. In this sense, Charles Darke and Stephen early in the novel are going more or less in the same direction. They are both trying to connect with the child that resides in their adult selves. While Charles' regression takes an extreme form, Stephen's regression is mostly camouflaged, as was already discussed at length, by his search for his absent daughter. His first novel *Lemonade*, together with many other things like his obsession with Kate, testifies to his inability

to grow up and wake up from his regressive dreams, as Peter Childs says: "Stephen's obsession with Kate is used by McEwan to suggest an inability to accept adult responsibility ... Accepting the responsibility of being a parent is tied with the act of letting go of childhood" (*Contemporary* 181). Thus, at the start of the narrative, he is headed down the path at the end of which Charles Darke met his doom. But with a dramatic turn, Stephen realises his mistake and starts moving toward a direction that will satisfy the value-system in the novel. As Paul Edwards phrases it, this "value-system of the novel is ... roughly based on a conviction of the sustenance that we may derive from 'childhood' (properly understood) when we are adults" (44). This, as Peter Childs said above, requires accepting adult responsibility and letting go of a timeless and regressive conception of childhood and understanding that "the fantasy of returning to a state of childish innocence, which [Stephen] has harboured since the writing of his juvenile novel *Lemonade*, is only an illusion" (Wells 49).

Thereby, the narrative movement excludes the possibility of a synthesis on the $\bar{S}$ axis, as well. In Greimassian semiotics, this neutral term is already an impossible term since it is the place of *nonsignification*. Fittingly, Kate's absence from the text proves the impossibility of this synthesis. Thus, at a certain point in the narrative, Stephen realises that he has to let go of Kate and his own childhood fantasies because to return to childhood, like Charles Darke, would be a kind of death. If he regresses deeper into his childhood fantasies, he will disappear like Charles. He understands that he has to recover from this tendency.

Kenneth MacKinnon's reference to post-Freudian terms offers a better understanding of Stephen's choice between recovery from regression or oblivion. At one point in the novel, Stephen experiences an anomaly in time and finds himself looking at the younger version of his parents who are sitting in a countryside pub trying to decide whether to have Stephen or choose abortion. Within moments,

Stephen's eyes meet those of his mother through the window, which makes him decide to have the child. Once achieving this, Stephen falls into a dream-like state:

He fell back down, dropped helplessly through a void, was swept dumbly through invisible curves and rose above the trees, saw the horizon below him even as he was hurled through sinuous tunnels of undergrowth, dark, muscular sluices. His eyes grew large and round and lidless with desperate, protesting innocence, his knees rose under him and touched his chin, his fingers were scaly flippers, gills beat time, urgent, hopeless strokes through the salty ocean that engulfed the treetops and surged between their roots; and for all the crying, calling sounds he thought were his own, he formed a single thought: he had nowhere to go, no moment which could embody him, he was not expected, no destination or time could be named (*Child* 60)

As is obvious from the images used in the description, this is Stephen returning to the mother's womb. This could be read as the "adult male fantasy [that] involves a return to the symbiotic relationship with his mother that the male child once enjoyed" (MacKinnon 6). As is also apparent in the last part of the quotation above, however, a return to the womb erases the self from existence. Hence, in MacKinnon's reference to the post-Freudian ideas, "[w]hatever its appeal, though, the fantasy must be accompanied with fear—the fear that a restoration of unity with the mother will bring about the destruction of selfhood" (6). McEwan's position here coincides with what MacKinnon states: the narrative is moving towards a closure that resonates with patriarchal ways of thinking. In this sense, "McEwan suggests that although it is important, even crucial, for the adult to accept the child that resides within himself/herself, it is dangerous, even suicidal, to become wholly that child-self or to surrender entirely to that desire" (Slay 127). As a result of this, Charles Darke and Kate become the "carrier[s] of a false or unsatisfactory version of the

novel's value-system" (Edwards 43) and are eliminated as possible resolutions within the narrative movement in the text.

The narrative movement leaves the *S* and $\bar{S}$ axes at this point and turns to the deictic combinations in its semantic universe. This turning point in the novel is marked by Stephen's confrontation with his friend Charles in the latter's tree house. This becomes Stephen's first encounter with a regressed Charles who is dressed up and acting like a boy. At first, Stephen is fascinated by what Charles is doing. He takes it to be a brilliant idea, an acceptable plan to escape the sufferings of adult life. However, after spending some time with Charles, Stephen realises the impossibility of the situation. Charles takes him to his tree house, and while they are climbing the tree, whereas Charles is completely carefree, Stephen feels terrified. He realises that he cannot let himself go as Charles does, and he is alarmed by the risks of climbing a tree:

It occurred to him fleetingly that he was engrossed, fully in the moment. Quite simply, if he allowed another thought to distract him he would fall out of the tree. Then he thought, I don't want to be doing this any more. I want to do something else. Take me out, make this stop. (*Child* 110-111)

Through this simple confrontation as an adult with a child's world at play, Stephen is forced to admit that he is an adult and this fantasy of returning to the timeless state of childhood is simply suicidal. Dominic Head's reference to Joseph Chilton Pearce's book *Magical Child*—also one of the three books that McEwan cites in the Acknowledgements of his novel—fittingly provides an explanation for what Stephen experiences in the tree house scene:

a time comes when the surface play is destroyed, displaced by 'work on the surface' which becomes 'the aware self's drive.' Then, for Pearce, 'the inner work of intelligence breaks down . . . anxiety takes over, joy disappears, and

the avoidance of death becomes the central issue of life.' By this apocalyptic account, Pearce means, simply, 'we grow up.' (Head, *Ian McEwan* 83)

Just as Pearce puts it, Stephen goes through an apocalyptic experience—i.e. the aware self faces annihilation within the play world of the child. Driven by the fear of death, Stephen turns away from childhood fantasies and embraces his adult self; he grows up. His turn becomes apparent in the sharp contrast between his two different reactions to being 'engrossed fully in the moment.' His first reaction is nostalgia for a time when he, together with his wife Julie, was 'engrossed fully in the moment' building sandcastles on the beach with Kate. Remembering that day on the beach, Stephen says how, "without quite realising it was happening, they became engrossed, filled with the little girl's urgency, working with no awareness of time" (*Child* 106), and he states his wish to stay forever in that state. In the text, this wish is expressed a few paragraphs before Stephen climbs the tree house. In contrast to this nostalgic yearning, the realisation of this wish to be 'engrossed, fully in the moment' during the climb makes him understand that this is not truly what he wants; that he has to reject such nostalgic tendencies completely. To press this point home, McEwan chooses to repeat the word 'engrossed' for effect in both of the situations.

The more Stephen spends time with Charles in the tree house, the more disillusioned he gets, and the farther the narrative movement turns away from the options on axes S and $\bar{S}$. Stephen becomes aware of the fact that the childhood or the child-like state he is nostalgic about is only an invented fantasy and hence must not be indulged in:

Stephen was impressed by what appeared to be very thorough research. It was as if his friend had combed libraries, diligently consulted the appropriate authorities to discover just what it was a certain kind of boy was likely to

have in his pockets. It was too correct to be convincing, not quite sufficiently idiosyncratic, perhaps even fraudulent. (*Child* 113)

By way of this realisation, Stephen understands that this cannot be the proper place or function of childhood in adult life. This is not the real essence of childhood but simply a constructed one. What Charles is experiencing is merely a distorted reappropriation of the true value of childhood. With these thoughts in mind, Stephen leaves Charles and Thelma to return to the city the next morning. By now, he already sounds as if he has woken up from a dream and is able to tell fantasy from reality: "The car keys were in his hand, his wallet was snug in his inside pocket – the equipment of adulthood. ... What had seemed wild and liberating about Charles's fantasies the night before now seemed merely silly, something he should snap out of" (*Child* 121). This acts as a turning point in the text because after this confrontation with a realised application of the childhood fantasy, Stephen's perception of things alters. This also marks movement from the first meaning of childhood as innocence and timelessness onto the second meaning of childhood as being in time, changing, progressing—thus from P_1 to $\bar{P}_1$ on the semantic map in Figure 15 above. This move, within the logic of the Greimassian square, already indicates a movement from childhood to adulthood since $\bar{P}_1$ implies P_2 , or in other words, childhood that is taken for its reproductive value in time, implies adulthood.

Upon returning home, the reader realises, Stephen, who previously numbed himself by watching silly day-time shows, cannot stand them anymore. He resents the people on the shows and protests, saying: "How dare they be children! He was prepared to listen, tolerant, reasonable man that he was, while it was explained just what purpose these people served, and why they should be permitted to go on living" (*Child* 125). This protest is important since it indicates that Stephen is not nostalgic about childhood and a childlike state anymore but deplores such attitudes.

He belongs to the progressive, time-valued adult realm now. In contrast to his reluctant and haggard walk to the committee meetings that opens the novel, he has now become eager and willing to be at the workplace; it is how, upon his return from the Darkes, the narrator describes Stephen walking to his meeting: “Stephen strode out, stepping in the gutter where necessary to overtake. To have a destination, a place where you were expected, a shred of identity, was such a relief after a month of game shows and Scotch” (*Child* 133). He sounds awakened: “the work ethic ... was still strong within him. He craved order and purpose” (*Child* 28). Moreover, he is now able to move on from his obsession with Kate: “He was beginning to face the difficult truth that Kate was no longer a living presence, she was not an invisible girl at his side ... he understood how there were many paths Kate might have gone down ... He had been mad, now he felt purged” (*Child* 153). This becomes a climactic moment in the narrative because the obsession with the lost daughter Kate that has dominated the narrative up to this point is simply abandoned and the narrative movement, which was characterised by this search, takes a completely different direction.

With this, as was already hinted, the narrative movement clearly leaves S and $\bar{S}$ axes behind and is moving towards the deictic synthesis of $P_2 + \bar{P}_1$, which can be followed in Figure 17 above. This marks the rise of ‘Stephen the father,’ the wage earner, the male breadwinner, the head of the household and the family. This is in complete parallelism with the neoconservative glorification of a certain historical family form: the Fordist family. Melinda Cooper points out the importance of this family form for neoliberal capital and says that “the Fordist family wage not only functioned as a mechanism for the normalization of gender and sexual relationships, but it also stood at the heart of the mid-century organization of labor, race, and class” (8). Cooper explains that the Fordist family consists of a male worker who earns the

family wage, a stay-at-home housewife and two or three kids and says that it was not only “a legal instrument of wealth appropriation that takes the form of family genealogy” but also “a form of identity politics inasmuch as it established white, married masculinity as a point of access to full social protection” (10; 23). In Thatcherite rhetoric, what is meant by ‘family’ becomes an encouragement of “the natural values and caring instincts of motherhood and the associated naturalness of patriarchal life” (Winter and Connolly 32). In that case, P_2 in the surface subtext, coincides with E_1 in the ultimate subtext, just as $\bar{P}_1$ coincides with $\bar{E}_2$. Therefore, the synthesis overlaps with the synthesis $E_1 + \bar{E}_2$; Stephen the father emerges in complete harmony with Thatcherite neoliberal ideologies.

Meanwhile, Julie—together with Thelma—can be positioned on the opposite deictic axis $P_1 + \bar{P}_2$ for their representation of a completely different womanhood from the neoconservative Thatcherite emphasis on women’s domestic role. Within the narrative movement, while Stephen stands in for an adulthood that connects with childhood on the basis of a utilisation of the latter for its reproductive value, Julie can be argued to stand in for an adulthood that connects with childhood in a more inward and organic way that strikes regressive notes and that undermines the neoliberal discourse of adulthood—adulthood understood as the *Authorised Childcare Handbook* pictures it: the strict father (not the mother) figure who lives by the ideals of time, work and money. The fact that the narrative movement turns to $P_2 + \bar{P}_1$ synthesis upon exhausting the possibilities on the S and $\bar{S}$ axes, and that it reaches its denouement without ever attempting towards, thence framing out this $P_1 + \bar{P}_2$ synthesis, will take the present analysis to the second horizon of Jamesonian political unconscious. Before moving onto the second horizon, though, more has to be said about the rise of Stephen the father in the text’s denouement by way of which the narrative movement provides a resolution to the antinomy in its subtext.

The conservative invocation of the family as the eternal and sacred core of the nation was indeed the top of the Thatcherite agenda. Thatcher's notorious statement, which was quoted above, bears testimony since it actually runs: "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are *families*" (Brooker, *Literature* 10; italics added). The discourse on the family had a central role in the Thatcherite project:

It was the family that provided the basic 'building block' of society where we learnt 'right from wrong.' Based upon a patriarchal structure and characterized by heterosexuality and within the context of marriage, it was here that children learnt about sexual morality, the importance of deferring to experience and the basic values that made up 'our' national identity. (Winter and Connolly 31)

For Margaret Thatcher and her politics, family is the most efficient institution for transferring its ideals like "punctuality, self-interest, getting the job done" (Amis 49) from the adult to the children; from one generation to the next. Margaret Thatcher liked to camouflage these ideals in a Victorian narrative in which "[b]y a process of selective amnesia the past becomes a historical equivalent of the dream of primal bliss, or of the enchanted space which memory accords to childhood" (Samuel, *Island Stories* 338). Raphael Samuel explains in detail how Thatcher conjures up a lost innocence with images of strict parents, well-behaved children, frugality, hard work, cleanliness and other similar puritan ideals—selectively crafted Victorian Values" (*Island Stories* 342). Samuel points out that this rhetoric was just a front that covered up the relentless neoliberal transfiguration of Britain and that credit and debt (excluding home loans) boomed while personal savings dropped drastically (from %16.3 to %1.3) between 1980 and 1988, thereby indicating how the frugality, hard work or thrift that Thatcher proposes "far from staging a come-back ... all but

disappeared" (*Island Stories* 341). Nevertheless, family values retain their central importance for the Thatcherite state, and it is with this in mind that Stephen the father's emergence as the only option for a resolution in the text's narrative movement can be analysed more firmly.

In the deictic synthesis of $P_2 + \bar{P}_1$ —which coincides with a synthesis of $E_1 + \bar{E}_2$ as in Figure 18—, Stephen the father arrives as the key that helps all the pieces of the puzzle to be put in their proper places: the novel "formally closes the circle of domestic harmony, and neutralizes trauma with the possibility of a happy ending" (Wood 185); "the happy ending of romance" (Diemert 216). The text offers a conventional wisdom in this happy ending: "life replenishes life, wounds are healed by time and nature" (Powers 492). With the new-born child, Stephen becomes, once again, part of "a couple, a marriage, a whole" (Slay 132). As Schoene-Harwood explains, his life "re-aggregates on being given another chance at fatherhood" (160), and, as Martin Amis notes, this moment in the denouement becomes "the first sign in the book that things are going to work out well, that man is delivered, as it were, by Stephen, just as Stephen will deliver a child" (McEwan, "Writers Talk" 50). The delivery Amis mentions is a reference to the last scene in the text when Stephen delivers the baby in the absence of a midwife. With this last accomplishment by Stephen, the narrative movement reaches its closure: the search for Kate, which evolves into a search for the lost, timeless 'childhood innocence'—"the lost Eden of infancy" (Ryan, "Sex, Violence" 216)—, ends with the delivery of the baby and in the *(re)establishment* of the *domestic borders* of the family with it. After Stephen successfully performs the delivery, the happy couple sees the planet Mars in the night sky through the bedside window. They find it to be "a reminder of a harsh world," but in their domestic unity, they feel "immune" against that harsh world (*Child* 220). Bradbury describes this domestic bliss as a united family with "proper

re-integration of the child within the adult, and regeneration, the reconciliation of male and female, through love" (430). This domestic bliss around the united Lewis family—which is whole once again thanks to the new-born— becomes polarised against the harsh world of the outside and provides a safe haven for innocence to reside; similar to the "polarizing in romance between the world we want and the world we don't want" (Frye, *The Secular* 42). As is required by the typical happy ending of romance, in the re-establishment of their family, the Lewises "heal everyone and everything, the Government, the country, the planet" by "start[ing] with themselves" (*Child* 215). That is to say, the nuclear family once again becomes the bedrock of social coherence. Their unity and happiness make everything about the world and their country all right, though only symbolically.

The narrative encourages the feeling that none of this would have happened if it were not for Stephen; and that Stephen could not have achieved this if he had insisted on his pursuit of 'Stephen the boy,' down into the regressive path where Charles Darke went. Stephen used to think that the lesson he had to learn from Kate was abandonment of everything outside the moment. He wanted to gain Kate's power to escape from time and responsibilities, from an identity which is a specifically adult attribute; he wanted to gain her ability to exist in a diffused and timeless now:

The wood, this spider rotating on its thread, this beetle lumbering over blades of grass, would be all, the moment would be everything. He needed her good influence, her lessons in celebrating the specific; how to fill the present and be filled by it to the point where identity faded to nothing. (*Child* 105)

In the value system of the text, this was the orientation towards P_1 and it turned out to be the wrong approach to childhood: it invokes the regressive tendency of $\bar{P}_2$ and

undermines P_2 , that is, adulthood. In the end, it means destruction as Charles' experiment proved it. When Stephen cries "[f]or God's sake get him off me!" (Child 199) while carrying Charles' dead body from the tree house, it comes to symbolise Stephen's realisation of this destructive side. Therefore, witnessing Charles' experiment, he understands that "the child exists in time and is destined to grow up. In adulthood the child's promise is fulfilled, not denied" (Pifer 209). As mentioned, this marks a turn towards P_2 , which, this time, invokes the reproductive quality in $\bar{P}_1$ and appropriates P_1 in favour of P_2 . In other words, Stephen understands that the goal is not to abandon himself or his identity as he once thought. The goal is to claim the childhood in order to undo what is "sad about grown-ups, about those who have ceased to be children" (Child 33). As he showed in his *Lemonade*, adulthood without the appropriate utilisation of childhood amounts only to "[s]omething dried up, powerless, a boredom, a taking for granted" (Child 33). In Morgado's words, that is the reason why the disappearance of children "emphasiz[es] the hurting void left by children in the family, the purposelessness of adult lives without children" (248). In accordance with this view, Stephen realises that he needs to "reclaim 'for the man,' or grown-up, the child's intensity of perception and participation in life" (Pifer 201). In other words, if it is accepted that the novel "focuses on attempts to recover what has been lost" (Malcolm 104), 'what has been lost' comes to be understood not as a fantasized timeless innocence but as a utilizable source of innocence, a tool that boosts "the adult's creative vitality" (Pifer 201), a resource that has invaluable reproductive powers. The goal is, hence, not to regress into fantasy but to reclaim this power for the sake of a progressive adult project.

This new direction the narrative movement takes, or, in other words, Stephen's realisation of his true goal in the value scheme of the narrative, coincides with the codes of the Thatcherite state, of a neoliberal version of capital which

commodifies everything and all aspects of life. David Harvey points out the sanctity of the workings of a *laissez faire* free market in neoliberal capitalism and adds that

[t]o presume that markets and market signals can best determine all allocative decisions is to presume that everything can in principle be treated as a commodity. Commodification presumes the existence of property rights over processes, things, and social relations, that a price can be put on them.
(165)

What Harvey here says about neoliberal commodification and property rights over social relations is laid bare when Stephen whispers the word “stolen” upon Kate’s abduction (*Child* 18). The child has its value for the neoliberal state, it has its ‘price.’ It is first the property of the family and then the property of the nation, and this property has its role in the neoliberal project. The *Authorised Childcare Handbook* asserts that “[m]ore than coal, more even than nuclear power, children are our greatest resource” (*Child* 205). Then first of all, according to the neoliberal/neoconservative outlook in both the narrative and the real socio-political practice, the child is “not just father of the man ... but also of the nation” (Dawson 144). Therefore, Kate’s abduction becomes not only for the family but also by extension for the nation “a symbol of the loss of a viable future” (Dawson 144). Moreover, for the neoliberal state, the child *in time* means a viable future for the system in terms of its social engineering project which aims, “under the guise of its concern for family values, ... to foster social competitiveness and political obedience in the next generation of citizens” (Pifer 194). When Stephen loses Kate, therefore, he deprives the family and the nation of the means to realise this project. This disrupts Thatcherite linear temporality which “is connected to authoritarian ideals of ‘progress’ and domination” (Horton, “Literary History” 33). It disrupts the Thatcherite project which utilises child/childhood for its reproductive potential,

and which focuses on the incipient adult within the child, the experiencing/growing child *within time*. Thus, once again, Stephen needs to fix this linear temporality by reclaiming the child's reproductive potential. And the text suggests that the most natural way to do that is "creating a new life to replace the lost one" (Malcolm 109) and "the sensitive and loving upbringing of one's children" (Chalupsky 58).

Meanwhile, Stephen himself serves as the living epitome of this reproductive capacity, and in that, his character in the text contrasts with Charles Darke's failure. Charles' inability to grow up can be discussed together with the fact that the Darke family has no children. It has already been pointed out earlier that the Prime Minister in the text refuses to acknowledge Charles and Thelma as a family on the grounds of their being a childless couple. Similarly, it was pointed out that upon Kate's disappearance from home, Stephen and Julie are not able to maintain their family and split up. In the absence of a child, Charles (d)evolves into Thelma's "difficult child" (*Child* 40) and eventually is erased from existence because this is a denial of the progressive aspect of reality within a neoliberal understanding of temporality. He should have grown up to become an adult, then a father and, by generating a family, should have fulfilled a reproductive role—according to a fundamentally patriarchal family genealogy, as mentioned above. In contrast with this failure, Stephen becomes an exemplary success. He reclaims the reproductive powers of childhood not merely by fathering new life—to replace the child he has lost—, but also by fathering himself. He connects past, present and future in his own *being* thus establishing the ultimate linear temporality. Everything starts and ends with Stephen in the text, and in the process, he lays claim to the roles of the women in his life. In relation to this it can be said that the instances where McEwan plays with the concept of time do not so much refuse the idea of linear temporality as reinforce an alternative linear temporality where Stephen becomes the beginning,

the end and everything in between. Thanks to the episode that will be explained shortly in the next paragraph, Stephen usurps both his mother's and his wife's reproductive roles.

On his way to Julie, Stephen experiences a time anomaly—the one that has been referred to earlier—outside a country pub near Julie's cottage. He watches his parents argue over the unexpected pregnancy. His mother Claire, just like his father Douglas, is not sure whether she wants the baby or not. And it is hinted that she wants to terminate the pregnancy. At that point, as mentioned above, Stephen—or his spectre—catches Claire's eyes for a moment and she is overwhelmed with emotion, declaring that she will have the baby. When Stephen visits his parents later in the text, his mother verifies the episode:

It was during this speech that Claire, still just holding on, still distracted, glanced across the saloon bar towards the window by the door. 'I can see it now as clearly as I can see you. There was a face at the window, the face of a child, sort of floating there. It was staring into the pub. It had a kind of pleading look, and it was so white, white as an aspirin. It was staring right at me. ... I was convinced, I just knew that I was looking at my own child. If you like, I was looking at you.' ... The baby, her baby, was suddenly flesh. It was holding her in its gaze, claiming her. It had acquired an independence of anything that might pass between this man and herself. (*Child* 175)

With this episode, then, Stephen becomes a self-generating entity. This is the baby, now, who 'claims' the mother. It 'acquires an independence' from the parents. This episode of the time anomaly ends with Stephen's falling into a dream-like state, which was already evoked above: "He fell back down, dropped helplessly through a void ... his knees rose under him and touched his chin" (*Child* 60). Stephen goes back

in time to secure his birth and, with this, he falls into the mother's womb, or in other words, he implants himself there.

Yet, there is more to Stephen's powers. When he wakes up from this dream-like state, he finds himself in Julie's cottage not quite sure how he arrived there, which further enhances a magic realistic implication that he went back in time, implanted himself in his mother's womb as a baby, and reappeared on the other side (as if by a temporal leap) as the 'now grown up man' who will produce his own children to maintain linearity. And certainly, he does exactly that. When he wakes up in Julie's cottage, at first, he is not sure how to approach his wife. The couple tries to reconnect after a long period of being apart. McEwan is deliberate here in explaining the quantum possibilities to the reader: Stephen might continue keeping his distance to Julie and part ways after some formal conversation, or he might defy that distant feeling and get close. Here is how McEwan renders the situation:

She stood at the head of the bed, stroking his hair. He was holding his breath, the moment was holding its breath. They confronted two possibilities, equally weighted, balanced on a honed fulcrum. The moment they inclined towards one, the other, while never ceasing to exist, would disappear irrevocably. He could rise from the bed now, giving her an affectionate smile as he moved past her on his way to his bath. He would lock the door behind him, securing his independence and pride. She would wait downstairs, and they would resume their careful exchanges until it was time for him to walk across the field to catch his train. Or something could be risked, a different life unfolded in which his own unhappiness could be redoubled or eliminated. (*Child* 63)

As McEwan's careful wording has it, the two directions are equally possible in quantum terms as if 'balanced on a honed fulcrum;' and each would lead to

completely different realities, eliminating the other. In the end, Stephen decides to 'risk something,' and the couple makes love. Without a doubt, this decision creates a certain version of reality which is going to deliver its fruit in the narrative's closure. And although McEwan seems to point out that each outcome was equally possible, he inevitably distinguishes between a right and wrong choice when he describes the lovemaking scene a few paragraphs later:

Later, one word seemed to repeat itself as the long-lipped opening parted and closed around him, as he filled the known dip and curve and arrived at a deep, familiar place, a smooth, resonating word generated by slippery flesh on flesh, a warm, humming, softly consonanted, roundly vowelled word ... home, he was home, enclosed, safe and therefore able to provide, home where he owned and was owned. Home, why be anywhere else? Wasn't it wasteful to be doing anything other than this? Time was redeemed, time assumed purpose all over again (*Child* 64)

It is clearly suggested here that there actually *was* a right choice; they were not equal whatsoever. Stephen made the right call and, thanks to that, he was able to 'find home.' Thanks to that, he 'redeemed time' and found a way to give it purpose and direction once again. As the description goes, any other option would have been 'wasteful.'

More importantly, this further underlines the fatalistic viewpoint at work here, and bestows Stephen with messianic qualities. Stephen becomes the deliverer of man, of the society and of the ideologically correct version of social progress. McEwan underlines the linear-causal understanding of what is happening in the text, and Stephen's ability to make the 'right' call is attributed to what happens earlier in the day:

Had he not seen two ghosts already that day and brushed against the mutually enclosing envelopes of events and the times and places in which they occurred, then he would not have been able to choose, as he did now, without deliberation and with an immediacy which felt both wise and abandoned. (*Child* 63)

Therefore, a sense of 'linear continuity of everything' starts to take shape regardless of the quantum high ground which would have given the narrative a whole different outlook. First, Stephen generates himself and then goes on to procreate his own offspring, which will, in the end, heal everyone and everything: 'the Government, the country, the planet.' That is clearly the message when the narrator states that "he did not doubt that what was happening now, and *what would happen as a consequence of now*, was not separate from what he had experienced earlier that day. Obscurely, he sensed a line of argument was being continued" (*Child* 63; italics added). Later in the text, the same point is made again, with references to the 'consequence' pointed out in this previous quotation. Stephen senses the fatalistic scheme of things: "He sometimes felt himself to be in training for an undisclosed event; he expected change – he had no clear idea of what kind" (*Child* 158).

The consequence, the undisclosed event, is obviously the birth of the couple's second child in the narrative's closure. The events that start with Stephen's encounter with his parents in time close with the arrival of the new baby. The narrative dispels the traumatic search for meaning in the continuity that Stephen has established; in Pifer's words, "Stephen's road to recovery, which involves reclaiming the lost child while accepting Kate's loss, is based on a reawakened sense of continuity between his adult self and his child self" (198). Therefore, although McEwan points to a quantum higher ground here and there in the text, the way he insists on an unalterable and meaningful linearity mitigates the power such a

quantum vision could hold over the narrative possibilities. Everything assumes meaning *in* and *only in* the linear scheme of things. Derek Wright briefly explains how linear temporality overpowers the quantum magic:

together with Julie's talk of "wrong and right moments," Stephen's absolute of "life loving itself," and their dual speculations about the deeper, meaningful patternings to time, all combine in the novel's moving climax to effect a major shift towards ideas of providential predestination, a planned view of time, and traditional metaphysics of fate that are quite at odds with the quantum. The "plotted" birth of the new child which issues in the book's dénouement closes the ontological gap created by Kate's abduction, shutting down imaginative options, and it transpires, in the novel's narrative closure, that Stephen's out-of-time experiences have from the beginning been enclosed within an irreversible linearity and his wanderings between competing orders of reality framed by his experience of this one—the "real" world and, ultimately, the only one that exists. (229-230)

As Wright says, the narrative movement makes quantum diversity yield to the 'real' world of irreversible linearity. This undermines quantum diffusion as a mere fantasy, a dream waking up from which accentuates the experience of reality and makes it the more 'real.' In other words, just as in any violent hierarchy, the linearity dominates quantum, the child in time dominates the innocent childhood—the latter only serves to accentuate the former.

In conclusion, the text provides a romance wish-fulfilment through Stephen's successfully completed quest. Northrop Frye's definition of the romance quest makes it easier to read Stephen's journey throughout the narrative:

The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and

the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero. We may call these three stages respectively, using Greek terms, the *agon* or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle, and the *anagnorisis* or discovery, the recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved himself to be a hero even if he does not survive the conflict. (*Anatomy* 187)

As was analysed at length earlier in this chapter, in the *agon* stage, Stephen's quest becomes a search for a nostalgic golden age, a connection to which has been lost to Stephen since the abduction of his daughter. Stephen's search for the lost daughter quickly transcends the traumatic physical search, and the interplay between a physical search for the lost child and the more conceptual search for a lost childhood becomes visible. Within this conceptual role, childhood branches into two contradictory meanings. These two meanings provide the key antinomy in the text's subtext; one becomes the wrong while the other represents the right path—one takes the hero to the underworld, the other to the mountain-top in that mythical struggle of good and evil. Stephen, looking for a way to rebuild the connection between adulthood and childhood, needs to choose the right path.

In the *pathos*, Stephen's crucial death-struggle down that wrong path becomes his encounter with a false understanding of the adulthood/childhood connection. The 'evil' he has to battle here, in order to proceed, turns out to be a child-adult created through an unsatisfactory integration of adulthood and childhood, that is, through 'regression.' Regression into childhood is a misunderstanding of the value system in the narrative. The understanding of childhood as Peter Pan's timeless land—an anti-temporal diffusion of time in an eternal present—defies the 'progression' demanded by neoliberal capital. The ideas of change and progress are crucial to enterprise and capital accumulation. The

childhood Charles represents, on the other hand, poses a threat to such a linear temporality. Similarly, being stuck with the phantom of a lost child (that is Kate) who stops changing and starts diffusing into an ever-present constancy, and being stuck in his own childhood that he frequently yearns for, Stephen in a way regresses into a similar passivity just like Charles, only without the childish attire. In other words, for the novel's value system, regressing into childhood does not necessarily require dressing up as a boy. Succumbing to a passive and enfeebled state counts as well. Unless one 'takes responsibility' or 'makes calculations about the future' (*Child* 157), one contradicts what the Thatcherite value-system requires of the grown-up individual. Time, work, money and virtue are intricately related in that system and "waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins" (Smith 65).

In the end, Stephen faces the 'evil' in *pathos*; regressive childhood as a false version of the novel's value-system dies alongside Charles Darke, and Stephen survives the battle having understood where the right path lies. The narrative proceeds onto the completion of the quest and onto *anagnorisis*. In this stage, Stephen 'clearly proves himself to be a hero,' as Frye says, and fulfils the duty the narrative movement bestows upon him. He realises that he needs to "shed [childlikeness] in order to attain 'civilised' maturity" because it is "weakness, incompetence and non-agency" (Dodou 74). At the same time, he understands that he needs to appropriate the child and the childhood in a way to reinvigorate the adult life. It is not through a pathetic act of regression, not by means of nostalgia for a static notion of childhood, not by 'escaping from time' into the timeless innocence of childhood that one can meaningfully reclaim the lost child but through reclaiming the reproductive potential associated with it. This version of the child and childhood proves to be in perfect harmony with the free market's instrumental 'time' that is conceptualised as progress, accumulation and reproduction. Although "childhood is

a sleep from which everyone must awaken to face an adult world” (Childs, *Contemporary* 179), the adult needs to bring the qualities of childhood into the adult life to benefit from them.

Stephen achieves this by fathering himself and his new child, and it marks the completion of his quest. The hero at the happy ending of romance is recognised as Stephen-the-father, who represents a combination of experience, of being in time and of reproduction: the adult within the child. These qualities correspond to a combination of neoliberal time as project and capitalist linear/reproductive temporality in the ultimate subtext. By means of this resolution, the text fulfils its duty as a symbolic act. The text’s inability to resolve the antinomy on the *S* axis of its secondary subtext becomes an indication of the irreconcilable nature of the contradiction within Thatcherite politics—the *S* axis on the ultimate subtext. Still, by offering a wish-fulfilment—through a synthesis on one of the deictic axes—by way of holding onto an archetypal narrative of loss of innocence and onto romance that closes with the retrieval of what was lost, the text is able to provide a happy ending that overlooks and overrides the original tension. This dénouement obviously falls short of reconciling the real contradictions of Thatcherite Britain and remains merely a wish-fulfilment at the symbolic level. Still, it serves an ideological function and eases the tension that is created by the Thatcherite state. According to Frye, of all literary forms romance is closest to the wish-fulfilment function, and for that reason it has a role in society: “in every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy” (*Anatomy* 186). Therefore, within the first horizon of the exploration of its political unconscious, it can be said that although it has the appearance of

rejecting them, *The Child in Time*, as a symbolic resolution of a real social contradiction, ends up embodying the neoliberal state's ideals.

Having thereby exhausted the first horizon of a Jamesonian hermeneutics, the analysis can now proceed to the second horizon where the essence of this romance wish-fulfilment will be laid out in order to indicate how it functions as an ideologeme. To begin with, it needs to be noted that although the subtext of the narrative places 'timeless childhood' in the dominant P_1 position for the romance procession to work, the ultimate subtext registers neoliberalism in the corresponding E_1 position. Therefore, the narrative's secondary subtext becomes a kind of reversed image of the ultimate subtext. Within this relation, even though S and $\bar{S}$ axes represent the same synthesis, the deictic axes correspond to opposite directions. This explains why the narrative insists on $P_2 + \bar{P}_1$ (Stephen) even though the 'dominant deictic axis' of the P universe points towards $P_1 + \bar{P}_2$ (Julie). In order to make it correspond with the dominant deictic axis of the E universe, the narrative has to move towards Stephen and disregard Julie altogether—that is why Julie is almost completely absent in the last birth scene. Stephen takes control of everything, and all that the reader witnesses is his amazement both at his own skills of delivering the baby and at the fact that he brought new life to this world. The whole scene is rendered as if Julie is a mere formality in the process, and in fact, this was already the case with Julie's pregnancy; it took place 'off-stage.' In terms of this whole birth process, the narrative registers only two moments: the moment Stephen fathers this child by 'choosing' to make love to Julie and the moment when he delivers the baby with his own hands. Therefore, the fact that the narrative movement turns directly to $P_2 + \bar{P}_1$ synthesis upon exhausting the possibilities on S and $\bar{S}$ axes, and that it reaches its denouement without ever attempting towards,

hence framing out the $P_1 + \bar{P}_2$ synthesis, will take the present analysis to the second horizon of Jamesonian political unconscious.

Within the second horizon, Jamesonian hermeneutics transgresses the borders of the text in order to include the social into the analytic process. Now the discussion builds upon the findings of the first horizon within a second and larger horizon. With this larger semantic horizon, the analytical work “has widened to include the social order,” thereby transforming the status of the text for the analysis: “it is no longer construed as an individual ‘text’ or work in the narrow sense, but has been reconstituted in the form of the great collective and class discourses of which a text is little more than an individual *parole* or utterance” (Jameson, *The Political* 76). Here at first, Jameson relies on the *langue/parole* relationship to describe how the text will be handled in this new horizon, but later he drops this linguistic metaphor to build his arguments around the concept of ideologeme. He defines the ideologeme as “the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes” (*The Political* 76). According to this definition, now the text will be analysed as a single utterance within a wider class discourse, just as any sentence would be analysed as a single utterance within a given language. However, with the idea of ideologeme, Jameson introduces a more historical and relativistic approach to this synchronic *langue/parole* relationship. He emphasises that class and class discourse do not exist in isolation but as part of something he calls ‘collective discourses of social classes’ where each class/class discourse defines and is forever defined by an antagonistic class and its discourse. In other words, no class and no class discourse are self-contained, nor are they self-standing; they are in a constant dialogue with other classes and other class discourses. Following this logic, the text as an ideologeme can be analysed not only as an utterance within a certain class discourse but also as an utterance within the dialogue of antagonistic class

discourses. Therefore, the text as an ideologeme is informed and shaped both by the class discourse it belongs to and by the dialogic context it was uttered within. Jameson bases this whole argument upon Bakhtin's dialogism, which will be elaborated on below. Bakhtin's understanding of dialogue prescribes a plurality of positions and rejects self-sufficiency, ideas which will be useful for Jameson in making his point.

Jameson obviously abhors a sociology of literature as was hinted at in his comments earlier. Similarly, he denies the sociological view of classes which, according to him, takes classes as "self-developing and independent from each other" (*Marxism* 381). E. P. Thompson says that "the notion of class entails the notion of historical relationship" (*The Making* 9). Just as Jameson wants to, Thompson points out the necessity of a historical and relational approach when analysing class: "it is a fluency which evades analysis if we attempt to stop it dead at any given moment and anatomise its structure. The finest meshed sociological net cannot give us a pure specimen of class" (*Ibid.*). Thompson's view, which is shared by several other contemporaries of his who study class dynamics, confirms Jameson's concern: class and class discourse cannot or should not be analysed in isolation. They have to be seen within their historical and relational position within a class struggle.

At this point, Jameson introduces another important idea. He emphasises that at the centre of such historical and relational positioning between classes or different class discourse, there is fundamentally the antagonistic and dichotomous relation between a dominant and a labouring class. All the other class fractions, the "ec-centric or dependent classes" such as petty bourgeoisie or peasantry, are positioned only in terms of this dichotomous axis (*The Political* 83-84). According to Jameson, within this dichotomous antagonism, "a ruling class ideology will explore

various strategies of the legitimation of its own power position, while an oppositional culture or ideology will, often in covert and disguised strategies, seek to contest and to undermine the dominant 'value system' " (*The Political* 84). Thus, in the last analysis, it is this antagonism that comes to define the warring ideologies of differing classes. This is also the same point behind Thompson's description of class as a 'fluency.' The dominant ideology will constantly try to bend itself to appropriate and/or marginalise the oppositional ideology that tries to undermine its power position. As Jameson says: "the very content of a class ideology is relational, in the sense that its 'values' are always actively in situation with respect to the opposing class, and defined against the latter" (*The Political* 84). If that is the case, Jameson asserts, it becomes necessary first to understand the interaction, the 'dialogue,' between these opposing classes in order to fully understand the text in his second semantic horizon.

It is in reference to this interaction between the dominant and labouring class that Jameson turns to Bakhtin's dialogism: "we will say, following Mikhail Bakhtin, that within this horizon class discourse—the categories in terms of which individual texts and cultural phenomena are now rewritten—is essentially dialogical in its structure" (*The Political* 84). Bakhtin himself does not clearly define his 'dialogism' in isolation as a critical term; instead, his ideas are dispersed across his work, especially his *The Dialogic Imagination*, which will be quoted later below. Therefore, Michael Holquist's definition of Bakhtin's dialogism becomes useful in understanding Bakhtin's ideas.

Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole—there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will

do so and in what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance. This dialogic imperative, mandated by the pre-existence of the language world relative to any of its current inhabitants, insures that there can be no actual monologue. (426)

Translated to Jameson's Marxist reading of it, what Holquist calls 'the pre-existence of the language world' can be understood as the pre-existence of the class struggle relative to any of the current classes engaged in it. Class struggle has always been, but classes and their positions within this struggle are transient. They are constantly changing: which affects which, how, and to what degree depends on the historical moment of this dialogue.

Although they are widely displayed as philosophical approaches, Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism and heteroglossia are fundamentally linguistic concerns, as is obvious from Holquist's definition. In other words, Bakhtin always uses linguistic and semantic terminology to make his points. Thus, if taken strictly in Bakhtin's terminology, the text in Jameson's second horizon can be understood as what Bakhtin calls a 'rejoinder' in a dialogic situation:

In any actual dialogue the rejoinder [leads] a double life: it is structured and conceptualized in the context of the dialogue as a whole, which consists of its own utterances ('own' from the point of view of the speaker) and of alien utterances (those of the partner). One cannot excise the rejoinder from this combined context made up of one's own words and the words of another without losing its sense and tone. It is an organic part of a heteroglot unity. (Bakhtin, "Discourse" 284).

This is obviously what Jameson has in mind when he talks about an ideologeme that is to be analysed within the 'combined context' of the dialogue of two opposing class discourses. He states that "the individual utterance or text is grasped as a symbolic

move in an essentially polemic and strategic ideological confrontation between the classes" (*The Political* 85). In other words, just as a rejoinder in Bakhtin's dialogue cannot be fully understood outside its combined context, Jameson's text as an ideologeme cannot be fully understood outside the ideological confrontation between the two classes engaged in a dialogue. Jameson elaborates on this idea elsewhere by saying that the literary work is "not complete in itself but is handed down to us as a kind of gesture or verbal thrust incomprehensible unless we are able to understand the situation in which the gesture was first made, and the interlocutors to whom it was a reply" (*Marxism* 377). The situation that Jameson refers to can be understood as what Bakhtin calls the heteroglot unity. Bakhtin's heteroglossia dictates that an utterance at a certain time and in a certain place will be shaped by the conditions then and there and its meaning will be quite "different from what it would be at other times and in other places" (Holquist, *Dialogism* 67). Therefore, without considering those conditions, which together create the heteroglot unity, comprehension of that utterance is quite incomplete.

At this point, although Jameson is talking about two interlocutors—or two opposing classes in dialogue—he does not mean that the text under discussion is the 'rejoinder' of one class and there will be another text which in its turn will be the 'rejoinder' of another class. He does not aim to bring another text into his analysis in order to reveal the dialogue. Just as he does in his first horizon, he locates the analytic job within the individual text itself. This is still not a diversion from Bakhtin. Bakhtin's words elsewhere about his understanding of dialogue indicate that Jameson is still on track. Bakhtin states that, in order for a dialogue to exist, there does not have to be an openly discernible exchange between two clearly identified interlocutors: "dialogic relationships can permeate inside the utterance, even inside the individual word, as long as two voices collide within it dialogically" (Bakhtin,

Problems 184). This further explains Jameson's idea: the text is to be understood in a way similar to how Bakhtin sees 'the individual word.' The text is to be understood as an individual utterance within which two antagonistic voices of a dominant and a labouring class 'collide dialogically.' Therefore, the analyst is not looking outside the text for the evidence of class dialogue, but inside the text itself.

Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia and dialogism insists that speech or discourse must always imply a dialogue. Therefore, any utterance taken from a dialogue carries the traces of that dialogue *within* itself, even if what is heard is only a single voice. Similarly, the text as an ideologeme carries *within itself* the traces of both of the voices that are engaged within the dialogue, even if it looks like the reader is hearing only one single voice. Dowling's following explanation serves to make this point clearer. He uses the analogy of someone overhearing part of a conversation to explain how dialogism should be understood here:

if I overhear a voice in conversation in the next room I make sense of it by supplying the idea of a listener or another voice I cannot hear, and even if it turns out that the speaker is physically alone I will construe his discourse as one-half of an imaginary dialogue. A hegemonic discourse, in fact, has just this character: historically speaking we 'hear' only one voice because a hegemonic ideology suppresses or marginalizes all antagonistic class voices, and yet the hegemonic discourse remains locked into a dialogue with the discourse it has suppressed. (130-131)

The first part of Dowling's words makes it easier to follow how even though it looks as if the text consists of one unified single voice, the dialogue still exists within it. However, the second part of his words points out the direction towards which the discussion needs to be developed from here. In a salutary reference to Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Dowling says it is not that we hear only one voice but that a

cultural, political and ideological hegemony makes it so that we are able to hear only one voice. The hegemonic ideology suppresses the antagonistic class discourse(s) or marginalises them so that, just like the analogy of a conversation in the next room, we hear only one side of the dialogue. However, the most important point in Dowling's words is that the hegemonic class discourse cannot be done with the antagonistic voices it works so hard to suppress. Again, as in the analogy, we will always sense the dialogic beyond the single voice we hear. Without the antagonistic rejoinders it tries to silence, the hegemonic discourse cannot maintain itself: Therefore, it is forever locked into this dialogue.

Once this becomes clear, the deconstructive element in Jameson's second horizon surfaces. The traces of this suppressed voice exist within the text and are continuously resisting the narrative closure's unifying power. This hints at a deconstructive reading which examines the individual work "not as the harmonious fusion of form and content but as instances of the intractable conflicts ... not as a self-contained artefact but as a product of relations" (Culler 7). Barbara Johnson's words are also instructive here:

If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not meaning *per se* but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. This implies that a text signifies in more than one way, that it can signify something more, something less, or something other than it claims to ... A deconstructive reading makes evident the ways in which a text works out its complex disagreements with itself. (204-205)

Therefore, the objective of the analytical job becomes seeing through the text's claims to unequivocal signification. What a text signifies more or what it signifies less can indicate the disagreements within its texture. The text harbours a dialogic conflict, and its narrative closure serves as a symbolic move within this dialogic

conflict; a gesture towards both maintaining the hegemony of the ruling class-discourse and suppressing the antagonistic discourse of the labouring class as invalid or simply as marginal.

Another point that requires mentioning before the discussion can move back to *The Child in Time* is the necessity of a 'shared code.' In his *Marxism and Form* Jameson states that "the ideological product under examination ... proves to have had a functional and strategic value as a weapon of a determinate kind in a concrete and local struggle" (382). This means that a literary work as an ideological product is not a battleground for a total war between classes, where a whole spectrum of ideological conflicts is fought out. Instead, the conflict is limited to a certain local struggle, and here lies Jameson's idea of a shared code. Elsewhere, Jameson says that the "form of the dialogical class struggle is one in which two opposing discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code" (*The Political* 84). Here, he gives the 17th-century Civil War in England as an example where, he says, the shared master code was religion. The Civil War period marks the surfacing of all the suppressed and silenced discourses in English society, and two things define the shape of what quickly escalates to a bloody conflict in that period. Both of these things are inherent to any dialogue. The first one is dichotomy, which was already mentioned above: the dialogue happens along a dichotomous axis of a conflict between a ruling and a labouring class, and all the other eccentric classes take a position according to this dichotomy. That is why all the complex antagonisms between many different layers of that contemporary society become organised under two main positions that are 'Anglican' and 'Puritan.' The second one is the shared code of this dialogic relationship: any working dialogue requires a shared code to function, and the civil conflict of the 1640s in England—regardless of the

complex dynamics of oppression and class struggle—expresses itself as a war of religion. Dowling elaborates on the fact as follows:

religion was for all parties the shared code within which their differences were fought out. Thus it was, for instance, that the ‘communism’ of the Levellers could not take the form of an atheistic doctrine (a doctrine, say, calling for the end of religious delusions as such) but, on the contrary, presented itself as a purified Christianity. The unity of Jameson’s second horizon is thus the unity provided by a single dialogue and a shared code.
(131)

If the interlocutors are not talking about the same thing, dialogue does not occur, or occurs but fails to be a dialogue. Jameson’s shared code, similarly, points out this necessity. In a literary work’s narrative movement, Jameson looks for a single dialogue between two antagonistic classes and for the shared code of that dialogue.

The analysis of *The Child in Time* in the second semantic horizon can thus start with the identification of this shared code, around which the dialogue would be observed to be shaped. The discussions in the previous chapter have already revealed that this shared code is best understood as ‘temporality.’ In his lyrics to Berkeley’s oratorio—as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one of the two key pieces that inspired McEwan to write *The Child in Time*—McEwan hints at the opposing interlocutors of this dialogue on temporality. In the seventh scene of the oratorio, the woman soloist asks: “Shall there be womanly times, or shall we die?” (“Or Shall” 23). With this in mind, and based on the discussions in the previous section, it can be argued that on one side of the dialogue, there is the neoliberal capitalist time which is strictly linear and male in essence. On the other side, there is a more cyclical or monumental understanding of temporality, which has very little to do with linear time and which is female in essence. This male/female dichotomy

will be elaborated on below, especially with reference to Julia Kristeva's thought. Throughout the narrative, these two 'world-views,' as McEwan names them, are at play as 'yin and yang.' McEwan also writes his interest in physics into this yin and yang relationship and names these opposing sides as "the Newtonian and ... the new physics—... representing a male and female principle" ("Or Shall" 15).

The antagonistic class discourses fight out their differences within this shared code in the narrative universe of *Child*, and it appears that several different oppositions are subsumed under this antagonism—i.e. linear/quantum, man/woman, father/mother, urban/pastoral, city/woods, man-made/cosmic. As was discussed before, it is clear that the rise of Stephen the father in the narrative closure $P_2 + \bar{P}_1$ coincides with $E_1 + \bar{E}_2$ and is an assertion of the neoliberal capitalist perspective on time. This move in the narrative marginalises timelessness or cyclical views of time ($P_1 + \bar{P}_2$ coincides with $E_2 + \bar{E}_1$) or, at best, hijacks them to market their qualities. Numerous sources discuss how neoliberalism monetizes such qualities in reality. For instance, Jacqueline Rose dedicates a whole chapter on 'commercialisation of the child' in her book on children's fiction (85-114). Similarly, Jon Goss explores how late 20th-century shopping mall consumer culture relies a lot on children's 'regressive,' 'mythical' or 'nostalgic' qualities to encourage consumption (65-70). The feminine qualities which are represented—by women, and especially by Julie, in the text—in $P_1 + \bar{P}_2$ are hijacked by the narrative closure in the name of Stephen the father. Therefore, the view of time as beyond linearity, that is $E_2 + \bar{E}_1$, is only there among the narrative possibilities for Stephen to make any necessary use of them—similar to how neoliberalism makes use of contradictory discourses when it sees fit.

Meanwhile, while male subjectivity (in its relation to linear temporality) becomes the position of the dominant ruling class, female subjectivity (in its relation

to quantum temporality) becomes the radical position which designates the movement of the labouring class that seeks to contest and to undermine the dominant 'value system.' And although McEwan declares that 'there shall be womanly times' in order for societies "to shift from violence to nurture" ("Or Shall" 16), the narrative closure of *Child* falls short of this proclamation. As was shown by way of the movement on the semiotic square, the text ends up affirming the linear over the quantum, the father over the mother; by way of allowing the former to usurp the qualities of the latter.

The view of time as linear, continuous and uniform is the dominant temporal perspective in capitalist societies. The evolution of clock time, which helps reify time and hence helps affirm the equation 'time is money,' coincides with the growth of capitalism (Duncheon and Tierney 240-241; Quattrone 192). As Thompson states, "in mature capitalist society, all time must be consumed, marketed, put to use; it is offensive for the labour force merely to 'pass the time' " ("Time" 91). Making convenient use of a Puritan morality from the very beginning, the capitalist perspective encourages the work ethic from a moral standpoint, teaching its children "to improve each shining hour" (Thompson, "Time" 95), and imposes 'a work discipline' on the labouring classes. According to Paolo Quattrone, the emergence of capitalist work discipline created a sort of 'paradigm shift' in how society understood work; it was "a discipline which homogenised and regularised work patterns, eliminating the possibility of self-organising which had been key in the pre-industrial work organisation of craftsmen and women" (Quattrone 188).

This is the capitalist work ethic or discipline that the 'Authorised Childcare Handbook' in *The Child in Time* advocates. The Handbook wants parents to teach their children—the adults of the next generation—that "the clock cannot be argued with;" that there is no choice but to accept it "when it is time to leave for school, for

Daddy to go to work, for Mummy to attend to her duties" (*Child* 27). Also, this discipline might be seen as the reason behind Stephen's frantic search for his lost daughter. Stephen gets angry with Julie who does not join him in this search. He sees mourning as a loss of valuable time that could have been used in the search for Kate. While Julie mourns at home, he runs around the city, "[eats] standing up in sandwich bars, anxious not to lose time, reluctant to sit down" (*Child* 24). And all this happens in accordance with a view of time that "monomaniacally" presses forward (*Child* 14); this is "the heartless accumulation of days" (*Child* 23). What *Lemonade* is about—Stephen's first and most famous children's book—is never revealed in the text, but the limited allusions to its themes hint that it is about the passing of time. We are allowed to know that when children read it, they cry "bitter tears" (*Child* 33). It teaches them about the 'cruel' progression of time. It teaches children that living in an innocent and timeless *now* is not an option; "[r]eading [Stephen], they get wind of the idea that they are finite as children;" as Charles Darke says: "It's a sad message, but it's a true one" (*Ibid.*).

The traces of this hegemonic form of temporality are also written in the very structure of the text, as it was already discussed above: Although McEwan suggests the existence of a quantum higher ground in the text, and although the text "does encourage the reader to expect some kind of holistic resolution of all the diverse strands of its narrative," it is unlikely to be able to deliver this promise (Morrison 73). In the end, the narrative movement insists on an unalterable and meaningful linearity of things, of providential predestination and of traditional metaphysics of fate. In the text, everything assumes meaning in and *only* in the linear scheme of things; linear temporality overpowers quantum diversity, and "Stephen's out-of-time experiences have from the beginning been ... framed by his experience of this one—the 'real' world and, ultimately, the only one that exists" (Wright 230). It is

explicitly suggested by the final moment of new birth in the text that “[a]ll the sorrow, all the empty waiting had been enclosed within *meaningful time*, within the richest unfolding conceivable” (*Child* 211; italics added).

This ‘meaningful time’ can be linked to a metaphysical conceptualisation of history, as Derrida says, which itself, in turn, “is not only linked to linearity, but to an entire *system* of implications (teleology, ... accumulation of meaning, a certain type of traditionality, a certain concept of continuity, of truth, etc.)” (Derrida 56). The implications of teleology, continuity and traditionality were already discovered in the narrative’s movement from the innocent child (P₁) towards Stephen the father (P₂), as was represented on the semantic square. The text indicates that everything Stephen goes through in the story finds meaning from a teleological *propter hoc* perspective. As Hillis Miller says, ‘the last page,’ where the new birth takes place, (re)defines the story within the notion of a teleological totality where the meaning emerges gradually and truth is found in ‘necessary progress:’

The last page is the goal toward which it has been moving, inhabited as it has been throughout by ‘the sense of an ending.’ This sense articulates all the parts as the backbone of the narrative. At the same time the image of a progressive revelation of meaning is to be applied to the idea of the ‘destinies’ of the characters. Their lives make ‘sense’ as the gradual revelation of a whole, the ‘meaning of their lives.’ The end of the novel is the final exposing of the fates of the characters as well as of the formal unity of the text. (461)

It is indeed the case in *Child*. As was discussed at length above, each and every detail of Stephen’s journey to the last scene is ‘articulated’ as part of a meaningful unfolding of truth: his work in the government committee, his encounters with the Prime Minister, his relationship to Darke and what they go through together, his

calligraphy and tennis classes, his experiences of quantum leaps, his visit to Julie and then to his parents, the car accident he barely survives ... several other details from the text can be added to this list. Every detail proves to have had a purpose in the overall scheme of things. The new birth and Stephen's role in it turn them, from random-looking coincidental, and sometimes incomprehensible events, into consequential inevitabilities.

It should also be noted how the narrator constantly—sometimes himself, sometimes through Stephen via free indirect thought—emphasises this point. Since it is not one of the scenes that was discussed above, the car accident episode and its connection to the last birth scene can be explored here as an obvious example. When Stephen fills in for the midwife during the birth, the narrator notes: “[h]e heard himself say something reassuring to Julie, while he himself was comforted by a memory, brief and clear like a firework, of a sunlit country road, of wreckage and a head” (*Child* 219). Stephen clearly remembers the car accident and how he pulled a lorry driver out of the wreckage. The episode is highly evocative of birth (*Child* 96-99): First of all, the lorry driver is stuck within the ‘pink’ cab of the vehicle. When Stephen comes closer, he sees ‘a man’s hairy head’ peeping through ‘an opening in the squeezed cab.’ He kneels on the ground stands there ‘with the head between his knees.’ He uses a jack to enlarge the opening. Having done that, he peers into the ‘dark chamber where the man’s body could be seen curled.’ After some effort, he successfully pulls the man out head first, wraps him in a blanket and feeds him a drink. Upon first reading, the episode is received neutrally and the accident as a mere accident. However, Stephen’s remembering of this particular episode to guide him during the birth reveals it to be fate. To use Cynthia Chase’s words, this is how the narrative “flatter[s] our ‘judicious opinion’ ” (174). As the reader expects the sequence of events to become intelligible and to find meaning, the narrative “evokes

the passage of time, which is itself presented to show the 'effects' of 'causes' and thereby to reveal the events' significance" (*Ibid.*). Stephen's description of the new born child, saying "[t]his is really all we have got, ... everything we have has to come from this" (*Child* 219), only recaps this whole linear/teleological perspective in the narrative movement.

That is why Stephen, when he experiences the episode near the pub Bell, describes it to Thelma as "something *out of time*" (*Child* 117; italics added). This simple description becomes important because, first of all, it indicates Stephen's dedication to a linear temporality that passes in accordance with the ticking of a clock or the leaves of a wall calendar. Anything that does not conform to such temporality is 'out of time' for him, and even the fact that he experiences such an alternative temporal reality first-hand cannot make him question if there was *nothing* that was 'out of time' but different temporal possibilities. Secondly, even though he cannot make sense of his quantum experiences, they are completely natural to Thelma, whom he turns to for her wise advice on the 'wild' anomalies of time that he thinks he is experiencing. For Thelma, a physics professor and expert on "the nature of time" (*Child* 32), Stephen's vision is not to be understood as something 'out of time' because, she tells him, "whatever time is, the common-sense, everyday version of it as linear, regular, absolute, marching from left to right, from the past through the present to the future, is either nonsense or a tiny fraction of the truth" (*Child* 117).

In contrast to Stephen's inability to make sense of a quantum existence in the capacity of his role as Stephen the father ($P_2 + \bar{P}_1$), the three women in the text, Thelma, Julie and Stephen's mother Claire ($P_1 + \bar{P}_2$), are able to "live in coexistence with [their] alternative, quantum selves" (Wright 226). As Thelma explains it to Stephen, they can connect with "a higher order of reality, a higher ground, the

ground of all that is, an undivided whole" (*Child* 119). This is expressed, for instance, by their ability to absorb life in its fullness, with all sorts of joy and sorrow, and their power to heal themselves against trauma; also, by their ability to experience and understand the quantum possibilities with ease; and by their artless connection to the timeless and cyclical nature around them. For instance, their ability to absorb life and heal themselves is expressed in the ease with which these women in the text stream through the crises of life, knowing how to handle them, and more importantly, being all-understanding not only of their own feelings and needs but also of those of the others around them. Thelma becomes a beacon of hope and stability for Charles and Stephen alike throughout their journeys in and out of the crises in their lives. Claire handles her husband Douglas and their marriage the same way. And it is, in the last analysis, Julie who, being able to face up to trauma and heal her wounds, is able to put their marriage with Stephen back on track. Similarly, their ability to experience and connect with the quantum with ease is chiefly represented by Thelma in her ability to understand beyond 'everyday time' and in her eagerness to show Stephen the way. Claire, similarly, experiences a quantum vision herself during her pregnancy. Through her ability to connect with this quantum perspective, she saves her relationship with Douglas and delivers her baby. Even Julie might be seen as 'stepping out of time' to deal with the traumatic experience when she drops everything and decides to retreat first to a monastery and then to a cottage in the country. The last of their abilities, their artless connection to the timeless and cyclical nature, was already discussed in the first section of this chapter as to how the *pastoral* contrasts the *urban* in the text, and what the relationship between children, women and the pastoral scene is. In addition to that discussion, Thelma's garden can be pointed to as an epitomic expression of women's connection with nature and the cosmos. The garden Thelma creates for her family is on the

verges of a “five-hundred-acre wood, coppiced since before Norman times and mentioned in the Domesday Book;” its ‘wild’ nature starkly contrasts with the enclosing ‘fir plantations’ of the neoliberal government’s programme to become ‘self-sufficient’ in wood (*Child* 101). Upon visiting the Darkes for the first time, Stephen feels it to be alien territory. The wood and Thelma’s garden in it are ‘engulfing’ and overwhelming him. This is how the narrator relates Stephen’s feelings: “His ignorance of the names of trees and plants heightened his impression of their profusion. The wood had detonated, it was engulfed in such a chaos of vegetation it was in danger of choking on abundance” (*Child* 105). Moreover, the garden is not meant to stay on the verges of the wood but to attach itself to its unifying whole. This drive for unity, which symbolises Thelma’s connection with nature, is represented in “how the outer edges of the garden were designed to merge with the wild growth of the wood so that there was no visible barrier between the two” (*Child* 104). Like the woman whose *being* surmounts cosmic borders and reaches the “bright swarm of the Milky Way” to find “joy [in] see[ing] and nam[ing] ... Orion, Pleiades, the Kids” in McEwan’s oratorio (“Or Shall” 17), Thelma’s *being* surmounts the borders that separates herself from the ancient monumental totality that the wild Norman wood represents.

This inevitably reminds one of the common identifications of time as ‘Father Time’ and of nature as ‘Mother Earth,’ personifications that are recurrent in almost all western mythology. Indeed, says Julia Kristeva in her ‘Women’s Time,’ “when evoking the name and destiny of women, one thinks more of the space generating and forming the human species than of time, becoming, or history” (15). Thus, this marks the chasm between a masculine and a feminine perspective regarding temporality. While the former represents ‘becoming,’ thus a predominantly linear and teleological time, the latter turns to a more diffuse and monumental or cyclical

view of time. Against the “conception of linear temporality, which” says Kristeva, “is readily labelled masculine and which is at once both civilizational and obsessional” (18), is evoked a ‘female’ understanding of temporality, which is all-enveloping in its natural and cosmic reach. The female subjectivity evokes and requires a different understanding of temporality that has little to do with the linear, teleological ‘masculine’ one:

As for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock, but whose regularity and unison with what is experienced as extrasubjective time, cosmic time, occasion vertiginous visions and unnameable *jouissance*. On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word ‘temporality’ hardly fits: All-encompassing and infinite like imaginary space (16)

For the analysis at hand, this female subjectivity that Kristeva gestures to features as the silenced rejoinder in the antagonistic class dialogue within *Child*. It is located in the silenced and overlooked $P_1 + \bar{P}_2$ position on the semantic map of the text’s secondary subtext and in the $E_2 + \bar{E}_1$ position in the ultimate subtext—both of which can once again be seen in Figures 15 and 18 below.

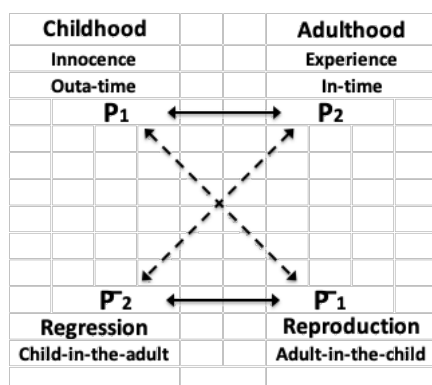


Fig. 15 The semic universe of the text

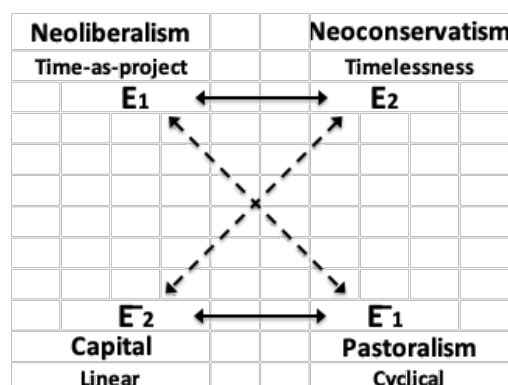


Fig. 18 Thatcherite politics

Both within the dynamics of the narrative (with its subtexts), and within the antagonistic class dialogue between the ruling and labouring classes of the Thatcherite neoliberal era, a female subjectivity, though repressed, becomes the ideologeme of the ever-expanding oppressed classes under the relentless neoconservative/neoliberal capitalism of the 1970s and 80s. It becomes the force that strives to undermine the ideologeme of the ruling class which is a masculine linear/teleological temporality. In other words, turning to Kristeva's arguments once again, it can be stated that "female subjectivity ... becomes a problem with respect to a certain conception of time: time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding; time as departure, progression, and arrival—in other words, the time of history" (17).

Kristeva expands on this idea, stating: this opposition between a linear-masculine time and a cyclical/monumental-feminine time

becomes, nonetheless, within a given civilization, an antinomy among social groups and ideologies in which the radical positions of certain feminists would rejoin the discourse of marginal groups of spiritual or mystical inspiration and, strangely enough, rejoin recent scientific preoccupations." (17-18)

Kristeva's argument here finds its resonance in the character of Thelma in *Child*. Indeed, it is she who 'teaches' Stephen about the quantum temporality—which is obviously what Kristeva means by 'scientific preoccupations.' In addition to that, just like Kristeva who sees female subjectivity joining forces with all marginal positions—be it that of a mystical, spiritual or a scientific nature—on the grounds of their views of temporality, Thelma states that what masculine perspective is unable to embrace, unlike the feminine perspective, are all the alternative temporal modalities like "the mystic's experience of timelessness, the chaotic unfolding of time in dreams, the Christian moment of fulfilment and redemption, the annihilated time of deep sleep, the elaborate time schemes of novelists, poets, daydreamers, the infinite, unchanging time of childhood" (*Child* 120).

In her lesson to Stephen regarding what he terms as things 'out of time,' Thelma finishes her lecture by a comparison between a male and a female subjectivity. She says:

When science could begin to abandon the illusions of objectivity by taking seriously, and finding a mathematical language for, the indivisibility of the entire universe, and when it could begin to take subjective experience into account, then the clever boy was on his way to becoming the wise woman.
(*Child* 120)

This is reminiscent of McEwan's Oratorio once again—in McEwan's lyrics, against the voice of the woman who asks "Can we have strength without aggression, / without disgust, / strength to bind feeling to the intellect?" ("Or Shall" 23), the voice of the man announces the necessity to clear one's head of emotions and focus on destroying enemies. And since women are the "traitors in our midst" according to the male voice, he says "[t]he weak-hearted, the effeminate, the disloyal / must know nothing" ("Or Shall" 20). As another example from the same oratorio, against

the man who is preoccupied with 'delivering bombs' to enemy territory "[w]ith God's blessing," and in the name of "[t]he defence of order, freedom, property, / sovereignty, the aspirations of the people" (20), McEwan pits the 'wise' woman who questions these motifs by saying: "Shall we always be fooled by these ancient lies? / Who is my enemy? Who is the enemy of my child?" ("Or Shall" 22). This is the wisdom that Thelma professes; an ability to take everything into account, being at peace with 'the indivisibility of the entire universe.' And this, of course, entails a comprehension of linear time as a "tiny fraction of the truth" (*Child* 117) in a way to surpass its boundaries into a more monumental temporal modality.

However, as was discussed at the beginning of this section of the current chapter, only one of the voices is audible in the dialogic relationship of classes since the dominant class ideologeme works towards undermining—by way of marginalisation or appropriation—the antagonistic class voices. In the same fashion, it was already hinted that male subjectivity usurps the female one in the narrative closure of *Child*. Male dominance is apparent in the text from the very beginning. As Adam Mars-Jones says, "in the absence of the child [it becomes] possible for the father's claims to be heard so favourably ... Stephen's feelings can dominate the novel" (28). Michiko Kakutani reaches a similar conclusion. She says that McEwan has a gift for control and sympathy as a writer and adds that in *Child*, "starting with a hero for whom we can only feel a great deal of compassion, he uses those same gifts to make Stephen's state of mind so palpable that we are made to share all his shifting emotions." Thanks to that, the dominance of male subjectivity pervades the whole narrative.

In certain instances in the text, the male animosity towards female subjectivity becomes more articulated. For instance, during his days of frantic search for the kidnapped daughter, Stephen slowly drifts away from Julie, who takes

a different road in dealing with the trauma: "one afternoon, ... Stephen found the bed stripped and three bulging plastic sacks by the door in her bedroom. He was angry with Julie, disgusted by what he took to be a feminine self-destructiveness, a wilful defeatism" (*Child* 24). Somewhere else, the reader follows Stephen's train of thought speculating on the differences between men and women. The conclusion he reaches bears witness to men's hostility to female subjectivity once again:

[women] were not taken in so easily by jobs and hierarchies, uniforms and medals. Against the faith men had in the institutions they and not women had shaped, women upheld some other principle of selfhood in which being surpassed doing. Long ago men had noted something unruly in this. Women simply enclosed the space which men longed to penetrate. The men's hostility was aroused. (*Child* 55)

The antagonism between man and woman in this excerpt is parallel with the arguments above: womanhood is described as 'being' which is more pervasive and diffuse in contrast to 'doing' which can only exist in-time and which relies on the idea of a forward or onward progression. It is openly stated how this antagonism arouses hostility on men's side. They long to penetrate this enclosed space of womanhood, conquer it and take over its control. Men have been doing this for centuries, as it is stated somewhere else in the text:

For three centuries, generations of experts, priests, moralists, social scientists, doctors – mostly men – had been pouring out instructions and ever-mutating facts for the benefit of mothers. No one doubted the absolute truth of his judgements. ... Here was Stephen now, a foot soldier in this army of experts. (*Child* 80-81)

And as it is clearly underlined, Stephen is a soldier in this battle for control over what is considered feminine. This, once again, explains the rise of Stephen the father

to power in the text's semantic relations with the help of what Mars-Jones describes as "submissive annexation" of the feminine (27). The concluding message is clear: "we need to integrate both the qualities of childhood and the unregarded aspects of feminine experience into our notion (and practice) of adulthood" (Edwards 42).

All in all, on the surface of it, *The Child in Time* is a story with a happy ending. It is a story where everything is alright in the end. It begins with a man who has lost his daughter and wife and who is himself lost without a home or a destination, and ends with the same man who now has reacquired everything once again. It centres on Stephen's search for the things that he has lost, or more accurately, that were taken from him. Yet, even though he cannot get his 'stolen' child back, eventually he fathers another child and reunites with his wife with the birth. There is domestic bliss in the end and with it, Stephen has a home, a destination and a meaning in his life once again. The story closes on such a hopeful note. Taken as it is told then, the story amounts more or less to the old aphorism 'time heals all wounds.'

It is true that, in the background of all this, McEwan tries to squeeze in some criticism of the neoliberal/neoconservative government through narratorial comment. Even though vaguely, the narrator lets the reader sense a growing disaffection in the country and in the world. This is backed up with Stephen's and his father's mild criticism of the current situation in Britain and with Stephen's refusal to lunch with the Prime Minister at Downing Street. Stephen becomes the mouthpiece for McEwan when McEwan makes him repeat what he himself says in an interview that he was not happy with what the Prime Minister's government had done to Britain.

After closer scrutiny, though, and 'semantic enrichment' (in Fredric Jameson's words), this study has discerned a different meaning that goes against the

seemingly deprecatory comments on the surface regarding neoliberal/neoconservative politics: the whole narrative movement and the denouement it arrives at are not so much in contrast with the neoliberal/neoconservative thought which the story seems to be criticising on the surface.

Following Fredric Jameson's semantic enrichment aiming to uncover this political unconscious in the text, the analysis started off with a discussion of the interplay in the text between a physical search for the lost child and the more conceptual search for a lost childhood. Once able to transcend the traumatic physical search and to see the 'child' thereby taking up a conceptual role, it becomes clear that there lies a fundamental contradiction in the text's semantic universe, a contradiction between two meanings of childhood—two contradictory meanings of childhood in their relation to two different concepts of time.

Through an allegorical analysis which helps make visible 'the political' behind what seems to be 'the private' of the text, the two contradictory meanings of childhood become allegorical positions representing the contradiction between relentless Thatcherite neoliberalism on the one hand and the evocation of traditional values by Thatcherite neoconservatism on the other. The text's inability to resolve the antinomy it creates in its own narrative paradigm is an indication of the irreconcilable nature of the contradiction within Thatcherite politics. Still, although they are irreconcilable, the text offers a wish-fulfilment through the magical resolution in its dénouement. It was argued that the magical resolution the text offers at the end betrays a conservative-neoliberal outlook that actually defines the work's political unconscious. The text ends up helping that real contradiction conceal itself behind the promising happy ending of its wondrous romantic wish-fulfilment.

In Jameson's terms, this romance wish-fulfilment needs to be understood as an ideologeme. The wish-fulfilment here involves the rise to power of Stephen-the-father in the semantic universe of the narrative. Stephen the father embodies all the ideals of neoliberal/neoconservative thought. He is the male bread-winner, the glue that holds together the conservative-bourgeois nuclear family, which in its turn is the glue that holds the neoliberal/neoconservative system together. He represents personal interest, individualism, gender roles, both domestic and entrepreneurial ownership, centrality of urbanism, ambition, and business. He represents the neoliberal/neoconservative or the male version of time which "include[s] the notions of origin and end ('archaeology' and 'teleology'); ... of the homogeneity, linearity and continuity of time; of necessary progress; of 'fate,' 'destiny,' or 'Providence;' of causality; of gradually emerging 'meaning;'" (Miller 459).

All the while, there is an undercurrent in the narrative that tries to subvert whatever Stephen the father stands for. As was discussed in relation to Kristeva's arguments from her 'Women's Time' and in relation to Thelma's statements in the text, this undercurrent is the silenced rejoinder in the antagonistic class discourse that Jameson points to in the second horizon of his semantic enrichment. A female subjectivity arises in contrast to Stephen the father and is represented by Julie, Thelma and Claire in the narrative. It represents the pastoral as opposed to urbanism, an inward direction that at the same time connects to the cosmos as opposed to individualism and an entrepreneurial aggression, and a monumental female time as opposed to male linearity.

To subvert this undercurrent, the narrative movement proceeds towards Stephen the father and reaches its dénouement without ever attempting towards this female subjectivity which is thence framed out. Stephen is made to usurp the powers of this female subjectivity by firstly laying claim to Claire's role in bringing

his baby-self into this world. He, then, announces his dedication to a linear understanding of time in total rejection of Thelma's teachings of the quantum, and he does this despite the fact that he used the quantum magic to reach back in time in order to seize Claire's subjectivity. And lastly, he usurps Julie's role in the birth of their new child. That is why Julie is almost completely absent in the last birth scene. Stephen takes control of everything. The whole scene is rendered as if Julie is simply a mere formality in the process. It is the case with the whole process of Julie's pregnancy; it takes place completely 'off-stage' except for two moments: the moment Stephen fathers the child by 'choosing' to make love to Julie and the moment when he delivers the baby with his own hands. According to Adam Mars-Jones, to explain this, anthropology uses the term *couvade* which denotes "patterns of male behaviour that seek to upstage or to appropriate potent moments in the lives of women . . . artificial blurring of identities, under cover of which the male, all the while loudly extolling the sanctity of her privileges, usurps the female" (33). In *Child*, though, the narrative usurps not only the female but also the antagonistic class discourse it represents against the male subjectivity of the dominant class.

This, in the end, lays bare the political unconscious of the text, and it is clear that there is a parallelism between what lies in that unconscious and the dominant neoliberal/neoconservative ideology. In fact, McEwan gives this away in his 'Preface' to his oratorio when he says "what novelists can pit against the overbearing State ... are the values of the individual attempting, for example, to retain his or her identity, ... discovering the ascendancy of love or being crushed in the attempt. ... the individual human worth (xii). This statement is very similar to Thatcher's infamous proclamation "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families" (Brooker, *Literature* 10). Pascal Nicklas reaches a similar conclusion about McEwan's works in general. He says that McEwan's

poetics “are not based on ideas of the collective but rather rest on the individual. His characters ... experience their lives as though they were the first human being on earth—only in special moments or with hindsight do they realise that they belong to a group or nation” (Nicklas 12). In a similar fashion, the political unconscious in *Child* reveals, once again, McEwan’s own commitment to a conservative liberalism, one that is also very ‘male’ in its character and understanding.



CHAPTER III

AMSTERDAM:

THE ISSUE OF MORALITY, THE LATE CAPITALIST MARKET AND THE POST-COLD WAR PARADIGM SHIFT

Just like *The Child in Time* in the previous chapter, *Amsterdam* is chosen as the third focus of this study since it marks a new phase in McEwan's career as an author, which may be the reason why most of his readers find it hard to fit it in McEwan's oeuvre. Peter Childs gives voice to the thoughts of the majority of McEwan's readership when he says that "*Amsterdam* ... may be best read ... as a divertissement, a diversion between the far more serious works *Enduring Love* and *Atonement*" (*The Fiction of Ian McEwan* 125). A similar point is made in Bettina Vine's 1998 review in *The Southland Times* where the novel is described as 'readable and lightweight.' In an interview with Adam Begley in 2002, however, McEwan dismisses such views and asserts that although "[s]ome readers considered the novel a lighthearted diversion, [for him], even at the time, it seemed as much a turning point as *The Child in Time* had been" (McEwan, "The Art of Fiction CLXXIII" 103). He goes on to add that he "could not have written *Atonement* without first writing *Amsterdam*" (McEwan, "The Art of Fiction CLXXIII" 103). Also, shortly after winning the Booker in 1998, he states in another interview that *Amsterdam* is "distinct from [his] novels written over the last ten-year period ... beginning with *The Child in Time* and really ending with *Enduring Love*: novels of a sort of crisis and transformation, rites of passage of great intensity for characters" (McEwan, "*Bold Type* Interview"). That is to say, McEwan accepts the fact that *Amsterdam* is different from his more serious novels, but he adds that this does not diminish its importance for him as an author and that it marks a turning point in his writing. In consequence,

this points at the possibility of finding a different political unconscious than that which has been uncovered with *The Cement Garden* in the first chapter of this study, and *The Child in Time* in the second chapter.

Amsterdam has a very “simple scheme,” as McEwan himself along with many reviewers states (“The Art of Fiction CLXXIII” 103). It centres on moral choices, and what creates suspense is less the antagonisms between certain characters than the consequences of “their own catastrophic moral choices” (Timson 72). The story deals with a group of characters from the same generation who are post-war children now living their middle age in the 1990s. The reader closely accompanies Clive Linley, a composer, and Vernon Halliday, a newspaper editor, during a few weeks of story time. The story opens with Clive and Vernon occupying a morally superior place in contrast to most of the remaining characters, who are depicted as morally corrupt from the start. These two know each other through a woman named Molly Lane of whom they are ex-lovers and long-time friends. As the story progresses, Clive and Vernon are faced with moral dilemmas, each of his own, that try their moral integrity and force them to make choices that will eventually lead both to fall from grace with the reader and lose their moral superiority. That is to say, in Mark Houlihan’s words, McEwan first draws “you [as the reader] into their worlds, and then leads you to despise them.” Eventually, Clive and Vernon’s refusal to rise up to their moral duties and their preference for prioritising their self-advancement over the well-being of others become focal points in the narrative. They are then duly punished at the end of the narrative for their immorality. In a farcical conclusion, the characters offer each other a glass of drugged champagne and die at the hands of Dutch doctors prearranged by themselves for one another thanks to the loose euthanasia laws in Amsterdam the city.

Amsterdam does not portray transformation or offer rites of passage for its characters, which, as McEwan said above, is its biggest but not the only difference from his other novels until then. Another important difference is surely its generic unfamiliarity for the McEwan readership. *Amsterdam* has been read differently by different reviewers and critics: it has been read as a satire as well as a morality tale, a burlesque, a comedy, and a fable among other things (Childs, *The Fiction of Ian McEwan* 118). Two of the terms McEwan himself deems applicable to *Amsterdam* are satire and comedy. For anyone who is used to the dark and macabre atmosphere and subject matter of McEwan's previous novels, it is undoubtedly unexpected. Maybe it was its "improbable comic plot" (McEwan, "The Art of Fiction CLXXIII" 103) that led readers to see *Amsterdam* as "a minor doodle by a major novelist" (Moore). What further complicated things for McEwan's readers and reviewers was *Amsterdam's* Booker Prize win.

Besides many other prizes and honorary awards, McEwan is among the most frequently Booker-shortlisted authors ever after Iris Murdoch and Margaret Atwood (Atwood and Murdoch have 6, and Beryl Bainbridge, Salman Rushdie and Ian McEwan have 5 shortlist nominations). It is only an indication of the fact that he has always been considered a leading figure in British fiction since the 1970s. Despite all this, McEwan was able to win the prestigious Booker Prize award only once, for his *Amsterdam* in 1998. The majority of critics and readers, however, were taken aback by this result; apparently, no one expected McEwan to win a Booker for *Amsterdam*, even though everyone expected him to win a Booker one day (see among others: Allen; Hoffert and Bryant; Moore; Home Staff; Vine). A survey of the reviews written at the time indicates that the disappointment surrounding *Amsterdam's* win had two dimensions. On one level, many thought the award diminished McEwan as an author since *Amsterdam* was deemed to be the least

deserving of his works up to that moment (Childs, *The Fiction of Ian McEwan* 118). On another level, the result was seen as yet another piece of evidence for the shortcomings and incompetence of the Booker Prize as the arbiter of literary value (Moore).

Before and since *Amsterdam*, though, the Booker has always been a topic of debate, as much as any prize ever is. The primary criticism concerns its patrons which have changed a few times since the prize's initiation, and who are the evidence of the prize's commercial essence (Sutherland, "The Booker's Big Bang"). Some people problematise the old colonial dealings of the main sponsor company, Booker McConnell Ltd and the repercussions of those dealings in terms of their manifestations in the present-day poverty in the Caribbean (White). In addition, the prize's scope, which is limited to writers born in Britain, the Commonwealth, Republic of Ireland, and South Africa is considered to be designed as a lifebelt for the former empire as expressed by Luke Strongman, who says that "the Booker has helped maintain the discrete ties between Commonwealth nations and the once imperial centre" (xii). Apart from these, the prize has been criticised for favouring 'readable' over 'high end' literature (Flood) as well as being similarly criticised for the exact opposite (Doughty). Robert McCrum traces the prize's decline; Stephen Moss tries to address the concern over whether the Booker is fixed or not; and Richard Gott describes the prize to be "more a toss-up than an exact science" saying "the Prize still does not remotely resemble an objective assessment of merit. It is something very close to a lottery. The judges have no agreed criteria for judging." On top of such extensive media coverage, the debate is taken up by more scholarly and academic studies, some of which are to be mentioned later in this study.

These extra-textual issues concerning *Amsterdam's* Booker win and the Booker prize in general may at first seem to have no apparent relation to an analysis

of what is *in* the text. According to Julia Waters, however, they can prove to be of value for a better appreciation of what McEwan claims to accomplish in his novel, namely painting a satirical portrait of its society. Belonging to the group that appreciate *Amsterdam* as a satire, Julia Waters states in her 1998 review of the novel that:

Ian McEwan winning the 1998 Booker for *Amsterdam* almost seems like the perfect epilogue to his social satire. On a short list of McEwan's great books, *Amsterdam* shouldn't even place. But there's a satisfying irony in knowing that this is exactly the kind of book that the society McEwan satirises would pick as the best book of the year.

Waters basically refers to a general corruption casting a shadow over the socio-politics equally of the world in *Amsterdam* and in reality. According to Waters' insightful review, *Amsterdam's* win and the ensuing frustration, in fact, bears witness to the validity of McEwan's satirical arguments that he articulates in *Amsterdam*. The 1998 Booker incident becomes, so to speak, the moment when "the satire bleeds out into the world of literary culture" in Dominic Head's words who apparently takes up Waters' idea and emphasises that seeing *Amsterdam* as a "literary event is crucial to understanding it" (*Ian McEwan* 145). Although this study does not aim to elaborate on the extra-textual issues regarding *Amsterdam* as a book on the shelves or as a "literary event" or the literary prize culture, there is nevertheless an obvious connection between these extra-textual debates and the points of discussion within *Amsterdam* which cannot be overlooked.

The present study considers the connection between what is happening inside and outside the text to be a valuable aid in enhancing the meanings it sets out to uncover in *Amsterdam's* political unconscious. In doing so, however, this study does not seek to deal with this connection in the same manner as Julia Waters or

Dominic Head does, namely reading *Amsterdam* solely as a satire, a reading which presupposes and focuses on an immediate relationship between the text and its context. The study will concern itself more with a reading of *Amsterdam* as a product of its historical moment where the novel becomes “the symbolic resolution of a real political and social contradiction” in Fredric Jameson’s words (*The Political* 80).

As was discussed before, the first horizon of Jameson’s semantic enrichment demands of the critic to consider any literary work within its relation to its historical-political context, and such relations, at a first glance, cannot be more manifest anywhere else but in satirical works. In his *The Anatomy of Satire*, Gilbert Highet’s discussions underline how a satire is immersed in its historical context, so much so that most satires do not function properly outside that context or lose much of their signification (17; 231-238). Yet, Jameson’s understanding of an historical-political context differs from the understanding of the same thing in this conventional social or historical criticism.

A literary work’s complex relation to its historical-political context for Jameson—which he names as *subtext*—was explored in detail earlier in the previous chapters. Jameson disapproves of the limits of a conventional sociology of literature which “feels that its work is done when it shows how a given artifact “reflects” its social background” (*The Political* 81). Regarding the present discussion, hence, what Jameson finds to be a limited point of view comes to focus solely on how *Amsterdam* as a satirical work looks at its immediate social context and reflects the follies it sees in it. Jameson’s model, on the other hand, regards the literary work to be a *symbolic act* which functions as the symbolic resolution of a real socio-political contradiction. As mentioned above, this requires a different treatment of context where context, becomes the place of that real socio-political contradiction.

A second difference between Jameson's model and the conventional sociology of literature is that while the latter thinks of context as existing independently of the text, the former considers it to exist inside the text as a subtext which needs to be extracted from there. When the context is thought to be outside the text, the critic engages with the conscious of the text. Here, the text looks at the context out there, conceptualises it, and says something in reference to what it sees there. When the context is thought to be buried inside the text as subtext, though, the critic engages with the unconscious of the text, which, Jameson says, is always a political unconscious. Here, context remains an absent cause "which cannot be directly or immediately conceptualised by the text" (*The Political* 82) in the way conventional social or historical criticism presupposes. At this point, Jameson borrows from Althusser and Lacan, as was discussed at length in the previous chapters, to indicate why and how context is "nonrepresentational" (*The Political* 82). Unable to directly engage with the 'real,' then, the narrative re-textualizes it by creating an intermediary subtext between itself and the real in a sublimation process of sorts. In this intermediary subtext, the narrative recreates the real social contradiction in the shape of an ideologically obscured antinomy which hence becomes "the symptomatic expression and conceptual reflex of ... [that] social contradiction" (*The Political* 83). In order to reach at the real social contradiction in a narrative's context, then, the critic needs to engage with this intermediary subtext by way of a symptomatic analysis. Symptomatically, when the antinomy in the intermediary subtext is "addressed and 'resolved' by the formal prestidigitation of narrative" (*The Political* 83), the resolution becomes, at the same time, the symbolic resolution of the real social contradiction.

In this respect, the place of ideology also differs for the two approaches. The conventional sociology of literature presupposes an independent extra-textual

reality where a conscious ideology informs the narrative. In Jameson's model, however, the production of the narrative form itself becomes an ideological act that interrupts an extra-textual reality. Regarding this, Jameson suggests that

ideology is not something which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal "solutions" to unresolvable social contradictions. (*The Political* 79)

Then, once again, the difference between a conventional sociology of literature and Jameson's model is underlined here. The former begins the interpretative act outside the text and looks for a more immediate relation between what is inside and outside the text, while the latter begins the interpretative act inside the text and works its way to the outside through symptomatic analysis. As a result, Jameson's model requires passing beyond, without denying its value, a reading of *Amsterdam* as a satire where Julia Waters and Dominic Head are operating, in order to grasp how it functions as a symbolic act. The interpretive act, accordingly, will begin inside the text with a focus on the system of antinomies in its subtext.

Following the same procedures as the previous chapters, the analysis here will start with a mapping of this system of antinomies by using the Greimassian semiotic square. This map will also help reveal the 'ideological closure' in this system that tends to imprison the narrative movement within a restrictive frame of thought beyond which no other alternative seems possible. In the first horizon of Jameson's model, a symptomatic analysis of this mapped system of antinomies will lay bare the real social contradiction that the text is trying to resolve in its political unconscious. In the second horizon, an ensuing analysis of the ideological closure

will lay bare *Amsterdam's* meaning and function as an *ideologeme* in an antagonistic class discourse.

As mentioned earlier, what drives the plot is Clive and Vernon's shared preference for prioritising their self-advancement over the well-being of others. They are forced to make a moral choice at a pressing moment, and they fail to make the correct choice. Upon revealing to one another the choices they respectively made, each blames the other for being immoral. The ensuing dispute leads to their killing each other with a deceitful murder plan. The narrative movement is more than eager to help Clive and Vernon with their respective murder plans, and the way these plans are easily fulfilled, as William Pritchard describes it, is "too neat to be true." At any rate, the novel concludes with the magical resolution of these two 'immoral' characters 'getting what they deserved' by the narrative's moral standards. Their killing each other close to the end of the novel satisfies the reader and the critic alike (Wells 85). Most readers and critics see it as a befitting fate for the two, ignoring, however, the fact that four other characters, George Lane, Frank Dibben, Julian Garmony and Rose Garmony finish the story triumphant regardless of being 'guilty' of similarly ignoring morality for self-advancement. The narrative closure, hence, prompts the question why Clive and Vernon perish where other characters in the story prevail.

It can hence be said that the narrative is built upon a system of antinomies which features different moral positions; the central binary opposition being the opposition between moral duty and self-advancement. The narrative opens with praise for moral duty against self-interest, and later Clive and Vernon, who are initially shown to be occupying this morally superior position against the self-serving characters George and Julian, are punished by death for not complying with

their moral duties. Yet, contradictorily, Julian is only partially reprimanded, and George comes out on top, let alone being punished for anything. The present study seeks, through a symptomatic analysis of this system of antinomies, to show that underlying *Amsterdam's* narrative movement there is an acquiescence to the hegemony of the unchecked free market in the post-Cold War world order of the 1990s. The shift in global politics from a bipolar to a unipolar world order coupled with the replacement of the antagonising conservative government with a unifying labour one in the British home front forces old positions of power to crumble during the decade. McEwan's *Amsterdam* becomes the conceptual reflex of this shift in global and home socio-politics. His novel is the symbolic act that tries to address the crises of power, authority and direction at this period of drastic change. With the shifting power positions in the decade, a Darwinian imperative taxes the old paradigms, forcing them to adapt or risk extinction. Especially for those individuals who shape their being and meaning thanks to these old antagonisms that are now annulled, this shift marks a crushing moment in the way they define themselves, their work, and their social authority. The antinomy of moral duty vs. self-advancement in *Amsterdam*, hence, becomes the symbolic representation of this real socio-political crisis in the post-Cold War years at the fin de siècle, the emphasis on moral duty indicating a left-wing and the emphasis on self-advancement indicating a right-wing politics.

Trying to come to terms with the contradictory shift in real socio-politics, *Amsterdam* imagines the binary oppositions of the Cold War bipolar world politics and the British neo-conservative politics in the shape of moral dilemmas in order to kill off the characters who try to make sense of the world with a steadfast loyalty to these binary categories instead of letting them go for the sake of a new kind of politics, namely free-market politics. That is to say, *Amsterdam* says farewell to

certain hegemonic binary categories in order only to – since it is unable to transcend the ideological closure of its narrative movement to propose a new direction – acquiesce to the hegemony of the now-unchecked capitalist market at Francis Fukuyama’s ‘end of history.’

As will be discussed in detail below, Clive Linley and Vernon Halliday are unable to make it to the end of the story and put each other to death in a mutual vendetta, that is to say, they self-destruct because of their unwillingness or inability to let go of the old dichotomies that have defined them so far. The reader witnesses the rise to power of characters who are more willing or able to adopt the imperatives of the shift in socio-politics. These characters are the businessman George Lane, a newspaper deputy editor Frank Dibben, and the Tory Foreign Secretary Julian Garmony and his surgeon wife Rose Garmony. With Clive and Vernon’s effacement, the text ‘says good-bye,’ in McEwan’s words (“*Bold Type* Interview”), to the old order of things while acquiescing to the new order of things with George, Frank, Julian and Rose’s rise to power. In this new order of things, the old antagonisms are effaced under the domination of the unchecked capitalist market where everything is for sale and anything can be utilised for profit. It is George, Frank, Julian and Rose’s ability to rise above the dichotomy of morality/immorality and to make use of and utilise these moral positions in accordance with when and how well these serve their self-advancement that carries them to triumph in the end.

It is here that the debate concerning *Amsterdam*’s Booker win becomes relevant. Terry Coleman who covered The Booker Prize’s initiation ceremony for the *Guardian* in 1968 reports that the award has two parallel agendas: one is encouraging authors, and the other is “to get a lot of publicity and to sell a lot of books. Before the winner is chosen, a short list of six novels will be made known and everyone hopes controversy and sales will flourish.” The parallelism between what

is happening in *Amsterdam* and the relevant Booker debate is that while some are locked in the dichotomy of literary worthiness/ unworthiness, others are simply operating above this dichotomy by cashing in on it, just as while Clive and Vernon are locked in the dichotomy of morality/immorality, other characters are taking advantage of these categories for their self-advancement. The notions of 'literary merit' or 'morality' lose any inherent meaning and are subsumed under notions like marketability and profitability. Taking these dichotomies into account, the study now turns to mapping out the system of antinomies in *Amsterdam*'s subtext, and will begin by an exploration of the central binary opposition in the narrative and continue with its enhancement onto a Greimassian square.

As mentioned earlier, the plot concludes with Clive and Vernon killing each other in a mutual vendetta. It is possible to read the dispute between Clive and Vernon simply as "an acrimonious personal squabble" as Brooke Allen does since they were in love with the same woman in the past and obviously still cherish their long-gone relationship with her. In such a scenario, the antagonism rests "on their jealousy and their veiled contempt for each other, fuelled by the selfish weaknesses and hubris" (Childs, *The Fiction of Ian McEwan* 118). Yet, although personal jealousy can be read into the dispute when Vernon accuses Clive of being posh (*Amsterdam*⁵ 73-74) and when Clive thinks of Vernon as a failure always in envy of the successful (*Am* 138), this becomes a diminutive reading even from the vantage of acknowledging *Amsterdam* to be McEwan's grand satire project. It reduces the whole conscious or unconscious political agenda of the narrative to the fits of mutual jealousy of two middle-aged men. As Lynn Wells puts it, Clive and Vernon do not destruct each other simply over a personal squabble; the whole incident makes

⁵ To be abbreviated as '*Am*' henceforward.

sense when they are seen as villains properly punished (85). The persistent themes in the incident are “the anguish of conflicting moral obligations” (Gray) and an “examination of the morals” of a generation (Moseley), which are completely overlooked when everything is considered to be the result of a fit of jealousy.

It is true that the narrative’s opening scene underlines a strong hostility between four male figures who share a history with the same woman, which, without a careful consideration of the terms of this hostility, may simply indicate jealousy between them. The narrative opens with the funeral of the “feisty ... restaurant critic, gorgeous wit, and photographer, the daring gardener” Molly Lane (*Am* 3), a woman of captivating personality. Her gripping power over numerous prominent people from artists, to writers, to government officials, to royal personas, to politicians from both sides, and to businessmen is repeatedly underlined in the text. Apparently, most of them were either her lovers at one point or wanted to become such. The narrative directs the reader’s attention towards four chief figures among these men whose antagonism with respect to one other is to be set before the scene is over. Of this four, one is the funeral host George Lane, late Molly Lane’s businessman husband. Apart from him, the narrative foregrounds three of Molly’s ex-lovers who are among the numerous funeral attendants, and these are the Foreign Secretary of the governing Tory party Julian Garmony, and Clive Linley and Vernon Halliday.

The narrator’s brief accounts in the funeral scene designate these four characters as the key antagonistic roles in the story. For instance, the narrator mentions how, in the last period of her illness, Molly becomes her husband George’s “sickroom prisoner” and how he takes advantage of this to vet her visitors. In this respect, the reader learns that under George’s guard “Clive and Vernon were strictly rationed ... Another key male, the Foreign Secretary, was also unwelcome” (*Am* 5).

The hostility is so deep that George even refuses to hold a memorial service just because he does not want “these three former lovers” to make a speech at the ceremony (*Am* 8). Clive and Vernon “enjoy loathing” George in their turn (*Am* 6) and see Garmony as “the enemy” (*Am* 13). Julian’s position, on the other hand, is not as directly accounted for but is inferred to be of a similar nature from his attitude towards Clive (*Am* 16), Vernon (*Am* 41-42), and George (*Am* 174-175) on different occasions in the novel.

As pointed out, a close examination of the terms of this hostility between these characters reveals the fact that McEwan takes special care to cast it as more than macho rivalry. For instance, the narration avoids any references to the romantic nature of the men’s relationships with Molly. She comes to represent more than an object of love, lust or possession, and being together with Molly is more of a social alignment rather than a romantic entanglement. At one point during the funeral, Clive reminisces in his mind about how Molly taught him to be a better version of himself, and he asks Vernon if he in his turn ever learnt anything from her (*Am* 8). Vernon replies, saying, “I can never remember sex, ... [b]ut I do remember her teaching me all about porcini, picking them, cooking them” (*Am* 8). She is a teacher and a source of knowledge, betterment and high moral/political standing. That is why, when Clive and Vernon are bothered by her relations with Julian and George, it is not a problem of carnal feelings but one of political and moral alignments. They are not questioning her liaison with Julian or George but in fact her liaison with a right-wing politician and a rich degenerate (*Forecasts* 60). Since, as will be discussed shortly, they see themselves as belonging to a morally superior group of people compared to Julian and George, Clive and Vernon are having hard time accepting the fact that Molly was just as intimate with those two as she was with them.

Furthermore, the fact that the story rarely refers to the characters' shared past, as in their shared relationship history, is another indication of McEwan's efforts to make the antagonism look less personal. Such an unobtrusive backdrop to the characters and events, together with the brief accounts from the funeral scene above, also helps put this antagonism at the centre of the plot. Befitting its 'simple scheme,' the novel moves directly and very swiftly to its conclusion after the opening funeral scene. McEwan states in an interview that he "wrote Amsterdam instead of doing a screenplay" ("Jonathan Morrow" 40), and the brisk pace of the novel may also be attributed to this motivation. In any case, the brevity of the material helps put the key antagonism between the chief characters into the limelight. After "a process of making it leaner and leaner until [he] really couldn't lose any more of it" ("*Bold Type* Interview"), McEwan trims the narrative so that it scarcely provides any background to the characters and events, and narratorial intrusions like descriptions, comments or setting-construction are kept at a minimum. What is left, hence, are the characters and their actions: McEwan defines it "as almost a kind of a theatrical experience" ("*Bold Type* Interview") where the reader is invited to judge what happens and is spoken on the stage in front of him; and what is on stage during the story is merely a clash of moral positions, not of male rivals in love.

Consequently, it becomes clear in the way this rivalry is spelled out that there is more than simple personal hostility between these four characters. From the start, the reader is met with a dichotomy (Fig. 19) which relies on a common 'us and them' polarisation drawing its meaning from a supposed moral superiority. Since the narrative is predominantly focalised through Clive's and then Vernon's viewpoints, the power position of 'us' becomes theirs from where they see themselves, and hence ushering the reader to do so, as morally superior to George and Julian.

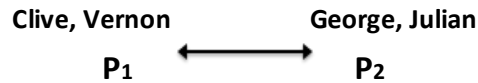


Fig. 19 Claim to moral superiority

The narratorial ambiguities, especially in the opening scene, work to further endorse this power position. Most of the time, it is not clear whose judgments are being narrated due to the frequent use of free indirect discourse. Thus, it is not clear whose viewpoint it is, for instance, when George is condescendingly described with adjectives like “morose,” “possessive,” “rich,” “needy,” and “dour” (*Am* 3, 5, 9). This initially leads the reader to assume sympathy between the narrator—and by extension the implied author (Rimmon-Kenan 114)—and Clive and Vernon. Although it turns out to be an ironic device that serves McEwan’s satirical purposes (i.e. of highlighting Clive and Vernon’s fall into immorality), it successfully secures the reader’s complicity in Clive and Vernon’s claims to moral superiority at the beginning. On one side, there is Clive and Vernon, an artist and a journalist while on the other, there is George and Julian, a businessman and a right-wing politician.

On the morally superior side of the opposition at the beginning of the narrative, Clive and Vernon represent selflessness and moral duty in contrast to George and Julian who represent self-seeking endeavour and self-advancement. At the present of the narrative, Clive Linley is commissioned by the British government to write the Millennial Symphony while Vernon Halliday is struggling to reverse his paper’s long-declining circulation figures. Vernon is dedicated to try everything in order to achieve that, to achieve what many editors before him had failed to achieve. They are initially portrayed as hardworking men, sweating and sacrificing in order to be useful for the public, the country, and the world. This contrasts with George’s

self-indulgence and Julian's self-aggrandisement, both of which will be mentioned below.

Clive's portrayal specifically differentiates him from avant-garde artists. He believes in devotion and hard toil in the old-school way. The Cabinet chooses him to entrust the composition of the Millennial Symphony with, which is a great honour since it is expected to " 'play itself' into public consciousness ... during the third millennium" and will be "incorporated into the official proceedings" (*Am* 21). It is reported to be an agreed fact "that along with Schubert and McCartney, Linley could write a melody" (*Am* 21). Clive is aware of this and "regard[s] himself as Vaughan Williams's heir" (*Am* 21), and he aspires to be Britain's Beethoven (*Am* 133). The narrative openly emphasises Clive's creative powers which he is shown to use in the service of his country and nation whenever necessary. It is hence highlighted that he is no politician, he is no businessman: he makes a living by "dreaming up sounds" (*Am* 139), whole symphonies, which is fairly depicted by the narrator as a both mentally and physically laborious undertaking in the following passage from the second scene of the opening chapter:

Creation apart, the writing of a symphony is physically arduous. Every second of playing time involved writing out, note by note, the parts of up to two dozen instruments, playing them back, making adjustments to the score, playing again, rewriting, then sitting in silence, listening to the inner ear synthesize and orchestrate the vertical array of scribbles and deletions; amending again until the bar was right, and playing it once more on the piano. By midnight Clive had extended and written out in full the rising passage and was starting on the great orchestral hiatus that would precede the sprawling change of key. (*Am* 23-24)

This laudatory passage can be contrasted with the accounts of George's and Julian's pursuits that will appear below. Here, the process of composition is broken down into 'every second of it' for dramatic effect, and Clive is the tortured artist burning the midnight oil. The narrator is clearly appreciative of Clive's talent and his diligence even more so. Clive achieves things, and his ambitions are more morally relatable on the reader's part compared to Julian's right-wing agenda and George's bourgeois excesses.

Early in the text, Clive is also shown to possess intellectual bravado. The reader learns that "[i]n nineteen seventy-five he published a hundred-page book which, like all good manifestos, was both attack and apologia" (*Am* 21). In this book, entitled *Recalling Beauty*, Clive accuses "the old guard of modernism" of "imprison[ing] music in the academy, where it was jealously professionalized, isolated, and rendered sterile, its vital covenant with a general public arrogantly broken" (*Am* 21-22). On top of all this artistic and intellectual bravado, he shows, at least at the beginning of the narrative, modesty. Although he has a demanding schedule, he does not want to fail to honour his promises to people. The narrator reports that "[i]t would have been possible to back out of his engagements by assuming the license of the free artistic spirit, but he loathed such arrogance" (*Am* 61-62). The reader also learns that Clive has "a number of friends who play the genius card when it suited" so that they can act in complete disregard of other people's plans and expectations. Clive strictly disapproves of such attitudes, saying the artist's "calling [is] high, but bad behavior [is] not a part of it" (*Am* 62).

All these accounts of Clive and his undertakings in life lead the reader to place him at the top of the morality scale in the narrative as a considerate man; an artist who is dedicated to creating "rhythms, melodies, and pleasing harmonies" (*Am* 23) for the 'general public;' an intellectual who rejects idleness and states that "[h]is

proper business in life [is] to work" (*Am* 26); and a generous person who thinks "affectionately about the people in his life" (*Am* 82). Therefore, when Clive thinks "of his work in totality, of how varied and rich it seemed ..., how it represented in abstract a whole history of his lifetime" (*Am* 82), the reader is compassionate and empathetic.

Vernon is portrayed in a similarly favourable light. As the editor of a newspaper, he draws his moral superiority, first and foremost, from the notion of the fourth estate of democracy. Since Edmund Burke's reflections on this in the eighteenth century, journalism has been considered as a vital element in western democracies, and it is accepted that the "press has always had its eyes on the government, and has always served as the voice of the people, speaking truth to power" (Tran). Just as Clive's choices later in the novel will cast doubt on his moral superiority as an artist, Vernon's intentions as a journalist will later be questioned. Nonetheless, his profession initially secures his position at the top of the narrative's morality scale next to Clive and opposite George and Garmony.

Just like Clive, Vernon is also portrayed as a hardworking character. First of all, the narrator underlines the difficulty of being "the editor of a national daily" (*Am* 34). The reader is made to witness one of Vernon's busy days at work with the following passage:

Since arriving at the *Judge* two hours earlier, he had spoken, separately and intensely, to forty people. And not only spoken: in all but two of these exchanges he had decided, prioritized, delegated, chosen, or offered an opinion that was bound to be interpreted as a command. (*Am* 29)

Shortly after this account by the narrator, Vernon's operation in the news offices is illustrated in a cinematic scene. The second scene of the second chapter opens with Vernon striding confidently towards his own office followed by several sub-editors,

section editors, staff members, and his secretary. Along the way, he is signing letters and interacting with “[e]veryone mov[ing] with him” (*Am* 39). In this long sequence, the dialogues become difficult to follow for the reader since Vernon is listening to and replying to all these people speaking at the same time (*Am* 39-41). Stylistically speaking, the difficulty of following the dialogues in a first reading and understanding which utterance belongs to whom and what it means is clearly meant to emphasise the tremendous strain put on Vernon as a journalist and his remarkable ability to cope with it.

All this may be the reason why the reader and the narrator alike are more complaisant than they are with George or Julian when Vernon entertains thoughts of grandeur and when a display of self-importance colours his statements regarding the Julian Garmony incident in the following chapter. The day after Molly’s funeral, Vernon receives a phone call from George bidding Vernon visit him urgently. It turns out that George has found some photos of the Foreign Secretary Julian Garmony among Molly’s belongings. The photos feature Julian dressed in drag and posing with sexual innuendos. Vernon sees this as proof of Julian’s hypocrisy which he extends to right-wing Tory politics at large. He says to Clive “[t]his is the hanger and flogger, the family values man, the scourge of immigrants, asylum seekers, travelers, marginal people” (*Am* 73) in order to highlight Julian’s hypocritical standpoint. Vernon considers this as his chance to deliver the public, the country and the world from hypocritical right-wing politicians, as the narrator points out:

Vernon was himself again, large, benign, ruthless, and good. Where others would have felt a weight upon their shoulders, he felt an enabling lightness, or indeed a light, a glow of competence and well-being, for his sure hands were about to cut away a cancer from the organs of the body politic; ... Hypocrisy would be exposed, the country would stay in Europe, capital

punishment and compulsory conscription would remain a crank's dream, social welfare would survive in some form or other, the global environment would get a decent chance ... (*Am* 111)

As the quote indicates, Vernon exalts himself as the saviour the country and the world has been waiting for. He considers himself worthy and competent for the task at hand. He is full of self-importance, but as mentioned, he entertains the reader's and the narrator's favour. In terms of the morality scale that the narrative builds up at the beginning, this scene only helps underline Vernon's heroic journalism, acting in his role as the final check, the fourth estate of democracy.

On the other side of the morality scale, the narrative features George Lane and Julian Garmony. George is portrayed as a corruptly rich and unsophisticated person with his "pleading, greedy eyes" (*Am* 5) who is depicted as undeserving of Molly's love or anyone's respect. His selfishness is underlined in the way he treats Molly on her sickbed. As quoted above, Molly becomes his prisoner, and he permits only people he likes to visit her. He is first introduced as a publisher, but it is more correct to define him, as he defines himself later in the novel (*Am* 175), as a businessman, since his business is described to be an 'empire' (*Am* 52) and since he apparently has various business investments like owning "one and a half percent of the *Judge*," a business he "knew nothing" about (*Am* 52). This suggests that he is in it only for the money. He does not care about journalism the way Vernon claims to. The narrator collaborates with Vernon on one occasion to underline the moral corruption in George's business enterprises:

[H]is fortune, his publishing "empire," was rooted in an energetic exploitation of the weak-headed: hidden numerical codes in the Bible foretold the future, the Incas hailed from outer space, the Holy Grail, the Ark of the Covenant, the Second Coming, the Third Eye, the Seventh Seal, Hitler

was alive and well in Peru. It was not easy to be lectured by George on the ways of the world. (*Am* 52)

In contrast with Vernon's grand intentions, George publishes for purely commercial reasons: he publishes brainless books on urban myths and similar trivia. His publishing business targets and exploits foolish people. The very word 'exploit' in this account of George's way of doing business becomes enough to see him at the bottom of the suggested morality scale. His blatant disregard for values like honesty, integrity or rectitude and his willingness to take advantage of others' weaknesses for profit is frustrating, repulsive even. Instead of choosing to do meaningful and honourable business, George preys upon vulnerable people for easy money. He is simply portrayed as a con man in the general sense of the word.

He is shown to have done the same thing with Molly. The reader is given the first glimpse of Molly and George's relationship in the funeral scene. George is described as "the sad, rich publisher who doted on [Molly] and whom, to everyone's surprise, she had not left, though she always treated him badly" (*Am* 5). It can be inferred from the few accounts of her life that Molly is a free soul not willing to settle down for anything. For instance, Clive sadly remembers the time she turns his marriage proposal down (*Am* 7). Therefore, people who know her are surprised, as might be expected, to learn it is the dour, rich businessman that she chooses to settle with. George's fascination with Molly is apparent in the account above as well as Molly's resistance to giving herself completely up to this relationship. This is confirmed by another account later in the novel:

Part of the complicated arrangement of his marriage had been that Molly kept herself, her guests, and her stuff separate in a wing of the house. She was spared the sight of her old friends stifling their amusement at George's

pomposity ... Vernon had visited Molly's apartment many times, but he had always used the external entrance. (*Am* 53)

From the account, one can easily understand Molly's struggle to maintain a sort of independence although she agreed to get married to an unlikely match. Yet, the reader learns that this all changes when she is helplessly bound to her sickbed. Upon entering Molly's part of the house shortly after her demise, Vernon reports that "[t]he place was exactly as she had left it the day she finally consented to move to a bedroom in the main house, to be imprisoned and nursed by George" (*Am* 54). With this report, an earlier account becomes more meaningful. Remembering those days, Clive thinks to himself "[h]e got her finally, when she couldn't recognize her own face in the mirror. He could do nothing about her affairs, but in the end she was entirely his" (*Am* 6). This is George once again portrayed as preying on people's vulnerabilities and weaknesses in his private life just as he is portrayed as doing the same in his business life.

George is further disparaged for his lifestyle. He is portrayed as a publishing baron who lives an opulent life in a mansion in Holland Park, uncaring towards and isolated from people and the public. The following description is from Vernon's visit in the second chapter of the novel:

The room was furnished in what [Vernon] had once heard [Molly] describe as the Buckingham Palace style: thick mustard-yellow carpets, big dusty-pink sofas and armchairs with raised patterns of vines and scrolls, brown oil paintings of racehorses at grass and reproduction Fragonards of bucolic ladies on swings in immense gilt frames, and the whole opulent emptiness overlit by lacquered brass lamps. George reached the massive brecciated marble surround of the coal-effect gas fire and turned. "You'll take a glass of

port?" ... And what was George doing wearing a silk dressing gown over his day clothes? The man was simply preposterous. (*Am* 51)

This highly farcical account of his lifestyle portrays George as a foolish upstart. He is clearly nouveau riche who is unworthy of the high social status symbolised by the ridiculous look of the silk dressing gown over his day clothes. His mimicking of nobility, which he lacks, is as vain as the coal-effect gas fire in his mansion. The passage also underlines his extravagance and immoderation. He spends preposterously to compensate for his lack of noble origins. The narrator obviously disparages George's ridiculous lavishness by specifically drawing attention to how he tries to fill the huge house with 'immense' objects yet fails to fill the 'emptiness' that comes to represent his true essence inside.

Julian Garmony is also disparaged in the narrative. He, for his part, is portrayed as a hypocritical and corrupt politician. The reader first meets him, like the other three men, at Molly's funeral. He sends his assistant to usher Clive to his side for a photo op sort of pseudo-event. This is where the reader learns that he is the Foreign Secretary of the conservative government and that "[h]e had made a life in the political marketplace with an unexceptional stall of xenophobic and punitive opinions" (*Am* 13). From the start, then, as a racist and chauvinist, Julian is positioned at the bottom of the morality scale next to George. Clive's first impression of Julian adds to this disparaging portrayal of the minister:

It had been a while since he had met a politician close up, and what he had forgotten was the eye movements, the restless patrol for new listeners or defectors, or the proximity of some figure of higher status, or some other main chance that might slip by. (*Am* 13-14)

His eye movements and his constant search for opportunities for self-promotion betray his insincere and self-seeking character. Even during Molly's funeral, he is

interested in self-promotion; he takes advantage of the occasion for his public relations campaign. He is also self-congratulatory; he uses Clive's presence to mention his vote for Clive's commission. Julian says:

"There was another thing. I wanted to congratulate you on your commission. The Millennial Symphony. D'you know, that decision went right up to cabinet level?"

[Clive:] "So I heard. And you voted for me."

Clive had allowed himself a note of weariness, but Garmony reacted as though he had been effusively thanked. "Well, it was the least I could do." (*Am* 14)

He obviously oversells his contribution to self-aggrandise, and he instrumentalises Clive's responses the way that suits his stunt.

When Clive gets annoyed and tries to leave, "the minister [does] not take his hand and [starts] speaking over him, for there was still a little more to be wrung from the famous composer's presence" (*Am* 14-15). This narratorial account of what is going on in Julian's mind helps the reader see his insincerity once again. At one point during this photo op publicity stunt, Clive decides to corner Julian and rebukes him for his political agenda. This part of their conversation, which also happens to be the end of the opening funeral scene, is worth quoting at length since it starkly illustrates the two-facedness of the politician:

"I was wondering," Clive said to Molly's ex-lover, "whether you're still in favor of hanging."

Garmony was well able to deal with this sudden shift, but his eyes hardened.
...

Then the Foreign Secretary did an extraordinary thing ... Garmony reached out and, with his forefinger and thumb, caught hold of the lapel of Clive's overcoat and, drawing him close, spoke in a voice that no one else could hear. "The very last time I saw Molly she told me you were impotent and always had been. ... Of course you're bound to deny it. Thing is, we could discuss it out loud in front of the gentlemen over there, or you could get off my case and make a pleasant farewell. That is to say, fuck off."

The delivery was rapid and urgent, and as soon as it was over Garmony leaned back, beaming as he pumped the composer's hand, and called out to the aide, "Mr. Linley has kindly accepted an invitation to dinner." This last may have been an agreed code, for the young man stepped across promptly to usher Clive away while Garmony turned his back on him to say to the journalists, "A great man, Clive Linley. To air differences and remain friends, the essence of civilized existence, don't you think?" (*Am* 15-17)

Here, the narrative's call for disdain for Julian is more manifest compared to occasions when it does the same for George. With respect to George's character, the reader mainly gets brief narratorial comments and reflections from other characters in the story. In the instance quoted at length above, the reader gets the chance to witness Julian's double-dealing first-hand. He capitalizes on Clive's public persona and appears as his admirer and supporter, but he does not refrain from threatening Clive with revealing private, personal information he obtained from a third party, namely Molly herself, in order to subdue Clive. The way he feigns 'civility' in his own words and his skilful use of underhand tactics strikes the reader simply as devious. All in all, he is a self-seeking, insincere politician who is "pure poison" and "vile" as Vernon and Clive respectively dub him (*Am* 72).

As stated above, this opposition between George and Julian as two self-seeking characters on one side and Clive and Vernon as virtuous, conscientious men on the other is mainly set in the decisive funeral scene at the novel's opening. Soon afterwards, however, the initial opposition, as it is represented in Figure 19 above, is frustrated by Clive and Vernon's disregard of their moral duties. In decisive moments in the days following the funeral, they each make a mistake and prefer furthering their self-interests at the expense of others.

In terms of narrative movement, though, McEwan introduces the idea of making wrong decisions even before the narrative properly begins. The novel opens with the epigraph: "The friends who met here / and embraced are gone, / Each to his own mistake;" taken from Auden's poem "The Crossroads." Foreshadowed by this epigraph, the narrative makes the reader witness how these two friends, Clive and Vernon, go on to make their own mistakes after their meeting at Molly's funeral at the narrative's opening. Each is shown to make a 'morally corrupt' decision by choosing, when the time comes, "self-advancement" (*Am* 126) over "moral duty" (*Am* 119). Clive refuses to save a woman from being raped so that he can continue writing his symphony. Vernon exploits, by publishing a sensational story about it, a secret that is privately shared by Molly and Julian Garmony so that he will be *the* editor to make the *Judge's* circulation go up. Clive's denial of moral duty is more immediate and more scandalous compared to Vernon's since it involves a more graphic crime, while Vernon's is of a more abstract nature.

How Vernon gets hold of Julian's private photographs was briefly mentioned above. In these photographs, the right-wing minister Julian Garmony is posing "in a plain three-quarter-length dress, posing catwalk style ... The strained, self-absorbed expression [is] that of a man revealed in a sexual state ... consciously seductive" (*Am* 69-70). Vernon is faced with a moral dilemma: should he breach a man's privacy by

taking advantage of the secrets he shared with a third party, or should he respect that man's private life and refuse to use private material obviously obtained without the involved parties' consents. Apart from this more theoretical problematisation of the situation Vernon is in, there is the fact that exposing Garmony will also be a denial of his long-defended moral position as the reader learns from Clive. Before publishing the photographs, Vernon visits Clive, expecting to elicit his support in the matter. Apparently, everyone else at the *Judge* is against exposing someone's privacy even though none of them has seen the photographs yet. Vernon states:

[T]he whole staff's against me, almost all of them. The building's in an uproar. It's a marvel we got a paper out tonight. There's a chapel meeting going on now and they're certain to pass a motion of no confidence in me. Management and the board are standing firm, so that's fine. It's a fight to the death. (*Am* 68-69)

Clive firstly wants to believe that Vernon is "fighting to keep them out of the paper," but he is devastated to learn that Vernon's "idea is to publish next week" (*Am* 72). Upon learning this, Clive denies Vernon the support he was looking for and rebukes him by saying:

Do you think it's wrong in principle for men to dress up in women's clothes? ... You yourself were once an apologist for the sexual revolution. You stood up for gays. ... Isn't this the kind of sexual expression you're so keen to defend? What exactly is Garmony's crime that needs to be exposed? (*Am* 73)

Still, in the face of such fierce opposition, Vernon decides to publish the photographs. Although he knows that he will be playing with a person's life and that a "man's life, or at least his career, was in his hands," he insists because he sees himself to be "in a position to change the country's future for the better [a]nd his paper's circulation" (*Am* 56). Therefore, he puts his success and pride before

another man's life. He dreams of "an image of himself as a massive statue dominating the lobby of Judge House, a great reclining figure hewn from granite: Vernon Halliday, man of action, editor" (*Am* 170).

As mentioned, Clive's situation is more disturbing and scandalous than Vernon's since it involves a graphic crime. Amidst the pressure of the approaching deadline for his symphony and the crisis Vernon created, Clive decides to visit the Lake District in hopes of finding the muse to overcome his composer's block. He is almost finished with the composition but is looking for one final melody-twist to sign off what he sees is to become his masterpiece. As discussed earlier, he invests too much significance in this commissioned composition. Therefore, he is truly happy "when it finally happen[s] ... when he hear[s] the music he [was] looking for" (*Am* 84). He hears the piping sound of a large gray bird and believes it to be "a gift" (*Am* 84). Yet, just as he crouches next to a big rock on top of a hill to write the music down, he hears some voices. He hesitates to look because he knows that anything might "destroy his fragile inspiration" (*Am* 87). Unable to resist his curiosity and already disturbed by the voices, he peers over the rock to see a woman arguing with a man. The argument turns into a physical struggle, and it becomes obvious to Clive that the woman is being assaulted by a stranger. At that point he feels "the pressure of choice: he should either go down and protect the woman, if she needed protection, or he should creep away round the side of Glaramara to find a sheltered place to continue his work, if it was not already lost" (*Am* 87). As expected, a common-sense choice is clearly to come to the woman's rescue whereas for Clive, all he can think of is his symphony:

The jewel, the melody. Its momentousness pressed upon him. So much depended on it—the symphony, the celebration, his reputation, the lamented century's ode to joy. He did not doubt that what he half heard could bear the

weight. In its simplicity lay all the authority of a lifetime's work. He also had no doubt that it was not a piece of music that was simply waiting to be discovered; what he had been doing, until interrupted, was creating it, forging it out of the call of a bird, taking advantage of the alert passivity of an engaged creating mind. (*Am* 87)

It is obvious that Clive is already making excuses in his mind so that he can turn his back on the assaulted woman. In the same way that Vernon thinks about publishing Garmony's photographs in terms of a duty to his country and the people, Clive considers the symphony in terms of duty. He thinks so much depends on it that its accomplishment is above individual troubles. It is as if he has no other choice but to continue with his heroic quest.

While Clive is preoccupied with these thoughts, the woman, the reader later learns, is trying to fight off the Lakeland rapist below the rock Clive is hiding behind. The narrator relates Clive's decision, saying: "She made a sudden pleading whimpering sound, and Clive knew exactly what it was he had to do. Even as he was easing himself back down the slope, he understood that his hesitation had been a sham. He had decided at the very moment he was interrupted" (*Am* 88). This is interesting due to the fact that Clive's pretending to himself that he cares after having already decided the very moment of interruption to turn away indicates an uneasiness in the face of a conflict that is also central to the narrative, indicating Clive's inner struggle to come to terms with his decision. As the narrator's account shows, he instinctually chooses his self-interest right away, but he is unable to accept that fact: the fact that he chooses self-advancement as against moral duty. Shortly after he flees the scene, he tries to justify his action once again, but this time he does not think that 'so much' depends on the symphony as he did during the scene

above. He makes it clear that what depends on this symphony is simply his own career:

He was trying to call it back, but his concentration was being broken by another voice, the insistent, interior voice of self-justification: whatever it might have involved—violence, or the threat of violence, or his embarrassed apologies, or, ultimately, a statement to the police—if he had approached the couple, a pivotal moment in his career would have been destroyed. The melody could not have survived the psychic flurry. (*Am* 88)

Therefore, in order not to admit to the fact that he is prioritising his self-interest over the well-being of others when face to face with a choice of self-advancement vs. moral duty, Clive chooses to conflate his self-interest with a larger sense of moral duty where his self-interest simply seems to coincide with that of the country and the nation compared to which his duty towards an individual is readily dispensable.

These incidents transfer Clive and Vernon to the opposite side of the morality scale where they now stand side by side with the people they were looking down on for their lack of morals. With this movement, it becomes clear that the narrative is steering towards an opposition between moral positions, not between rival men. Hence, the opposition between rival men in Figure 19 – which was already shown above to rely on moral positions from the beginning – reveals its underlying categories as shown in Figure 20 below.



Fig. 20 Concepts creating the central contradiction in the narrative

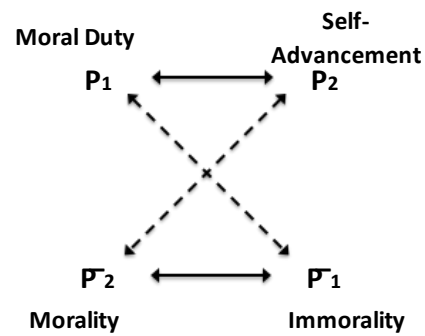


Fig. 21 Projection of the central contradiction on a Greimassian square

It can hence be stated that what creates the central contradiction in the narrative is not so much the rival men as the two morally contradictory concepts of moral duty vs. self-advancement. As Monica Cojocaru observes, it is “[t]he failure to assume ethical responsibility for the other [that] provides the fulcrum of the moral allegory” in *Amsterdam* (13). Although an opposition between different male figures features on the surface of the narrative, this surface contradiction indicates a whole system of contrary and contradictory moral positions in the narrative’s subtext. The narrative movement is imprisoned to and tries to resolve the clash between agendas of self-advancement and moral duties. When projected on a Greimassian square as in Figure 21 above, moral duty indicates immorality $\bar{P}_1$ as a contradictory category while self-advancement contradicts with the category of morality $\bar{P}_2$. By implication, moral duty aligns with morality while self-advancement aligns with immorality.

As was discussed earlier in the previous chapters, in any binary opposition, and hence in the Greimassian square, some P_1 represents the desired position or category while P_2 represents the feared or unwanted one. In *Amsterdam*, it can be argued that the narrative favours moral duties over blatant self-advancement which is depicted to be as malignant as exposing someone’s privacy or turning a blind eye to a woman’s distress. As Patrick Henry observes, the novel seems to cohere as

a warning about the dangers of immorality and the manipulation of others, a reminder that the authority of a cultural figure such as a preeminent editor or composer must be used for admirable causes—like McEwan's protests against Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. (84)

Amsterdam itself can be seen as McEwan's continuing service to admirable causes and his protest against the moral decay and socio-political corruption in his society. Fittingly, Robert Kohn, in his analysis of the novel, ties the conflict in its narrative to a fundamental binary which is the "battle between Good and Evil" (99). It can hence be stated that *Amsterdam* coheres as the glorification of moral duties, the place of Good, against self-advancement at the expense of one's moral duties, the place of Evil.

Accordingly, the narrative condemns Clive and Vernon's immoral decisions by making them analyse one another's actions. First, Clive warns Vernon not to publish Garmony's photographs since it is simply "a terrible idea" of character assassination (*Am* 72). Then, it is Vernon's turn to chastise Clive for his inaction in the Lake District. They confront each other in the following dialogue with accusations of immoral behaviour:

"Go to the police, Clive. It's your moral duty."

...

"You're telling me my moral duty? You? Of all people?"

"Meaning what?"

"Meaning these photographs. Meaning crapping on Molly's grave—" (*Am* 119)

Each blames the other for his actions while refusing to accept any wrongdoing on his part. Vernon rebukes Clive by saying that "[t]here are certain things more important than symphonies. They're called people," only to be similarly rebuked by

Clive: "And are these people as important as circulation figures, Vernon?" (*Am* 119-120). The way they see the whole affair is that although the other "had not broken the law[,] there had to be consequences" for his actions (*Am* 147).

At the disposal of the narrative, therefore, they are duly turned into each other's executioner with the help of the unlikeliest happenstances the novel's tight plot has been weaving into place since the first chapter. At Molly's funeral, Clive and Vernon speculate about the humiliation Molly must have had to bear in her helpless state, and they lightly agree that they "would have killed her with a pillow or something and saved her from everyone's pity" (*Am* 8). After the funeral, both Clive and Vernon imagine that they are showing symptoms similar to Molly's symptoms at the onset of her illness. Therefore, Clive opens up to Vernon saying "[j]ust supposing I did get ill in a major way, like Molly, and I started to go downhill and make terrible mistakes—you know, errors of judgment, ... I'd like to know there was someone who'd ... help me to die" (*Am* 49). After considering this dramatic plea for a few hours, Vernon responds saying "[y]es, on one condition only: that you'd do the same for me" (*Am* 57). Coincidentally, Vernon's features editor at the newspaper, Lettice O'Hara, brings up an investigative piece on a medical scandal in Holland where "doctors are exploiting the euthanasia laws" (*Am* 37). Vernon ignores the piece at the time since he has other ideas for Lettice's column. Through the end of the novel, though, after Vernon loses against Garmony and is fired, and after Clive fails to finish his symphony and feels beaten, Lettice, apparently in Vernon's absence, publishes the story. Both Clive and Vernon happen to read the piece, according to which, "in Holland some unsavory types with medical degrees were offering a legal service to eliminate [one's] inconvenient elderly parent. ... All one needed was the aged parent's signature in duplicate and several thousand dollars" (*Am* 142-143). Vernon decides to honour their agreement "[f]or clearly Clive had

lost his reason and something had to be done" (*Am* 149). He knows that Clive will be in Amsterdam for rehearsals, so he calls him up "to pretend to make peace, in order to invite himself to Amsterdam" (*Am* 149). As luck would have it, Clive was looking for a way to make Vernon come to Amsterdam as he also wants to honour their agreement. As the following report by the narrator shows, Clive thinks the same of Vernon:

He could tell himself now, in all tortuous sincerity, that in making his various arrangements on Vernon's behalf, he, Clive, was doing no more than honoring his word. That Vernon should want a reconciliation and should therefore want to come to *Amsterdam* was surely more than a coincidence or a neat convenience. ... the symptoms: unpredictable, bizarre, and extremely antisocial behavior, a complete loss of reason. Destructive tendencies, delusions of omnipotence. (*Am* 155-156)

In the end, each believes the other to have slipped into the immoral, evil side. They both describe this as 'loss of reason' as the last two quotes show because, they believe, they have tried to reason with one another in trying to make the other see the error in his judgment.

Eventually, they manage to kill each other, and, as Nicholas Lezard notes, indicating "how much McEwan despises his characters," Clive and Vernon are depicted in the most farcical and buffoonish way possible in their last hours:

[Clive's] hands ... were shaking now as he tipped the powder into Vernon's champagne ... Then he stood and took a glass in each hand. Vernon's in the right, his own in the left. Important to remember that. Vernon was right. Even though he was wrong.

Only one problem now preoccupied Clive ...: how to persuade Vernon to take this drink before the doctor came.

...

As Clive was looking round for somewhere to put down the drinks, he saw Vernon coming toward him with a big smile. Unfortunately, he had two full glasses of his own.

"Clive!"

"Vernon!"

...

"Look," Clive said. "I had a drink all ready for you."

"And I got one for you."

"Well ..."

They each presented a glass to Lanark. Then Vernon offered a glass to Clive, and Clive gave his to Vernon.

"Cheers!" (*Am* 162-164)

It is as if McEwan rejoices at their tragi-comic end: the gullibility in their accepting the glass offered by the other, the unknowing smile of victory on their faces, and the whole tone of narration undermine the seriousness of their quests for moral justice.

David Malcolm interprets this outcome by saying that "[t]he moral could scarcely be clearer if the narrator set it out: 'Thus perish the hollow men.' " (*Understanding* 194). He adds that "Vernon and Clive are duly punished—fired, disgraced, ridiculed" (*Understanding* 194). Robert Kohn seems to agree with Malcolm, stating that the "novel comes to a satisfying conclusion, the two compromised friends punished for their hubris and greed" and for making the wrong moral decisions (100-101). Lynn Wells reads the whole thing to be McEwan's "critique of popular or 'low' culture as devastating as that on elite or 'high' culture" through Vernon and Clive (89) while Monica Cojocaru adds that "[e]uthanasia, [as] McEwan seems to suggest, might be the sole remedy for the megalomania and moral

degeneracy of a generation for which Clive Linley and Vernon Halliday stand” (15). Although all these insights are relevant, they tend to overlook the inconsistency in McEwan’s suggested morals if this outcome is to be taken as his moral statement. It has been pointed out above that, as suggested by the epigraph by Auden, Clive and Vernon start the narrative on the $P_1\text{-}\bar{P}_2$ axis only to end up on the opposite axis after making a mistake, which can be seen in Figure 22 below. Yet, Garmony and George have been portrayed on the $P_2\text{-}\bar{P}_1$ axis from the beginning. If Clive and Vernon are ‘duly punished’ for straying towards the ‘evil’ side, the fact that Garmony and George, with several other similar characters, finish the narrative unscathed creates an inconsistency that should be dwelt upon. Another inconsistency in the narrative’s suggested moral statement would concern the fact that Clive and Vernon are judged by each other not by anyone else. As discussed above at length, they come clean to one another to be harshly criticised while neither George nor Garmony go through such a process of confession and judgement.

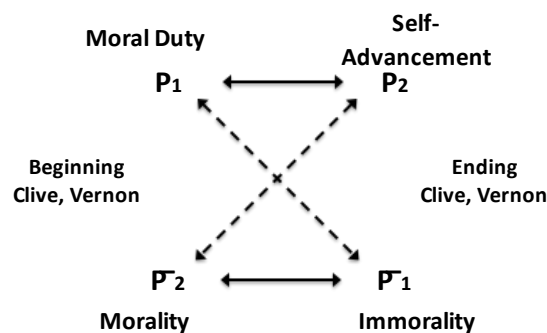


Fig. 22 Clive and Vernon’s shifting positions

To start with George, it can easily be said that he is the arch-enemy from the standpoint of moral duties. Apart from his initial immoral position that was discussed above at the beginning of this chapter, he is the one who puts most of the

action into motion. He is the one who scavenges through Molly's belongings in the first place to find Garmony's photographs. While trying to convince Vernon to publish these photographs, he states that "[t]he copyright was hers, and as the sole trustee of her estate, I effectively own it. It goes without saying, I shall expect the *Judge* to protect its sources" (*Am* 56). However, the reader learns at the end of the novel, while George is talking to Garmony, that "Molly [had] assigned the copyright to Linley" (*Am* 175). Also, the reader knows that, although he offers the photographs to Vernon reportedly to save the *Judge* from bankruptcy, "George, concealing his identity behind an agent, went on the open market with the pictures... Eight other newspapers put in bids, and Vernon had to quadruple the original price to secure the deal" (*Am* 101). He is a complete mischief maker, and he can turn his back on anything and anyone if he sees any profit in it. As a case in point, when Vernon's attack on Garmony backfires, George Lane is the one who helps the Board to fire Vernon. When public opinion suddenly turns against Vernon, the Board starts pondering the problem: "How could they sack an editor to whom they had given a unanimous vote of support last Wednesday? Finally, after two hours of meandering and backtracking, George Lane had a good idea" (*Am* 127). Completely disregarding the fact that he put Vernon in this mess in the first place, Lane does what suits him the best and turns his back on Vernon. Finally, the reader is also let into George's master plan. While they are on their way to Amsterdam to escort the coffins back to England together, George turns to Garmony and, putting his hand on Garmony's arm in feigned sincerity, says: "You know, I think you came out of it bloody well. ... Most men would have hanged themselves for far less" (*Am* 176). This indicates, as Earl Ingersoll also notes, that "George apparently was certain [the photographs] would appear in print, causing Garmony enough embarrassment to hang himself and Vernon to be publicly condemned as his murderer" (135).

Despite all this, the final outcome is a complete victory for George. First of all, although the whole affair ends scandalously, the publicity Vernon creates for the *Judge* helps the circulation figures to rise to a “best in seventeen years” (*Am* 113), meaning a lucrative investment for George. Secondly, on the final pages of the novel, the narrator who was delivering the story from Clive and Vernon’s vantage point, is now following George’s, and the reader can see that he, George, is about to break into song with happiness. Back from escorting Vernon’s coffin, he is now on his way to Vernon’s widowed wife Mandy and indulged in his own thoughts:

[H]e found his thoughts turning pleasantly in other directions: Garmony beaten down, and trussed up nicely by his lying wife’s denials of his affair at her press conference, and now Vernon out of the way, and Clive. All in all, things hadn’t turned out so badly on the former-lovers front. This surely would be a good time to start thinking about a memorial service for Molly. ... Yes, a memorial service. St. Martin’s rather than St. James’s, which was favored these days by credulous types who read the sort of books he himself published. (*Am* 178)

In other words, George has eliminated all the three men he saw as enemies because of their relationships with Molly. On the plus side, he plans Molly’s memorial service as a profitable publicity event for his publishing business. Lastly, the narration in free indirect speech also lets the reader in on George’s thoughts about Mandy: “[h]e’d known Mandy for years. A great girl. Used to be rather wild. Perhaps it was not too soon to ask her out to dinner” (*Am* 178). That is to say, if this was to be interpreted in terms of a romance, George gets to kill the dragon, get the treasure and also marry the princess.

Garmony, although having lost his chances to become the next prime minister, survives the scandal with his honour intact. The reader learns that “in the

country at large the politics of emotion may have bestowed forgiveness, or at least tolerance, but politicians do not favor such vulnerability in a would-be leader" (*Am* 174). Therefore, although he is not going to be the prime minister, he is still a VIP (*Am* 174), he has the moral support of the nation at large, and he re-bonds with his wife and children. Although a low profile one, he is going to continue his political career. Yet, all this was possible thanks to his wife Rose who readily lied to help her husband to save face.

The narrative also rewards Frank Dikken, who was able to replace Vernon as his successor in the *Judge*. Vernon, like everyone else working for the paper, calls Frank "Cassius" after the Roman general who conspired against Caesar and knows that Frank has his eyes on his job (*Am* 39). The name is aptly given since Frank is a manipulator. After his journalists pass a no-confidence vote in the editor, Vernon is stalked by Frank on his way home and persuaded into a pub for a drink. Here, Frank claims to Vernon that he is on Vernon's side and that he "stayed away from the meeting [of no-confidence] pleading pressure of work" (*Am* 106). He pleads with Vernon to go on with his plans of publishing the photographs because, he says, as the only editor who can help the *Judge*, if Vernon wants to publish them, "it must be right to run them" (*Am* 106). He further says that "[h]e wanted to give Vernon his support, and more than that. He wanted to be of use, which was why it wouldn't be right for him to be openly identified as the editor's ally" (*Am* 106). When he says this, the reader can easily see through Frank for his back-stabbing and double-dealing ways, but Vernon seems not to do so, maybe because of his delusions of grandeur or his desperate need of an ally. After the night at the pub, Frank keeps seeing Vernon in secret, pretending to be his ally, but whenever they are in public, Frank makes sure that others see him as Vernon's enemy. Even on the day before the photographs are published, Frank goes on with his charade. He confides to

Vernon that everyone will be congratulating Vernon since publishing the photographs turned out to be very profitable for the paper. Frank says that people “might chime in, there might even be some applause, that sort of thing. If it’s all right with you, I think I should hang back, not show my hand at this stage” (*Am* 110). During the meeting, while everyone else is applauding Vernon, Frank sits “slumped down in his chair, hands deep in his pockets, frowning and shaking his head” (*Am* 115). That is to say, Frank sees an opportunity and seizes it. If Vernon is able to accomplish his plan, the *Judge* will be a more powerful paper to be working for, and Frank will have won the editor’s favour. If Vernon fails, he will be fired and he, Frank, will replace him because everyone will think that Frank stood against Vernon throughout the whole endeavour. Eventually, Frank’s plans work out, and he becomes the next editor of the *Judge* which, thanks to Vernon, now has the highest circulation figures in seventeen years.

Therefore, although it seems that the narrative is driven by the contradiction of morality versus immorality and that the narrative movement concludes with a punishment of the characters based on these values, George, Frank, Garmony and Rose’s evident triumph at the end does not conform to this reading, in the sense that they are not punished. A reconsideration of the narrative movement and conclusion in *Amsterdam* in Jamesonian terms, however, is able to offer a different outlook on this problematic outcome.

Jameson’s utilisation of the Greimassian square was discussed in detail in the previous chapters. Jameson suggests that once locked into the semantic universe of contraries and contradictories that it creates in its subtext, the narrative tries to square its circles by means of forcing the semes into synthetic combinations. The possibility of progress, the possibility for novelty or breakthrough, that the Greimassian semiotic square offers is the semic combinations (see Figure 23 below)

that would seemingly provide the narrative with an opportunity to resolve the antinomy that is at the core of its semiotic universe and hence with a way out of this impasse. To quote Jameson once again, this means that the semiotic square

can ... “reduce” a narrative in movement to a series of “cognitive” or ideological, combinatory positions; or it can rewrite a cognitive text into a desperate narrative movement in which new positions are generated and abandoned, and in which terms ceaselessly amalgamate in order to achieve the release of this or that ideal synthesis (“Foreword” xvii)

The syntheses Jameson talks about can be labelled mainly the complex utopian term ($P_1 + P_2$) and the neutral term (and $\bar{P}_1$ and $\bar{P}_2$), these not being the only possible combinations. Jameson explains: Thinking about S_1 as white and S_2 as black, their combination becomes S , and the combination of their contradictories nonwhite ($\bar{S}_1$) and nonblack ($\bar{S}_2$) becomes $\bar{S}$; based on a square as such,

the two compound or “synthetic” positions of S and $\bar{S}$ offer still greater conceptual enlargements, S standing as a complex or utopian term, in which the opposition of “white” and “black” might be transcended ..., whereas $\bar{S}$ stands as the neutral term, in which all of the privations and negations are assembled ... Finally, the transversal axes map the place of tensions distinct from the principal or binary one, while the synthesis hypothetically proposed by uniting the two sides of the square ... designates alternative conceptual combinations. (“Foreword” xiv)

In other words, the narrative forces its way out through four combinations as they are designated in Figure 23, but—in accordance with the workings of the real socio-political antinomy behind the surface impasse—the narrative movement leans towards a certain synthesis in trying to achieve its breakthrough.

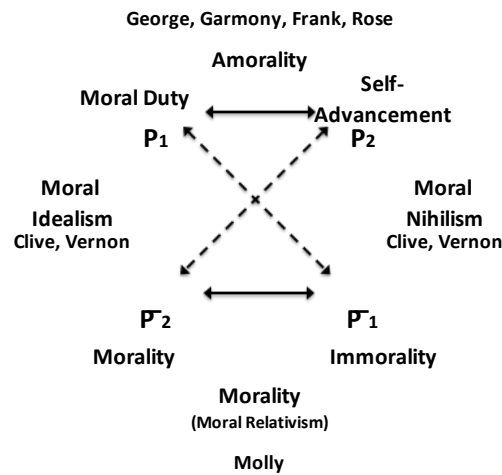


Fig. 23 Synthetic combinations and their
actantial manifestations in the narrative

Jameson explains that all of these four synthetic positions can be manifested within the text in actantial terms: “the two planes of narrative—“characters” or, better still, systems of characters, and cognitive complexes or contradictions—can be coordinated and transcoded into one another” (“Foreword” xx). In *Amsterdam*, the two actantial designations for the two major combinations can be George, Garmony, Frank and Rose for the complex term, and late Molly Lane for the neutral term (Figure 23). For both of the deictic (or lateral) syntheses, the narrative features Clive and Vernon who finish the narrative in a position exactly opposite of the one they start in. As was discussed earlier in this chapter above, Clive and Vernon initially represent a sort of moral idealism that “identifies morality with the ideal set of moral rules” and indicates a universal obedience to them (Sobel 277). Their conduct underlines the importance of moral duties and is against agendas of self-advancement and self-interest. Once they make some errors of judgement, they leave this category, which is never to be refilled by any other character after them. In their new roles, Clive and Vernon now represent a sort of moral nihilism. Opposed to the moral idealism, moral nihilism represents a dismissal of moral values and

duties (Pratt) and a refusal to acknowledge any wrongdoing in terms of some moral values (Sinnott-Armstrong).

These two combinatory positions of moral idealism and moral nihilism can be respectively labelled as the places of pure good and pure evil in the narrative. As a result, it can be concluded that, through Clive and Vernon's eventual death, the narrative efficiently empties the place of evil at the novel's end. This conclusion practically creates an illusion of triumph of good over evil at the narrative's end since the evildoers are efficiently eliminated. However, as mentioned above, the place of good is not refilled after Clive and Vernon's dismissal from this position. It can hence be argued that, by leaving both categories empty, the narrative actually refuses to accept a solution in either direction. That is to say, just as it does not conclude with the designated evildoers getting away with what they did, neither does it conclude with the victory of moral ideals or the pure good. However, the narrative successfully carries Clive and Vernon from their initial position of goodness over to the evil side so that they can be publicly executed in order for there to be a sense of fulfilment at the novel's end, a gratification of the desire of justice, and in order to conceal the fact that some other characters of similarly immoral reputation are spared the punishment Clive and Vernon suffer. This indicates that the narrative is leaning towards another synthesis in its denouement.

As mentioned before, Molly stands on the neutral axis as it is displayed in Figure 23 above. She is in the neutral domain since she represents a sense of morality that no longer exists in the world of *Amsterdam*. In contrast with the irreconcilable opposition between idealistic and nihilistic senses discussed above, Molly offers, by virtue of a feminine principle of benevolence, a position that may reconcile the senses of the moral and the immoral within a relativist sense of morality. She has relations with all the characters in the story however different

their moral positions might be, and she is welcoming towards everyone. Yet, the fact that the narrative opens with her funeral and that she is altogether absent in the narrative indicates that this is also not the synthesis the narrative prefers. There is no other female figure to fill the void left by Molly's removal from the narrative's world. Although the only other female character in the story, Julian Garmony's paediatrician-surgeon wife Rose seems to be offering a similar female benevolence when she helps Garmony save face, she is in fact "collud[ing] with the Conservative Party media manipulators as her public service is used as a political weapon" (Malcolm, *Understanding* 195). In the following excerpt, the narrator relates the Party's counterattack through a television performance designed as a spoiler against Vernon's news.

The party managers thought long and hard about the matter and made some reasonable decisions. One was to allow cameras into a well-known children's hospital that morning to film Mrs Garmony emerging from the operating theatre, tired but happy, after performing open-heart surgery on a nine-year-old black girl called Candy. The surgeon was also filmed on her rounds, followed by respectful nurses and registrars and hugged by children who clearly adored her. Then, captured briefly in the hospital car park, was a tearful encounter between Mrs Garmony and the little girl's grateful parents. ... While the sobbing father heaped half a dozen pineapples into the arms of the surgeon, a voice-over explained that one could rise so high in the medical hierarchy that it became inappropriate to be addressed as 'doctor'. It was Mrs Garmony to you. (*Am* 121)

As is attentively recounted by the narrator, it is devious and shameful of the party managers to take advantage of 'the black girl' of a poor immigrant family to arouse public sympathy and compassion towards a hypocritical politician who has made

his name through “xenophobic and punitive opinions” (*Am* 13). Besides, the way Rose lets her identity as a doctor to be used by these media manipulators for their own ends becomes a betrayal of all ethics and medical ethics since the Hippocratic Oath. All these images, together with a doctor’s happiness in her tired state after a surgery, a sentimental scene of a tearful parent expressing his thanks, and the fruits being offered to the medical gods, compensate for the lack of all these qualities in Julian Garmony.

Rose’s complicity does not end, though, with her letting herself be exploited freely by the party managers and media manipulators. She actively partakes in the fraud by lying. During the press conference that follows the hospital scene above, Rose says “she was glad to be able to put the record straight and make it clear that there was absolutely no foundation to the rumour. Molly Lane was simply a family friend, and the Garmonys would always remember her fondly” (*Am* 124). However, the reader has already learned about Rose’s aversion towards Molly when, upon seeing her husband going through his letters from Molly, she thinks to herself: “Molly Lane’s letters, the ones that stupidly indulged his grotesque cravings. Thank God that episode was over, thank God the woman was dead” (*Am* 95). Therefore, it is the more ironic and the more hypocritical when she announces that Vernon has “the moral stature of a flea” (*Am* 125) and that “love was a greater force than spite” (*Am* 124).

Consequently, Rose is unable to restore a female benevolence and a relativistic morality that were represented by Molly while she was alive. By extension, this also indicates that that synthetic option is closed by the narrative as a viable option of resolution. This leaves the complex synthesis as the sole remaining option, and that is indeed the synthesis the narrative leans towards in its denouement.

The only actants present at the narrative's end are George Lane, Julian Garmony, Frank Dibben and Rose Garmony, and their survival signals a difference between them and Clive and Vernon. It can be argued that they represent a sense of amorality that contrasts with Clive and Vernon's moral idealism and then moral nihilism and also contrasts with Molly's benevolence and moral relativism. All of these three latter categories, even though in different manners, still operate within the domain of morals. In other words, they are positions, be it affirmative, negative or relativistic, created in regard with a discussion of what morality is, what is/should be moral, and what is/should be immoral. Therefore, they rest upon and believe in the existence of certain value judgments in their interpretation of society. Amorality has completely different dynamics compared to these positions. It neither affirms, denies or relativises but is indifferent towards morality and morals in general. This bestows the amoralist with a playing field that exists above such concerns. From this transcendent position, the amoralist does not see an inherent antinomy between, and is able to dispense with as he or she sees fit, concepts like moral-duty or self-advancement.

Anita Superson defines an amoralist to be someone who "recognizes the existence of moral considerations, [but] remains unmoved" (127). In his defence of amorality, Joel Marks says that the "argument for amorality is ... simply that morality is not an element of our best explanation of the world as we know it" (17). To extend his argument for amorality, Marks lists its advantages against morals one of which states that "[a]morality is guilt-free" (48), which, when applied to the post-Cold War unchecked capitalist context, simply refers to the impersonal machinations of the capitalist free-market whose maxim is to "forget about human issues and concentrate simply on profits" (Donaldson 78). This is discussed by various scholars with special regard to corporations of the latter half of the twentieth century.

William Quigley, for instance, describes corporations as “huge amoral behemoths” that operate above moral codes (2). Similarly, James Hazelton discusses at length why “public companies are amoral” and will always remain so (378). Hazelton specifically focuses on corporate social responsibility projects and acts in order to indicate that the only type of such projects and acts is the type “where businesses engage in socially or environmentally positive behaviour ... where the motivation is profit maximisation” (367). Many similar studies, in the end, point to the fact that, by default, the capitalist sense of profit making is and will be amoral as Beth Stephens’ title for her long and detailed article on the subject goes. As in the definition of amorality, actants in a capitalist free-market are aware of certain moral codes; however, they are indifferent in the face of these because of the inherent workings of that free-market: the only dichotomy there ever was and is for the capitalist free-market is the one of profit vs. loss. Therefore, as in Hazelton’s assertion, it chooses to engage in certain moral duties in the traditional sense of the word, like social responsibility issues and projects, only when they align with the fundamental desire for and objective of profit.

In *Amsterdam*’s narrative universe then, when George, Frank, Julian and Rose are rewarded for their ability to be indifferent towards moral codes except for whenever they can be utilised and weaponised for their own self-interests, this makes the complex combination of amorality, the position that would subsume the core binary semic positions, become the ideal synthesis that promises to resolve the original antinomy. This position functions so by utilising the original antinomy in accordance with a new and subsuming antinomy that is aware of the original antinomy but is unmoved in the face of it except for when the addressing of this original antinomy is profitable or will be able to help avoid loss at the least. This marks a paradigm shift, an abandonment of the old dichotomies for the sake of new

ones. In Jameson’s terms, therefore, the contradiction in the narrative’s first subtext becomes a projection and the false ideological appearance of a real social contradiction featuring in the narrative’s nether subtext, namely the post-Cold War paradigm shift.

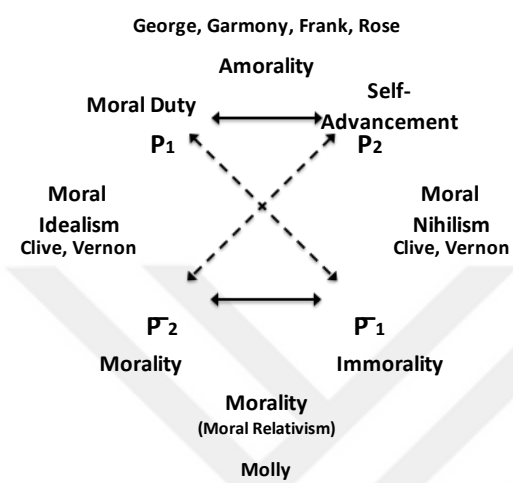


Fig. 23 Synthetic combinations and their actantial manifestations in the narrative

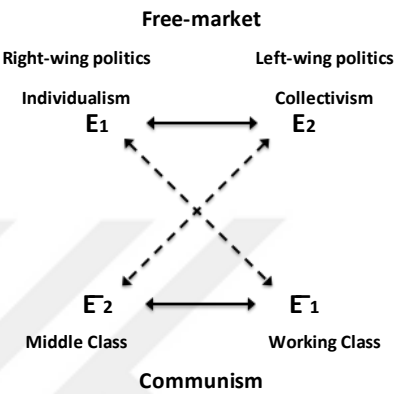


Fig. 24 Cold War and post-Cold War politics

In line with Jameson’s model of semantic enrichment, it was already suggested above that the present study seeks, through a symptomatic analysis of the system of antinomies in the narrative’s subtext, to show that, underlying *Amsterdam*’s narrative movement, there is an acquiescence to the hegemony of the unchecked free market in the post-Cold War world order of the 1990s. This nether subtext can be mapped out as in figure 24 above. The terms left/right are used to express the dichotomy in the nether subtext of the narrative with the reservation that, as Norberto Bobbio discusses it at length, they can be ambiguous descriptive or evaluative terms in politics unlike, for instance, in religious allegory where right always describes the righteous while left the sinister (35-37). Steven Lukes is similarly cautious in his approach to these terms, warning that “ ‘left’ and ‘right’ are

classifications that are both cognitive and symbolic: they promise understanding by interpreting and simplifying the complexities of political life and they stimulate emotions, awaken collective memories and induce loyalties and enmities" (602). However, both of these scholars, together with numerous others, point out the fact that this distinction has survived since it started in the French Revolution and continues to be used as a fundamental political distinction. As a case in point, two huge volumes of a recent *Encyclopaedia of Politics: The Left and The Right* (2005) by Rodney Carlisle are named "The Left" and "The Right," and they endeavour to explain the fundamental distinction between these two poles of politics. Steven Lukes himself calls this distinction "the grand dichotomy" (602).

Therefore, in this study, the left and the right are used in their most common denotations, as Roger Scruton in his *A Dictionary of Politics* analyses them. The left, in Scruton's words, is "the polar opposite of right" and is "[hostile] to private property" (260). The left believes in "social ownership as the ideal alternative" and represents "egalitarian leanings" under a welfare state at the least (Scruton 260-261). Meanwhile, according to Scruton's *Dictionary*, the right is "defined by contrast to (or perhaps more accurately, conflict with) the left" (408). The right believes in, among other things, "private property, not as a natural right, but as an indispensable part of the condition of society," along with "the irreplaceable value of the individual as against the collective" (408). Standing for, in their most basic sense, individualism and collectivism respectively, the right vs. left dichotomy of the text's nether subtext aligns with the contradiction in the text's immediate subtext: self-advancement and moral duty.

In the Cold War period, this 'grand dichotomy' is represented by the communist bloc of the USSR on the left and the capitalist bloc of the USA on the right. During the Cold War, this dichotomy strived to polarise every aspect of life into

categories of value judgments such as right/wrong, good/bad, moral/immoral, fair/unfair, rational/illogical and many more. Since it is not in the scope of this study to delve deep into the matter of the Cold War, John Lewis Gaddis' following brief account of this bipolarity at the Cold War's core would serve the purpose of the ongoing argumentation. Gaddis states with reference to the Cold War that

[i]t was a division of the world into two hostile camps. It was a polarization ... into antagonistic spheres of influence. It was an ideological contest, some said between capitalism and communism, others said between democracy and authoritarianism. ... It was a struggle that took place within each of its major adversaries as supporters and opponents of confrontation confronted one another. It was a contest that shaped culture, the social and natural sciences, and the writing of history. (*The Cold War, the Long Peace, and the Future* 234)

As Gaddis points out, this contest between two hostile camps, the USSR and the USA, or the left and the right respectively, was a confrontation not only of military or economic forces but of two antagonistic claims to truth, to rightness, to good and to moral superiority. When the opponents in Gaddis' account confronted each other, they "tend[ed] to attribute a positive value to their own political programmes and a negative one to those of their opponents" (Bobbio 37). This is echoed in Clive and Vernon's insistence on judging their own and everyone else's acts and deeds according to similar categorisations of moral/immoral, right/wrong or good/bad.

Consequently, this identifies the contradiction of the bipolar Cold War politics and the problem of its resolution in the post-Cold War unipolar world order as the real socio-political contradiction informing *Amsterdam's* political unconscious. The British social, political and cultural landscape was inevitably shaped by this post-Cold War crisis of paradigm shift, and at this moment of

punctuation when the rug was swept under the body politic with a swift transition from polarised value judgments to their redundancy henceforth, societies on both sides of the Cold War had to face the need for new ways of making sense of and creating meaning in their lives. The power of this crisis in shaping British culture and worldview in the 1990s is underlined by Nick Bentley as follows:

Two international events, standing at either end of the 1990s, had a crucial political and symbolic resonance for British culture. At one end was the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent dismantling of the Communist regimes of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. At the other end of the 1990s, or at least close enough to represent a symbolic shift in world politics, were the events in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 (9/11). (2-3)

Drawing on Bentley's emphasis of the political and crucial symbolic resonance of the end of the Cold War, it can clearly be argued, once again, that *Amsterdam* becomes the symbolic act that tries to address the crises of power, authority and direction at this period of drastic change. At this point, having identified the real socio-political contradiction in the text's nether subtext, the analysis of how *Amsterdam* symbolically resolves this crisis moves the discussion into the second horizon of the Jamesonian model.

Within the second horizon, Jamesonian hermeneutics transgresses the borders of the text in order to include the social into the analytic process by building upon the findings of the first horizon. With this larger semantic horizon, the analytical work "has widened to include the social order," thereby transforming the status of the text for the analysis: "it is no longer construed as an individual 'text' or work in the narrow sense, but has been reconstituted in the form of the great collective and class discourses of which a text is little more than an individual *parole*

or utterance" (Jameson, *The Political* 76). As was discussed at length in the previous chapters, Jameson names this utterance an ideologeme: "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (*The Political* 76). According to this definition, the text as an ideologeme will be analysed not only as an utterance within a certain class discourse but also as an utterance within the dialogue of antagonistic class discourses, namely of a dominant and a labouring class.

Although Jameson is talking about two interlocutors (i.e., two opposing classes in dialogue), he does not mean to bring another text into his analysis in order to reveal the dialogue. Just as he does in his first horizon, he locates the analytic task within the individual text itself. As was discussed in the previous chapters, this move in Jameson's hermeneutics relies on Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia and dialogism which insists that speech or discourse must always imply a dialogue and that any utterance taken from a dialogue carries the traces of that dialogue *within* itself, even if what is heard is only a single voice. In a similar light, the text as an ideologeme carries *within itself* the traces of both of the voices that are engaged within the dialogue, even if it looks like the reader is hearing only one single voice. This is a covert reference to Gramsci's concept of hegemony where the hegemonic ideology suppresses the antagonistic class discourse(s) or marginalises them so that only one side of the dialogue is heard.

Therefore, the objective of the analytical job, in a deconstructive fashion, becomes seeing through the text's claims to unequivocal signification. What a text signifies more or what it signifies less can indicate the disagreements within its texture. The text harbours a dialogic conflict and its narrative closure serves as a symbolic move within this dialogic conflict; a gesture towards both maintaining the hegemony of the ruling class-discourse and suppressing the antagonistic discourse

of the labouring class as invalid or simply as marginal. If that is the case, Jameson asserts, it becomes necessary first to understand the interaction, the 'dialogue,' between these opposing classes in order to fully understand the text in his second semantic horizon.

A fuller understanding of this dialogue starts with an understanding of its 'shared code.' As was discussed at length in the previous chapters, in Jameson's model, a literary work as an ideological product is not a battleground for a total war between classes, where a whole spectrum of ideological conflicts is fought out. Instead, the conflict is limited to a certain local struggle, and here lies Jameson's idea of a shared code. Jameson says that the "form of the dialogical class struggle is one in which two opposing discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code" (*The Political* 84). When considered in simple terms of a daily dialogue, a shared code is necessary for any dialogue to take place: if the interlocutors are not talking about the same thing, dialogue does not occur. Jameson's shared code, similarly, points out this necessity. In a literary work's narrative movement, Jameson looks for a single dialogue between two antagonistic classes and for the shared code of that dialogue.

The analysis of *Amsterdam* in the second semantic horizon can thus start with the identification of this shared code, around which the dialogue would be taking shape. The discussions in the previous chapter have already revealed that this shared code is best understood as the issue of 'morals.' In an interview he gave shortly after *Amsterdam*'s Booker win, McEwan himself points to this central concern in the novel, saying that

[t]he press and political culture have been trapped in something of a time-warp. A near-Victorian morality has held sway in newsrooms and sex scandals are run against an implicit set of moral values, which actually

nobody in the country is living by. I think perhaps there has been a change, that that's now crumbling. ... It was as if the political culture and the press had each other by the throat where neither could move. (*"Bold Type Interview"*)

His account of the issue of morals, apart from highlighting its centrality to *Amsterdam*, indicates how it is problematised in the narrative. It is a problem of finding a new direction in the face of a paradigm shift that necessitates a reconsideration and re-evaluation of the values that used to provide that direction.

With this in mind, and based on the discussions in the previous section, it can be argued that on one side of the dialogue, there is the free-market ideology which aligns with the amorality of the characters who are rewarded at the end of the narrative. On the other side, there is a more relativistic and benevolent understanding of morality, which is neither indifferent to these values in an amoral way nor demonstrates a firm stance in reference to them in an idealist or a nihilist way. Throughout the narrative, these two differing perceptions are at play as two opposing forces.

The antagonistic class discourses fight out their differences within this shared code in the narrative universe of *Amsterdam*. As was discussed before, it is clear that George, Frank, and the Garmonys' rise in the narrative closure P_1+P_2 coincides with E_1+E_2 and represents an assertion of the free market ideology. This move in the narrative refuses any attempt to make sense of the world in pure value judgments at either side of the spectrum ($P_1+\bar{P}_2$ coincides with $E_1+\bar{E}_2$; and $P_2+\bar{P}_1$ coincides with $E_2+\bar{E}_1$), and it refuses to acknowledge the existence of an alternative or more benevolent solution ($\bar{P}_2+\bar{P}_1$ coincides with $\bar{E}_2+\bar{E}_1$).

A relativistic and benevolent approach which is represented—by Molly in the text—in $\bar{P}_2+\bar{P}_1$ signifies and reveals the possibility of a different solution to the

contradiction which transcends the antagonistic classes towards building a possibly classless society by acknowledging the existence of these antagonistic classes. Its promise is more truly progressive compared to the amoralist position which merely creates a mirage of progress since this position transcends the central contradiction not so much by engaging with and finding a solution to it but by leaving it untouched and denying its existence in the new paradigm. Yet, at the narrative's denouement, the reader witnesses the total victory of the amoralist position: the relativistic and benevolent approach is replaced by the twisted version of relativism of characters like George, Frank and the Garmonys whose amoral position relativises value judgments not with a benevolent aim to create equilibrium and harmony but with an aim to create profitable results for individuals at the expense of other individuals or the society at large.

Therefore, while an amoral position (in its relation to the free-market ideology) becomes the position of the dominant ruling class, a benevolent moral relativity (in its relation to the promise of a solution that can transcend classes, perhaps creating a classless society) becomes the opposing position which designates the movement of the labouring class that seeks to contest and to undermine the dominant 'value system.' And although *Amsterdam* is read as a morality tale, its campaign for better morals fails at the end of the narrative. As was shown by way of the movement on the semiotic square, the text ends up acquiescing to a new profit/loss dichotomy and it affirms marketability over benevolence. This mirrors the rise of a free market ideology, as will be discussed now below, to hegemonic power in the aftermath of the dissolution of the communist iron curtain block.

As Steven Lukes points out, with the end of the Cold War, "the idea, or metaphor, of political space as divided between left and right, ... the old left-right

maps and charts have lost their applicability" (602). In a similar fashion, Gaddis defines the end of the Cold War as "one of those rare points of 'punctuation' in history at which old patterns of stability [break] up" (*The Cold War, the Long Peace, and the Future* 235). Therefore, this marks both a necessity and an opportunity as can be inferred from Condoleezza Rice's statement that the West in general and the US in particular find "it exceedingly difficult to define its 'national interest' in the absence of Soviet power. ... Yet such periods of transition are important, because they offer strategic opportunities. During these fluid times, one can affect the shape of the world to come" (45). On one hand, the necessity, as can be understood from Rice's statement, is the necessity of finding a new direction at this point of punctuation where old maps and charts stop working. Any attempt to cling to the old bipolar politics as specified above risks being anachronistic, backfiring or simply falling flat. Although not directly addressing the post-Cold War transition from a bipolar to a unipolar world, McEwan is in fact referring to this paradigm shift when he comments in an interview on the changing political atmosphere in Britain by saying: "My overwhelming sense, still, is of an era that has just come to an end. And really *Amsterdam* is my farewell to that time. And I'm very glad to say good-bye to it" ("*Bold Type* Interview"). On the other hand, the opportunity, as again can be understood from Rice's statement, is the opportunity the Western world has to affect the shape of the world to come because they have the upper hand at the end of the Cold War conflict.

When thought of in terms mapped out in figure 24 above, this whole process of the need for leaving old antagonisms behind and the opportunity to shape the direction henceforth presents itself as the transcendence of the old antagonisms (i.e. left vs right politics) via a new direction, something historically new and progressive (i.e. the complex synthesis in the Greimassian square). However, this transcendent

term turns out to be anything but new. In the aftermath of the Cold War, it turns out, the US and the Western liberalism seizes the opportunity Condoleezza Rice points to in order to showcase free-market as the direction to be followed, as the term and model that transcends old antagonistic politics of bipolarity.

Much of the argument for the free market relies on its inherited definition from classical economics which claims that “the free market permits economic growth, leads to stability, and respects fundamental rights” which are denied in any other economic model (Scruton 179). Western liberal democracy rests on the assumption that free-market is “a self-regulating mechanism with a natural tendency towards equilibrium, perhaps generating, along with that equilibrium, the conditions of social and political order” (Scruton 179). One of the most well-known economists who supports a free-market economy with minimal or no government intervention, Milton Friedman praises its virtues by stating that, contrary to the interventionist economies, the Western world

has continued to progress; its citizens have become better fed, better clothed, better housed, and better transported; class and social distinctions have narrowed; minority groups have become less disadvantaged; popular culture has advanced by leaps and bounds. All this has been the product of the initiative and drive of individuals co-operating through the free market. ... The invisible hand has been more potent for progress than the visible hand for retrogression. (199-200)

Friedman’s laudatory description of the results of a free-market economy noticeably downplays the state of minority and disadvantaged groups, the chasm between different classes, and the culturally and environmentally devastating effects of a growing consumerism behind that popular culture he mentions. It no doubt disregards, among several other things, the tycoons, monopolies, corporations,

lobby groups or media magnets that are the actual embodiments of the 'business individuals' he firmly believes to make up the backbone of a democratic society, and it disregards that it is these groups who dominate the 'free' market he unquestioningly supports. After all, as Jameson states, "it is ... virtually always a misnomer. For one thing, no free market exists today in the realm of oligopolies and multinationals" (*Postmodernism* 266).

Despite its shortcomings, flaws and drawbacks, the free-market ideology promptly resolves to fill the socio-political vacuum that takes shape in the aftermath of the Cold War. It is able to do that easily firstly because of the fact that the end of bipolarity in world politics is not followed by a multipolarity, which would have led to a more balanced and democratic world politics, but by a unipolarity that paves the way for a single worldview's hegemony over the rest of the world. This unipolar "center of world power is the unchallenged superpower, the United States, attended by its Western allies" (Krauthammer 23). Even though this unchallenged hegemony leads to "fears amongst left-wing intellectuals concerning the end of an adequate political resistance to the global advance of Western capitalism" (Bentley 2), an overwhelming majority of the people does not consider this a threat but simply the triumph of the right over wrong, good over bad, or moral over immoral, in the way the free-market ideology advertises itself. The former US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice describes this, as many others did, as being "on the right side of history" from the perspective of the US and its allies (46). Many scholars, historians and politicians approve of this Western hegemony and add to its arguments the confirmation that "unipolarity is durable and peaceful" (Wohlforth 8).

The second reason the free-market ideology easily fills in the vacuum of the post-Cold War period of world politics is the fact that the end of the Cold War is extended beyond its original political context to conflate "other discourses and

narratives of endings: the end of ideology, the end of opposition to the market economy and globalization, the end of alternative futures, the end of idealism, the end of culture, the end of value and the end of meaning” (Bentley 6-7). What Nick Bentley wants to make clear was first outlined by Francis Fukuyama in his famous 1989 article as follows:

What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government. ... the victory of liberalism has occurred primarily in the realm of ideas or consciousness and is as yet incomplete in the real or material world. But there are powerful reasons for believing that it is the ideal that will govern the material world *in the long run*. (4)

Fukuyama presents the triumph of the capitalist free-market over the “Soviet Union[’s] ... universal socialist alternative to markets and democracy” (Rice 45) in evolutionist terms to make it sound less like an economic, political and military victory and more like the unquestionable, self-evident result of a historical and/or natural process. The free market won because it is the final ‘truth’, the unmistakable final step of humankind’s development. Even when the hegemony of the free market is accepted not through such scholarly or philosophical debates, for the average citizen around the world for instance, it is accepted simply through the explanation that, as Gaddis claims, capitalism won because “markets proved more efficient than command economies in allocating resources and enhancing productivity [and] improvement in people’s lives” (Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* 265).

The acquiescence to the hegemony of the capitalist free market as the only viable option left is all-encompassing in the post-Cold War period. As Steven Lukes

states, even the “left parties increasingly accept a capitalist framework and left intellectuals accept market principles and the logic of profit” in the aftermath of the end of bipolarity (609). Testifying to this claim with a first-hand experience, the Socialist Party of the UK describes the process in an online article as the ‘bourgeoisification’ of the left. They say that, in the aftermath of the Cold War,

[t]he organisations of the working class remained intact but were now subjected to a huge ideological offensive in favour of the free market ... [This is followed by] a process of ‘bourgeoisification’ of the workers’ parties, with the abandonment of even the historic aim of socialism; for instance, the scrapping of Clause 4 – standing for the nationalisation of the ‘commanding heights’ of the economy – in the Labour Party in Britain. ... [Then,] majority of formerly radicalised intellectuals ... went over en masse to the idea of capitalism ... Capitalism, albeit purified of its most obnoxious features, was now the only historic choice, concluded the tops of the labour movement and the overwhelming majority of former left intellectuals. (*Collapse of Stalinism*)

Their account of the spread of the free-market ideology even among the historically oppositional groups and movements highlights the lack of any strong alternative to the free market at the time and hints at the ease with which the latter fills in the vacuum of the post-Cold War period.

Fredric Jameson examines the ascendancy of the capitalist free market with similar propositions. He announces the “surrender to the various forms of market ideology” to be “alarmingly universal” (*Postmodernism* 263). He goes on to add that everyone is “willing to mumble, as though it were an inconsequential concession in passing to public opinion and current received wisdom (or shared communicational presuppositions) that no society can function efficiently without the market” (*Postmodernism* 263). Yet, according to Jameson, the strongest and most

comprehensive version of this acquiescence is the tendency to associate the capitalist free-market with human nature. For Jameson, the proposition that “ ‘[t]he market is in human nature’ ... is the most crucial terrain of ideological struggle” (263). This proposition is evidently in between the lines in Fukuyama’s statements quoted above. When he starts explaining the situation in evolutionist terms, he is already giving the hints of a tendency that sees market as a natural part of the human and its ‘god given’ nature.

In conclusion, the free-market ideology does not in fact resolve any of the antagonisms the bipolar politics created in world societies but is simply indifferent to them. For the sake of the new direction that it offers, the free market refuses to acknowledge the remaining existence of these antagonisms unless acknowledging them becomes profitable once again. It similarly suppresses and refuses to give the chance to breathe to any political or ideological position that affirms their remaining existence or demands resolution. As was already discussed above, this is mirrored in *Amsterdam* with the fact that Clive and Vernon are punished not because they were corruptly going after their own self-interests but because they were trying to bring up moral codes to make sense of the whole endeavour. If they were doing the things they were doing with an acknowledgment that they are doing them simply for their own self-advancement at the same time accepting in their heart of hearts that this is completely alright, they would have been rewarded just like the other characters who are able to survive the narrative. This conclusion is evident in how the Board, with George’s help, decides to fire Vernon after the public backlash against the Garmony incident. In the meeting, George addresses the Board members and says that

there was nothing wrong in purchasing those photographs. Actually, I can tell you this, I heard he got a jolly good deal. No, Halliday’s mistake was in not

pulling his front page the moment he saw Rose Garmony's press conference.

... He was quite wrong to have gone ahead. ... He should have seen which way the wind was blowing and got out. (*Am* 127-128)

Apart from hypocritically hiding the fact that it was he who set this whole endeavour into motion by suggesting the idea to Vernon and personally selling the aforementioned photographs to him, George clearly shows how this is just business. He interprets the whole event from the perspective of marketability and with a concern of profit vs. loss. He does not judge Vernon at all on the grounds of any value judgments and he openly endorses the act. The only mistake, in his way of seeing things, is not pulling back when the whole thing stops being profitable and marketable anymore. It was already discussed above that Vernon indeed fails to see that this whole thing is just business and a matter of profit and loss. Because of that, and because he believes to be on a crusade against the evil and it is his moral duty to see it through, he refrains from taking a step back.

This is directly contrasted with how all the other newspapers and broadcasters handle the situation and how public opinion follows suit. When Vernon starts his attack with preliminary features, articles and news that will eventually lead to the final blow of publishing the photographs, he has the wind at his back.

Despite the dissenting voices, a broad consensus was emerging that the *Judge* was a decent, fighting paper, and that the government had been in power too long and was financially, morally, and sexually corrupt, and that Julian Garmony was typical of it and was a despicable person whose head was urgently needed on a plate. (*Am* 100)

This marks the moment, as George explains it, this whole event becomes marketable and hence profitable. Therefore, all the other papers and public opinion join in. On

the first days of Vernon's campaign, "all the papers, broadsheets and all, had been obliged to run related features. You could see the reluctance and the envy in every caption, in every busily researched fresh angle" (*Am* 109) in the hopes of sharing in the profits. After Rose Garmony's press conference, though, they change their statements immediately and without any trace of remorse. The craftily staged press conference and Rose's lies help the Conservative Party change the public opinion as the narrator relates: "A broad consensus emerged over the weekend that the *Judge* had gone too far and was a disgusting newspaper, that Julian Garmony was a decent fellow, and that Vernon Halliday ('the Flea') was despicable and his head was urgently needed on a plate" (*Am* 127). Immediately after the press conference, that is "[a]round five o'clock that afternoon, it occurred to the many newspaper editors who had bid for Molly's photographs that the trouble with Vernon's paper was that it was out of step with changing times" (*Am* 126). These editors who were racing to share in Vernon's profits by following his footsteps are now racing to share in the Conservative Party's profits by following their footsteps in blackening Vernon's name.

As a leader in one broadsheet put it to its readers on Friday morning, 'It seems to have escaped the attention of the editor of the *Judge* that the decade we live in now is not like the one before. Then, self-advancement was the watchword, while greed and hypocrisy were the rank realities. Now we live in a more reasonable, compassionate, and tolerant age in which the private and harmless preferences of individuals, however public they may be, remain their own business.' (*Am* 126)

As the quote indicates, they were able to see which way the wind was blowing and change course of action. This proves that the only values that they uphold are marketability and profitability. They do not argue for things according to certain

value judgements but according to how much profit there is in arguing so. The irony in the statement above (i.e. blaming someone with hypocrisy and self-advancement in a hypocritical way for one's own self-advancement) is attached to a bigger irony in the novel: that no one, especially not the broader public, sees any harm in the way all these editors use and abuse values as they fit. Everyone seems to have accepted the fact that this is the way of the world.

There are several other cases in the novel that reinforce this sense. For instance, the staff on the *Judge* hold back their initial resistance to Vernon's campaign when the sales quickly increase. The narrator relates how "[i]n a week, sales were up by a hundred thousand, and the editor was finding he was arguing into silence from his senior editors rather than protests" (*Am* 100). Contrary to the first meeting they have where they pass a vote of no-confidence in the editor, they now hold a second meeting where one of the dissenting senior staff (referred to as the Grammarians) openly praises Vernon:

there's a feeling in this building, an urgency on this paper now, that takes me back to the good old times of the three-day week when we really knew how to tell it. Today the circulation figures speak for themselves—we've tapped the public mood. So ..." Grant turned to the editor and beamed. "We're riding high again, and it's all down to you. Vernon, a thousand thanks! (*Am* 114)

The narrator indicates that this is sincerely shared by the remaining of the staff: "[T]he general view that took hold as people dispersed and returned to their desks, and that consolidated in the early afternoon, was that this was work of the highest professional standards. ... Vernon's instinct was unerring" (*Am* 116). Following Grant's laudatory address and the ensuing loud applause, "others chimed in with brief messages of congratulation" (*Am* 114-115). Yet, all this was about to change.

Just like the editors of other papers, they change their attitude towards Vernon and his campaign after Rose's press conference.

On the *Judge* itself, the senior staff were glad their reservations had been minuted, and it was felt by most journalists that Grant McDonald pointed the way when he was heard to say in the canteen that once his misgivings were not listened to, he did his best to be loyal. By Monday they had all remembered their misgivings and how they had all tried to be loyal. (*Am* 127)

Once again, the narrative features characters who are simply acting according to their self-interests and feeling no remorse over their hypocritical change of attitude. Frank Dibben is among them. After introducing himself to Vernon as an ally, he does not even take the time to say goodbye to him, let alone informing Vernon that he is his successor as the new editor. On his way out after being sacked, Vernon meets "no one, not a soul, on his way to the lift. The only person to say cheerio to the editor was the porter downstairs on the desk, and he was also the one to inform Vernon of his successor. Mr. Dibben, sir" (*Am* 146).

On top of this, in the very short scene that follows Vernon's being sacked, the narrative highlights a further change in the senior staff on the *Judge*. The scene features the staff in a meeting with the new editor Frank Dibben. Frank starts with a suggestion:

'It's time we ran more regular columns. They're cheap, and everyone else is doing them. You know, we hire someone of low to medium intelligence, possibly female, to write about, well, nothing much. You've seen the sort of thing. Goes to a party and can't remember someone's name. Twelve hundred words.'

'Sort of navel gazing,' Jeremy Ball suggested.

'Not quite. Gazing is too intellectual. More like navel chat.'

‘Can’t work her video recorder. Is my bum too big?’ Lettice supplied helpfully.

...

‘Excellent. I like it. Harvey? Grant?’

‘Um, always losing Biro. Where do they go?’

‘Ehm, canna keep his tongue out of the wee hole in his tooth.’

‘Brilliant,’ Frank said. ‘Thank you, everyone. We’ll continue this tomorrow.’

(*Am* 129-130)

This is the senior staff who refused to accept the same suggestions when Vernon made them earlier in the novel. They resisted such changes on the grounds that it decreased the intellectual quality of the paper. Yet, under the new editor, let alone resisting or silently consenting to them, they are enthusiastically embracing these changes and suggestions, trying to play a part in their realisation. This points out to the same message in the narrative that people act according to their self-interests. They were able to refuse Vernon’s changes since they know Vernon cannot fire them. He simply lacks the resolve: “He was widely known as a man without edges, ... as a man who did not fully exist. ... Vernon was revered as a nonentity” (*Am* 30). However, everyone knows Frank as the fierce and power hungry “Cassius” (*Am* 105) whom it is more difficult and dangerous to fight against.

In another scene, Clive asks “the great Italian conductor” Giulio Bo for his honest opinion of the symphony, Bo responds by saying “[i]s fine, everything is fine” and changes the subject: “ ‘[B]etween you and me ...’ [h]e lowered his voice. ‘I think the second oboe, the young girl, is very beautiful but the playing is not perfect. Fortunately, you have written nothing difficult for her. Very beautiful. Tonight she will have dinner with me’ (*Am* 161). Neither Bo, nor the other members of the orchestra confront Clive to express their true opinion of the symphony and prepare

for the performance regardless. However, after Clive's death, they cancel the performance: "Giulio Bo says it's a dud. Half the BSO refuse to play it" (*Am* 176).

And of course, there are George and Julian Garmony. When they meet at the end of the novel, they both feign ignorance and innocence since doing so is in their best interests:

Garmony had heard rumours that it was Lane who had sold the photographs; Lane did not know how much Garmony knew. Garmony in turn was uncertain about Lane's attitude to his affair with Molly. Lane did not know whether Garmony realized just how much he, George, despised him. (*Am* 174)

They refrain from confronting each other because there is no profit to be gained from such a confrontation, hence rendering such a thing unnecessary. This contrasts Clive and Vernon's insistence on confronting each other on similar matters and judging each other according to certain value judgments as was discussed at length above.

In another very darkly humorous moment, Clive and Vernon face the art critic Paul Lanark. Lanark is the critic who demeans Clive and his musical career. While Lanark keeps bothering them, Vernon remembers a list of names accused of being regulars of a paedophile ring which he refused to publish since it might have caused great legal trouble to the newspaper. In an attempt to get rid of Lanark, however, Vernon tells him to his face: "I recently saw your name on a list of some very distinguished people. Judges, chief constables, top business people, government ministers ... This concerns a children's home in Wales. Top-notch paedophile ring" (*Am* 164). The gruesome prevalence of such an hideous crime among the top members of the society who are responsible for keeping the society clean from such crimes in the first place goes beyond the individual cases of hypocrisy laid out in the previous paragraphs to a whole society.

In conclusion, what Clive and Vernon do wrong, according to the new paradigm of profit/loss that the narrative acquiesces to, is not being hypocritical, corrupt or self-seeking but failing to accept this fact in the way all these other characters do. It is not that, for instance, just as Frank later does, Vernon reduces the intellectual quality of the *Judge* by doubling the sports pages “at the expense of arts and books” (*Am* 36) or turns even the obituary section into a paparazzi column by refusing to put dignified portraits there (*Am* 40) but that he wants to justify all these choices as “contractually right” in terms of “honouring his word” in the sense of work ethics and moral duties. In the last analysis, he lacks the resolve to openly fight for his self-interests in the way Frank does and continuously tries to make sense of any decision he makes according to such ethics or moral codes. While Frank manipulates his way to editorship, Vernon merely ends up there by accident when “a congressman [mistakes] Vernon for a writer on the *Washington Post* and tip[s] him off about a presidential indiscretion” which eventually causes him to be appointed as the editor when the previous editor is coincidentally fired at the same time (*Am* 30). He fails to place the individualist, self-seeking values of a free-market ideology at the centre of his worldview. That is why “he [is] simply the sum of all the people who [listen] to him, and when he [is] alone, he [is] nothing at all” (*Am* 29).

Both Clive and Vernon believe that their actions have to have a meaning beyond self-interest. That is why each opens up to the other after the ruinous decisions he makes (i.e. Vernon with the photographs and Clive with the assaulted woman) with an assurance that his decision will be considered by the other as ‘contractually right,’ and ironically they fail to accept one another’s decisions for the same reason. For instance, when the narrator makes the reader privy to Clive’s thoughts while he is thinking of Vernon’s decision to publish Garmony’s photographs, he condemns the act by thinking that Vernon is acting “[a]s if some

criminal political conspiracy had been uncovered, or a corpse under the table in the Foreign Office. So unworldly, so misjudged, so uncool" (*Am* 141). Underlying Clive's thoughts hence is the belief that acts need to have lofty motivations, or at least moral grounds and motivation. People cannot and should not act for personal agendas or for mere self-interest.

The whole narrative movement, therefore, turns into a warning against not letting go of the value judgments of the past in the face of the free-market ideology's rise to hegemonic prevalence. It is "a caution against clinging too tightly to what we knew" in the way Clive thinks about his symphony (*Am* 136). On his visit to the Lake District, Clive eats "alone in the bar under the gaze of a stuffed fox mounted in a glass case, frozen in a predatory crouch" (*Am* 67). This may represent the status of the values of a bipolar world politics of the Cold War period: they are there, but they are neutralised and simply ornamental. The image of the stuffed fox is contrasted with the image of aeroplanes Clive watches on his way to Amsterdam:

[T]hrough gaps in the fog he could see other airliners waiting competitively in ragged, converging lines, something brooding and loutish in their forms: slit eyes beneath small brains, stunted, encumbered arms, upraised and blackened arseholes. Creatures like this could never care about each other. (*Am* 150)

There is no morality or no meaning other than competition in this new period. Symbolised by the aggressive and insensitive image of airliners which have a minimal amount of thinking capacity within their small brains, this new paradigm requires the citizens of the 'new world' to be similarly aggressive, insensitive, self-seeking and competitive. Therefore, it seems, because of their inability to make this shift to the new paradigm, "no other outcomes were available to [Clive and Vernon], and this was the nature of their tragedy" (*Am* 149).

This is also where, as was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the debate about *Amsterdam*'s Booker win finds its meaning. The parallelism between what is happening in *Amsterdam* and the debate about its Booker win becomes clear in the way the narrative draws its conclusion. While characters like Clive and Vernon are locked in old value judgments, other characters like George or Frank operate above these values and take heed of them in terms of their marketability. Similarly, in the reality of the literary prize culture, while some people insist on judging literary worthiness/unworthiness to be the meaning and purpose of literary prizes, others see these events as business, a way of marketing certain products and profit making. As Dominic Head also maintains, the strong consumer culture a free-market economy relies on shatters, in the literary arena too, "any lingering idea that contemporary literary culture is governed by aesthetic values that can be held aloof from the marketplace" ("*On Chesil Beach*" 117). Here, the notions of 'literary merit' or 'morality' lose any inherent meaning and are subsumed under notions like marketability and profitability.

Luke Strongman points out that the most challenging problem for literary prizes like the Booker is the lack of a "definition of the overall aim of the Prize to find 'the best novel of the year' " (viii). The lack of or in fact the ad lib nature of a definition of the prize's overall aim signals the answer to John Sutherland's question in the *New Statesman*: "Does it exist to make a qualitative judgement, or to sell books?" ("*The Booker's Big Bang*"). The whole annual event was established after the Booker company started "purchasing the copyright on famous authors and profiting very well from it" (Strongman vii). In approval of Hazelton's conclusions about corporate social responsibility acts above, the Booker company established the prize in the hopes of making more money out of it. They invest in the prize for its "to turn a modest, serious novel into something that can sell by the hundred

thousand ("A lark in a tall tree"). That is why, whenever a Booker is "met with a gigantic consumer yawn and [sells] barely at all" (Sutherland, "The Fall of Man Booker") it is considered to be a failure regardless of any conclusions regarding the quality of the novels shortlisted.

Eventually, as James English states, literary prizes like the Booker "foster the joining of ideal and material, aesthetic and economic, generous and self-profiting impulses into a single" act (121). They help the "fetishisation" of literary objects (Huggan 108), and create a new culture where "[s]elling novels, as opposed to originating, or nurturing, them, had taken priority" (Sutherland, "The Booker's Big Bang"). Literary works, like everything from concepts like patriotism, love or ethnicity to real human beings themselves, are and can be commodified (see, Bauman; Wilsterman; Scanlon). In this state of things, the measures of value or worth become marketability, saleability and profitability. Notions of 'literary merit' or prestige that awards like the Booker Prize are meant to honour lose their meaning and worth outside these aforementioned measures. Just like de-branded advertising (Handley; Parasuraman) or localisation of multinational products (Botting 21-22), recognition of prestige or merit is useful as long as it makes the sale and will be adopted or dropped accordingly. Finally, as Fredrick Jameson argues in his *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, everything, even "culture has become a product in its own right" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* x).

In the same manner, whenever a profitable thing or act ceases to be so, it will be dropped for more profitable alternatives; George, Frank or the Garmonys are shown to act accordingly in *Amsterdam*. For instance, together with the Pulitzer and the Nobel, the Booker Prize is one of the third literary prizes that attract international media coverage. Bob Hoover in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette underlines how big the Booker is by saying that "[t]he atmosphere around the award

approaches sports-championship proportions, with London bookies posting the ever-changing odds on the nominees.” That being the case, one expects “winner of the 1998 Booker Prize” to be prestigious enough to appear alone on the cover page of the book as it is the case with its 1999 Vintage Books edition that is used in this study. However, when it is found out that films boost book sales more than literary prizes (see among others, “Deathly Hallows;” Chapman; Paige; Pate), the advertisers turn towards that direction. Many of McEwan’s books are made into films, and one of these films, *Atonement* (2007), that is based on his 2001 novel of the same name, brought him worldwide renown, so much so that even the reprints of his previous work after the film have come to bear the marketing tag ‘from the author of *Atonement*.’ Interestingly, this includes McEwan’s sole Booker Prize winner novel *Amsterdam*, too. This says something about the late-capitalist consumer culture that starts growing unchallenged with the 1990s and about the denouement in *Amsterdam*’s plot.

This tendency to adopt the dichotomy of profit/loss in acquiescence to the new paradigm the free-market ideology brings shows its immediate effects on British politics as well, as was again mentioned earlier in this chapter. The first political party to respond to the paradigm shift is the Labour Party. They change, under Tony Blair’s new leadership, Clause IV of the party’s constitution, one of the fundamentally defining clauses of the constitution, following Blair’s campaign for change and reform (Rentoul; Rodrigues). Nick Bentley describes the process by saying that “[p]olitics in Britain responded to the shift in the new world order by a move away from the entrenched left- versus-right ideological divisions of the 1980s with a gradual return to consensus politics marked by New Labour’s shift from the left to the centre” (3). Paolo Donadio carefully compares the old and the new texts of Clause IV to show how the clause turns from a legal and normative text into a

promotional and inclusive one. 'Workers' of the old text becomes 'all of us' or 'each of us' in the new, and the new text does not refer to class distinctions, problems of ownership or state control. New Labour, with Blair's campaign, thus "appeal[s] less to the older working classes of Labour's heartland than to the mortgaged home-owning middle classes of middle England" (Morgan 103). Kenneth Morgan traces in detail how New Labour drops a bipolar politics to adapt to the unipolarity of the free-market ideology by saying that

Blair appealed openly to business leaders in the Confederation of British Industry (CBI); he courted the Murdoch press which had traduced his party in the past; he even spoke well of Thatcher's achievements in privatizing nationalized industries, spreading home-ownership, and ending the stranglehold of the unions. His model appeared to be not the old Labour Party ... but the 'market socialism' of Australian Labour or perhaps the American Democratic Party under President Bill Clinton. (103)

The fact that New Labour under Blair starts speaking the same language of the neoliberal conservatives like Thatcher and the Murdoch press shows that they choose to eschew the methods of a bipolar politics that rises upon antagonisms, regardless of the fact that it is not the neoliberals who need to change either their constitution or their methods. Furthermore, the fact that Blair's campaign leads to a Labour win in the first elections indicates public approval of the Labour's acquiescence to the new paradigm.

It has already been discussed that an ideologeme should be considered within the antagonistic dialogue of opposing classes. The narrative of *Amsterdam* is an ideologeme with its endorsement of the capitalist free-market ideology after the paradigm shift from a bipolar to unipolar politics, and this should thus be analysed for the traces of the antagonistic voice it tries to suppress. While talking about the

rise of free-market ideology to hegemonic power, Jameson states that it is necessary “to call /market/ what it is, namely, an ideologeme, and ... to talk about the realities fully as much as the concepts” (*Postmodernism* 264). What he means by talking about realities is the manner in which under its advertised image, free-market ideology hides an ever growing economic and social problem. Jameson defines the ideology of the market to be the “objectively necessary afterimage” of the economic problem (*Postmodernism* 260) and adds that “it exists and is real insofar as it is an image, marked and destined to remain as such, its very unreality and unrealizability being what is real about it” (*Postmodernism* 262). That is to say, it is not possible for the free-market economy to exist and its discourse on democracy, equality, freedom, happiness for all to be true at the same time since the whole economic model relies on requisites such as class society, wage slavery, monopolism and corporatism, capital accumulation and private ownership. Jameson bases this discussion on Marx’s observations in the *Grundrisse*: Marx says that under the bourgeois system “the very realisation of *equality* and *freedom*, ... turn out to be inequality and unfreedom” (*Collected Works* 180). Marx attributes an inability to comprehend this to a “failure to grasp the inevitable difference between the real and the ideal shape of bourgeois society” (*Collected Works* 180).

Following Jameson’s and Marx’s comments on how the ideologeme of the market works to conceal the real shape of the society that this economic model causes, the traces of the real shape of the society can now be discovered in the narrative of *Amsterdam*. The novel depicts a peculiarly middle-class masculine world in its narrative, and the life of these male members of the middle class takes the form of “a history of ... growing wealth” (*Am* 45-46). At one of the moments in the funeral scene, when the narrator makes the reader privy to Clive’s thoughts, Clive inadvertently confesses “[h]ow prosperous, how influential, how they had

flourished under a government they had despised for almost seventeen years. ... they were already safe, they consolidated and settled down to forming this or that—taste, opinion, fortunes” (*Am* 11-12). As Vernon, although he himself is not really taking heed of any of it, accuses Clive of not seeing the harsh realities from his comfortable studio, these men live in a version of the reality which does not register the actual version of things where, day by day, there are “more people living below the poverty line, more people in prison, more homeless, more crime, more riots” (*Am* 74).

There are two instances in the whole novel where the reader is brought face to face with this actual version of *Amsterdam*’s society as it exists outside the enclosed world of the middle-class male characters. The first instance is Clive’s train ride to the Lake District, during which he looks out of the car’s window expecting to watch the soothing English countryside but finding nothing of the sort:

it was easy for Clive to think of civilization as the sum of all the arts, along with design, cuisine, good wine, and the like. But now it appeared that this was what it really was—square miles of meager modern houses whose principal purpose was the support of TV aerials and dishes; factories producing worthless junk to be advertised on the televisions and, in dismal lots, lorries queuing to distribute it; and everywhere else, roads and the tyranny of traffic. ... No one would have wished it this way, but no one had been asked. Nobody planned it, nobody wanted it, but most people had to live in it. (*Am* 63-64)

Here, Clive involuntarily faces the corruption of a capitalist free-market economy spreading to the cherished English countryside and spoiling it. He faces the mindless consumerism it encourages, the urbanisation it causes and the chaos it creates. It is

completely different from his version of civilisation, which is elegant, gentle, indulgent, arty and free from any disturbances.

The second instance is again registered by Clive when he is taken to the police station to make his witness statement concerning the Lakeland rapist. Standing there in a corner in the station, shrinking “behind his brick-red tea” (*Am* 153), Clive watches working class people coming and going in and out of the station with all sorts of crimes, problems and disturbances. Sometimes it feels like a gothic story for Clive, when, for instance, he sees a six-month-old baby lying on the canteen chairs whose “young mother was locked up in a cell on the ground floor while she recovered from a drinking binge” (*Am* 152). Clive keeps hearing “her plaintive shrieks and moans drifting up the peeling stairwell” (*Am* 152). At other times, it is like a reality television show about “one huge unhappy family with domestic problems that were of their nature insoluble. This was the family living room” (*Am* 153). Clive registers the things he sees as follows:

Two hair-chewing girls, twin daughters of a violent father, came in for their own protection and were treated with joky familiarity. A woman with a bleeding face lodged a complaint against her husband. A very ancient black lady whom osteoporosis had folded double had been thrown out of her room by her daughter-in-law and had nowhere to go. Social workers came and went, and most of them looked as criminally inclined, or as unfortunate, as their clients. Everybody smoked. In the fluorescent light everybody looked ill. There was a lot of scorching tea in plastic cups, and there was a lot of shouting, and routine, uncolorful swearing, and clenched-fist threats that no one took seriously. (*Am* 152-153)

Side by side with this dreadful and brutal side of the society, Clive’s character shrinks down to the image of a comically genteel and squeamish man of wealth and

leisure who has to “put a restraining hand over his leaping heart and [is] obliged to sit down” (*Am* 152) as if watching a sensational drama unfold in front of him “all evening in a state of exhausted excitement” (*Am* 153). Apart from the list of crimes mentioned in the quote above, Clive sees how “a big, sweating teenager with a shaved head had been picked up hiding in a back garden with bolt cutters, master keys, a pad saw, and a sledgehammer concealed beneath his coat” (*Am* 152), meaning that he is a burglar, but other than that the crimes mentioned are of a special nature: they indicate crumbling family values and a crumbling society. There is domestic violence everywhere. Parents abuse the children, children abuse their elderlies, husbands abuse wives, social workers do not help, and obviously the police do not care at all. Once stepping outside the bubble he lives in, everyone Clive meets looks unhappy, ill and “down-at-heel” (*Am* 153). Clive concludes this scene with the observation that it seemed “the main business of the police was to deal with the numerous and unpredictable consequences of poverty” (*Am* 153).

These two instances, as rare as they ever could be in *Amsterdam*, are affirmed by Kenneth Morgan’s account of the state of British society in the 1990s, which is worth quoting at length below.

There was also much public disgust with the state of British society. In east London, elegant postmodernist tower blocks, an ecological park, and a marina built by the Docklands Corporation around Canary Wharf contrasted starkly with young homeless people sleeping rough in the Strand or Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Disparities in wealth, income, health, and lifestyle had grown ever-wider. Long-departed diseases like tuberculosis returned to haunt the poor, quite apart from newer scourges like Aids. There were other sources of instability, too. Family breakdown went on apace: one marriage in three broke down and Britain had the highest divorce rate in the EU, higher even

than the Scandinavian countries. There was long-term youth unemployment in areas like Merseyside, many troubled housing estates, and an endemic drug culture in urban areas, portrayed in the film *Trainspotting*, based on a disturbing novel by the Edinburgh writer Irvine Welsh. British society, never more affluent, seemed spiritually impoverished and socially divided. (100-101)

Morgan similarly underlines the crumbling state of the family and the society in the 1990s in Britain. Marriages fail, families fail, youth culture fails and a new generation is losing itself to a devastating drug culture. Moreover, this is happening while another portion of the society enjoys a comfortable and leisurely lifestyle with their elegant tower apartments and luxurious marinas. A free-market economy is expanding apace, helping the select portion of the society accumulate more wealth and property and become ever more affluent while hiding away the fact this is happening at the expense of the other, larger portion of the society. While the Clives, Vernons, Georges and Julians of the society are rising above the society, the working classes are suffering under their feet. Once again, as Marx points out, free-market Western democracy's promise of freedom and equality turns out to be unfreedom and inequality.

While the free-market ideologeme, as it is represented by the amoral position in *Amsterdam's* narrative, works to conceal this side of the coin, another position, the moral relativist position in the narrative might be read, if not as an outright representative of the opposing voice in this antagonistic dialogue, at least as the promise of a solution more inclusive than the one the amoral position and the free-market ideology proposes. In narrative terms, this might be argued to be represented by the female benevolence offered by Molly and a truer sense of equality and freedom. The alternative here is difficult to frame in real political terms.

It may be named centrism that seeks to keep a balance between left and right tendencies (Woshinsky 140-141), or it may be named the third way that claims “not to be a compromise between two extremes, but to supersede them both” (Bobbio 8). Since none of these political forms are fully implemented anywhere, it is difficult to bring the ensuing results in this discussion as it was done for the results of a long implemented free-market economy model. All that can be referred to is the promises of such an alternative for a more egalitarian, inclusive and communitarian society.

It was already suggested earlier in this chapter that a relativistic and benevolent approach which is represented in $\bar{P}_2 + \bar{P}_1$ and by Molly in the text signifies and reveals the possibility of a different solution to the contradiction which transcends the antagonistic classes towards building a possibly classless society by acknowledging the existence of these antagonistic classes in order to build a more inclusive and balanced politics. This benevolent and more truly progressive position is denied validity and is replaced, at the narrative’s end, with the amoralist position which merely creates a mirage of progress since it transcends the central contradiction not so much by engaging with and finding a solution to it but by leaving it untouched and denying its existence in the new paradigm. Compared to Molly’s benevolent relativism which is mediatory and inclusive, there is now George, Frank and the Garmonys’ amoral relativism which is indifferent and opportunistic.

It was already discussed that while an amoral position (in its relation to the free-market ideology) becomes the position of the dominant ruling class, a benevolent moral relativity (in its relation to the promise of a solution that can transcend classes, perhaps creating a classless society) becomes the opposing position which designates the movement of the labouring class that seeks to contest and to undermine the dominant ‘value system.’ Now, at this moment, it could also

be argued that the amoral position becomes the male while the relativistic position becomes the female voice of the antagonistic dialogue. Although David Malcolm claims that “male-female relations of power” which is normally a “social issue that is never far from the heart of McEwan’s novels and short stories” is actually absent in “*Amsterdam* and the work for children” (*Understanding* 186), for Dominic Head and Lynn Wells it is a highly relevant issue in *Amsterdam* as well (Head, *Ian McEwan* 153; Wells 85-89). Indeed, bringing this dichotomy into play helps make better sense of the antagonistic class discourses in the text within the second horizon of Jamesonian hermeneutics.

As Wells argues, “with Molly’s death, the world depicted in *Amsterdam* loses the benign ‘feminine’ principle of caring for others, and except for Clive and Vernon’s remembrances of her, women play little role for the first three sections of the novel (86). This includes the role played by the only other female character on stage, Rose Garmony, since she fails to revive the female benevolence lost by Molly’s death once she lets herself become the mouthpiece of the conservative media manipulators as discussed at length above. Compared to the male characters who dominate the story at all instances with their power struggles, back stabbings, double-dealings, and delusions of grandeur, Molly’s memory resembles a beacon of hope for a better society. It was already discussed that she is able to maintain relationships with all sorts of characters from the story. In fact, she is, or at least used to be, the glue that holds the world depicted in *Amsterdam* together. All the different sorts of people who share that world are in interaction with one another in the narrative because their relations to Molly make this possible. Molly is like the heart of a huge metropolitan city where all the roads of which meet. The destruction of this community, hence, follows Molly’s death: after the removal of this mediating and uniting force, things, people and relations start to fall apart. After seeing Molly’s

photographs of Julian Garmony, for instance, Clive states that he was able to consider, for the first time, “what it might be like to feel kindly toward Garmony. It was Molly who had made it possible” (*Am* 71). Here, Molly is the force that brings these two extremes together and makes them understand and ‘feel kindly’ toward each other. With the photograph incident, Clive better understands the essence of her relationship with Garmony. He thinks that “[s]he would have been creative and playful, urging him on, taking him further into the dreams that the House of Commons could not fulfil, and he would have known that he could rely on her” (*Am* 70). Here, Molly is now also the force that can bring meaning, fulfilment and trust into this world. She provides an alternative to the petty power struggles and tensions of the male politics represented by the House of Commons. To be able to rely on someone with one’s innermost secrets is a direct opposite the hypocritical ways the male characters interact with each other in the text. In another instance, while reminiscing about their friendship in the years following their love affair, Clive thinks to himself how “they liked to be free to talk about their affairs. She was like a sister, judging his women with far more generosity than he ever allowed her men” (*Am* 20). This once again underlines the difference in the opposite male and female voices in the text, the former being individualistically possessive and selfish, the latter being benevolently generous and understanding.

Carol Gilligan in her *In a Different Voice* elaborates on these two different perspectives, namely male and female, and how they interpret life, society and relationships differently. Her discussion of the dialogue between these two voices is quite parallel to Jameson’s antagonistic dialogue in his second horizon. Gilligan says:

As we have listened for centuries to the voices of men and the theories of development that their experience informs, so we have come more recently to notice not only the silence of women but the difficulty in hearing what they

say when they speak. Yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection. The failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. (173)

Gilligan's interpretation of the dialogue is similar to Jameson's idea in the second horizon according to which there is a hegemonic voice that tries to undermine the opposing voice by silencing it. As any hegemonic voice, the male voice, in Gilligan's words, continuously tries to sustain the assumption that no voice exists other than its own, and there is no way of seeing things other than its own. Another important aspect of Gilligan's words is her reference to an 'ethic of care' which seems to be the alternative that that female voice tries to uphold against the male voice of indifference.

In an article that juxtaposes a female romanticism epitomised in the works and thoughts of Jane Austen and Mary Shelley with the male romanticism of Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley or Keats in order to discuss how there is a neglected feminine perspective on the Romantic era ideology, Anne Mellor arrives at similar conclusions to those of Gilligan. Mellor starts by elaborating on the fundamental significance of the individual for romanticism rather than the state or society as a whole and how the romantic idea of exercising the human mind's creative powers over nature compares the individual to gods (274-275). This leads to, in Mellor's interpretation of Mary Shelley's ideas, "[t]he failure of the masculine romantic ideology to care for the created product as much as for the creative process, together with its implicit assumption that the ends can justify the means" (285). According to Mellor, Shelley's *Frankenstein* serves as an account of what such an ideology leads

to: Victor Frankenstein “abandons the child to whom he has given birth, and by failing to provide his creature with the mothering it requires, he creates ... a battered child who becomes a battering adult, a monster” (283). This masculine ideology is contrasted by a feminine ideology which urges one to “take responsibility not only for the creative process but also for the created product [and] the predictable consequences” (Mellor 283). Mellor concludes by saying that against the indifference and self-indulgence of a masculine romanticism,

Mary Shelley posed an alternative ideology grounded on the trope of the family-politic and its gradual evolution and rational reform. ... the organic development of both human minds and nation-states under benevolent parental guidance as her model of a successful human community. (284-285)

In other words, as opposed to the masculine romantics’ emphasis on the rights of the individual, the feminine romantics emphasise the responsibilities of the individual towards other individuals in the community. It is a mediating and balancing approach as was discussed above in relation to Molly’s position in *Amsterdam’s* narrative. Once again returning to Carol Gilligan, this might be understood as the necessity of keeping a balance “between responsibilities and rights [to] sustain the dialectic of human development” (174).

In *Amsterdam*, all the male characters and Rose clearly adhere to what Mellor names the assumption that the ends can justify the means, and they fail to realise that they have a responsibility to other individuals in society; they do not want to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. It is evident when Clive in the train ride episode says, looking at the urban corruption reaching out to the countryside, “[n]o one would have wished it this way, but no one had been asked. Nobody planned it, nobody wanted it, but most people had to live in it” (*Am* 64); or, when he similarly says in the police station episode watching the working-class

people come in and go with all sorts of troubles, “the main business of the police was to deal with the numerous and unpredictable consequences of poverty” (*Am* 153). In both cases, he refuses to accept any responsibility either on his part or that of the system for the devastating consequences some people have to face. They, hence, represent the romantic masculine worldview, the traces of which in the narrative are followed by some critics, especially with references to Clive and his presence in the Lake District (Ingersoll 131; Popiel 95; Cojocaru 9; Wells 89). Vernon does not care about the fact that he deploys the hate codes that further polarise the society so that he can exercise his powers as an editor. Clive does not care that he lets a woman be raped so that he can exercise his powers as a composer. Similarly, George does not care if people are hurt so long as he can get what he wants, and Frank does the same so long as he can be the next editor. Rose also adheres to this ideology and does not care that she is openly lying to and manipulating the thoughts of the public so long as her husband can retain his political power. It is Molly who refuses to justify the means for some ends and to ignore the consequences of decisions. The novel opens with a reference to this caring and responsible perspective of Molly’s when the narrator describes the garden of the crematorium chapel by saying: “Each plant had been savagely cut back to within a few inches of the frozen ground, a practice Molly used to deplore” (*Am* 4). This is an ethic of care that rests “on the premise of nonviolence” (Gilligan 174), on the premise that no one should be hurt so that some others can exercise their will. Molly is the one who refuses Clive’s marriage proposal, since he, she understands, proposes to stop her from leaving. She responds by quoting from a Philip Larkin poem: “He married a woman to stop her getting away/Now she’s there all day” (*Am* 7). Unlike the male characters, she considers the consequences of thoughts and actions.

This move completes the analysis in the second horizon of Jameson's model. The analysis started with a consideration of *Amsterdam* as a symbolic act which tries to resolve a real social contradiction in a symbolic move. Following Jameson's model of semantic enrichment, which eventually makes the critic privy to the political unconscious of the text, the analysis first needed to distinguish between a nether subtext, where the real social contradiction resides, and an intermediary subtext, which the text, being unable to directly engage with the 'real,' creates between itself and that 'real' in a sublimation process of sorts. As mentioned, in the intermediary subtext, the narrative recreates the real social contradiction in the shape of an ideologically blurred antinomy which hence becomes "the symptomatic expression and conceptual reflex of ... [that] social contradiction" (*The Political* 83). Symptomatically, when the antinomy in the intermediary subtext is "addressed and 'resolved' by the formal prestidigitation of narrative" (*The Political* 83), the resolution becomes, at the same time, the symbolic resolution of the real social contradiction. In order to reach at the real social contradiction in a narrative's context, then, the analysis continued to engage with this intermediary subtext by way of a symptomatic analysis.

Trying to answer the question why Clive and Vernon perish where other characters in the story prevail, it was found that *Amsterdam's* narrative was built upon a system of antinomies which features different moral positions; the central binary opposition being the opposition between moral duty and self-advancement. After a mapping of the system of antinomies by using the Greimassian semiotic square in the first horizon of Jameson's model, a symptomatic analysis of this mapped system of antinomies showed in the second horizon of Jameson's model that underlying *Amsterdam's* narrative movement there was an acquiescence to the unchecked free market hegemony in the post-Cold War world order of the 1990s. In

a decade when the shift in global politics from a Cold War bipolar to a post-Cold War unipolar world order creates a paradigm shift McEwan's *Amsterdam* becomes the conceptual reflex of this shift in global and home socio-politics. His novel is the symbolic act that tries to address the crises of power, authority and direction during this period of drastic change. Trying to come to terms with the contradictory shift in real socio-politics, *Amsterdam* imagines the binary oppositions of the Cold War bipolar and the British neo-conservative politics in the shape of moral dilemmas in order to kill off the characters who try to make sense of the world with a steadfast loyalty to these binary categories instead of letting them go for the sake of a new kind of politics, namely free-market politics. That is to say, *Amsterdam* says farewell to certain hegemonic binary categories in order only to acquiesce to the hegemony of the now-unchecked capitalist free market.

As was discussed in detail, Clive Linley and Vernon Halliday are unable to make it to the end of the story and self-destruct because of their unwillingness or inability to let go of the old dichotomies that defined them so far. The reader witnesses the rise to power of characters who are more willing or able to adopt the imperatives of the shift in socio-politics like George Lane, Frank Dikken, Julian Garmony and Rose Garmony. With Clive and Vernon's effacement, the text 'says good-bye,' in McEwan's words ("Bold Type Interview"), to the old order of things while acquiescing to the new order of things with George, Frank, Julian and Rose's rise to power. In this new order of things, the old antagonisms are effaced under the domination of the unchecked capitalist market where everything is for sale and anything can be utilised for profit, including values like moral, ethical, right or good. It is George, Frank, Julian and Rose's ability to rise above the dichotomy of morality/immorality and to make use of and utilise these moral positions to the

extent that these serve their self-advancement that carries them to triumph at the end.

With this in mind, *Amsterdam* was then taken as an ideologeme in an antagonistic class dialogue. It was argued that on one side of the dialogue, there is the free-market ideology which aligns with the amorality of the characters who are rewarded at the end of the narrative. On the other side, there is a more relativistic and benevolent understanding of morality, which is neither indifferent to these values in an amoral way nor demonstrates a firm stance in reference to them in an idealist or a nihilist way. Throughout the narrative, these two differing perceptions are at play as two opposing forces. While an amoral position (in its relation to the free-market ideology) becomes the position of the dominant ruling class, a benevolent moral relativity (in its relation to the promise of a solution that can transcend classes, perhaps creating a classless society) becomes the opposing position which designates the movement of the labouring class that seeks to contest and to undermine the dominant 'value system.' It was also argued that the amoral position becomes the male and the relativistic position becomes the female voice in the antagonistic dialogue.

While the free-market ideologeme, as it is represented by the masculine amoral position in *Amsterdam's* narrative, works to suppress the opposing voice, the feminine moral relativist position in the narrative signifies and reveals the possibility of a different solution to the contradiction which transcends the antagonistic classes towards building a possibly classless society by acknowledging the existence of these antagonistic classes in order to build a more inclusive and balanced politics. This benevolent and more truly progressive position is denied validity and is replaced, at the narrative's end, with the amoralist position which merely creates a mirage of progress since it transcends the central contradiction not

so much by engaging with and finding a solution to it but by leaving it untouched and denying its existence in the new paradigm. Compared to Molly's benevolent relativism which is mediatory and inclusive, there is now George, Frank and the Garmonys' amoral relativism which is indifferent and opportunistic. Therefore, as an ideologeme *Amsterdam* ends up acquiescing to a new profit/loss dichotomy and it affirms marketability over benevolence. This mirrors the rise of a free market ideology to hegemonic power in the aftermath of the Cold War.



CONCLUSION

This study's aim was reading, analysing and interpreting Ian McEwan's novels *The Cement Garden* (1978), *The Child in Time* (1987) and *Amsterdam* (1998) in terms of Fredric Jameson's theory of political unconscious in order not only to bring forth the political and the social in McEwan's fiction but also, in the same process, to explore, through McEwan's fiction, the ways in which a text unconsciously engages with its contemporary socio-political reality. To this end, this study explored the selected texts in the light of Jameson's two concentric horizons of interpretation which he identifies as the political and the social, reserving an analysis of these texts in the third, historical, horizon for further study.

McEwan is established in the canon of the contemporary British novel, especially after the commercial success his *Atonement* brought him in 2001. However, his earlier work is generally overlooked on the grounds of the narrow and disturbing nature of their subject matter. Subject matter of these novels may seem narrow and disturbing on the surface, but as this study hopes to have proved, Jameson's semantic enrichment helps penetrate these texts' surfaces to reach their political unconscious and open up new social and political readings of them. Therefore, in each case, Jameson's theory of the political unconscious proves a productive reading, helping explore McEwan's fiction beyond what it deals with on the surface. For all three novels, an exploration of their political unconscious help us to understand them in fresh ways and helps bring to light new meanings that lead to a fuller understanding of his fiction.

In the light of the findings of this study, it can be said that McEwan's fiction is highly responsive to its socio-political context. *The Cement Garden*, for instance, is usually read as a reflection on disturbing adolescent fantasies, but when taken as a

symbolic act, it is found that the text deals with the British Empire's demise in its political unconscious. A mapping of Jack's desire in terms of a contradiction between two versions of unity as controlled by the forces of the Imaginary and Symbolic Order reveals the narrative movement to be a symbolic reworking of a socio-political contradiction that was a burning issue for British society in the 1970s. The 1970s was witness more than ever to the fact that the British Empire had been dissolving since the mid-century and Britain was losing its place as a global power to the USA and to the corporate actors of a neoliberal age. The opposing forces of Imaginary and Symbolic come to respectively represent imperial idealism and centralism on one side and neoliberalism and globalisation on the other. While the former indicates a reluctance to let go of British imperial fantasy—as the Mother's encased corpse in the basement suggests—the latter indicates the pressing necessity of Britain's integration into the new globalised neoliberal order—as suggested by Derek's hammering the cement encasement to pieces. When the intrusion of Derek and the police at the narrative's last few sentences disrupts the children's prolonged residence in the Imaginary Order, the narrative projects a future where the kids are forced to integrate into the Symbolic, hence, at the same time, it points towards the unavoidable transition from the imperial towards the global-neoliberal.

It is further revealed that while a hegemonic ruling class ideology dominates the ideological closure in *Cement's* narrative, voices of an emergent opposition try to break through this dominant voice to make their alternatives be heard. In the double bind of the two versions of unity controlled by either parent lies the boundaries of an ideological closure in the narrative where it seems impossible to think of an alternative solution to the socio-political crisis, i.e., either get stuck in an imperial fantasy or integrate into the neoliberal-global. However, the voices that are

denied, avoided, suppressed and imprisoned in the margins of the text represent a working-class alternative to these ruling class versions of unity, i.e., trade unionism and punk subculture. These alternative and oppositional versions of unity reject, in the symbolic plane of *Cement's* narrative, either parent's control and points towards a unity of the siblings that challenges old oppressive relations of power represented by the parents.

For *The Child in Time*, an exploration of its political unconscious similarly helps reconsider this novel in fresh terms and paints a completely different picture of how it responds to its socio-political context. *Child* is usually appreciated as a political statement against the neoliberal conservative government of the time and a critical stance on patriarchal values. However, it is found that the narrative movement corroborates the neoliberal-neoconservative viewpoint and denies a feminine outlook in its political unconscious. The central contradiction between two different conceptualisations of childhood in the narrative, coupled with a contradiction between a male-clock time frame and a female-quantum time frame, is revealed to be a symbolic reworking of the contradiction that the Thatcher government introduced to British society in the 1980s. This real socio-political contradiction that emerges with Thatcher's simultaneous emphasis on a regressive conservatism on the one hand and a 'progressive' neoliberalism on the other finds its symbolic resolution in *Child's* narrative when the narrative movement eliminates the quantum forces in the end. With this move, the narrative eliminates the female forces and any understanding of more diffuse-cyclical forms of existence with it. The triumphant clock time represents male forces and an understanding of time as neoliberal project.

Lastly for *Amsterdam*, an exploration of the text's political unconscious opens up new meanings of the novel while it is mainly read as a take on the decaying

morals of its time. An analysis of the text's political unconscious reveals the narrative's engagement in the crisis brought about by the post-Cold War paradigm shift of the 1990s and also its acquiescence in free-market hegemony. It is found that the narrative movement is set on an investigation and resolution of a contradiction between self-interest and moral duty, which becomes a symbolic reworking of the paradigm shift of the post-Cold War transition in the 1990s. The bipolar world politics of the Cold-War era gives way, in the 90s, to a unipolar centre that is dominated by the capitalist free-market. The free market does not align with old dichotomies that used to designate bipolar world politics and operates above concerns such as good/evil, west/east, or moral/immoral. When Clive and Vernon fail to see this paradigm shift and insist on judging their own and each other's decisions in accordance with the old dichotomous moral/immoral value judgments, they are simply removed from the narrative. The ones who know how to operate above such concerns, and more than that, how to manipulate, utilise and take advantage of these concerns whenever they prove to be profitable, finish the narrative unpunished and rewarded. The analysis was able to show that this narrative denouement indicates an acquiescence to the free market hegemony in the post-Cold War period that passes itself as the triumphant and the only viable option as opposed to the socialist or similarly collectivist options. The oppositional voice, in this case, comes to be represented by the moral relativism of Molly in the narrative. Her benevolence points at the possibility of a benevolent and responsible moral relativism as an alternative to the irresponsible amorality of the free market.

To conclude, it can be said that there is more to be found in Ian McEwan's earlier fiction that is sampled in this study by three of his novels from the 70s to the 90s. In the introduction chapter and the analytical chapters, it was already discussed how Jameson's theory goes beyond a mere sociology of literature, that is, beyond

what a text seems to be dealing with on the surface. All three novels analysed for this study display an astounding link between the contradictions that drive their plots and the socio-political contradictions of their immediate context.

On another note, based upon what the study managed to find in the political unconscious of these texts, it can be argued that although McEwan the author comes across as a dissident who is disaffected by the condition his country and the world at large is in—a message conveyed by not only certain novels he wrote but also in the interviews, talks and newspaper articles by, with and on him—his works are found to be dominated by the hegemonic middle-class bourgeois discourse. For instance, there are several moments in his *Child* where Thatcher's Tory government is openly rebuked by the narrator Stephen for being directly guilty of putting the country in the miserable condition it is in. Similarly, an open disapproval of a Tory government's economic and social policies is among the main discussion points between the chief characters in *Amsterdam*. Such disapprovals of Tory governments are always there in his writing, given in casual small doses and always stated in very peaceful terms and with a democratic tone. Nevertheless, once the analysis moves beyond these surface statements, that is, when the analysis moves beyond a sociology of literature for which such statements may suffice to categorise them as of an oppositional nature, these overt criticisms of the right-wing governments are revealed to belong to a limited and restrictive day-to-day politics as opposed to an extensive and conflictual politics whose disapproval would have extended beyond the problem of who is in charge of the government into the problem of class relations and oppression that the whole socio-political system is built upon. In their formal prestidigitation, as Jameson calls it, all these three novels end up acquiescing to the existing power relations and maintain a dominant class discourse while pushing the oppositional labouring class discourse to the margins in each case.

Finally, as suggestion for further study, it can be stated that McEwan's fiction can be analysed in Jameson's third horizon. In Jameson's third 'historical' horizon, "the organising unity [becomes] what the Marxian tradition designates as a mode of production" (*The Political* 89). However, as with all the other terms he uses, Jameson slightly revises the term of mode of production and what it means for his theory. He argues that speaking of history as a succession of modes of production (from tribes to a projected communism) is nothing more than impairing dialectical thought. Such a vision simply stratifies a whole process of historical development, which is a continuous flow, into many synchronous and static moments, each of which is centrally controlled by an all-encompassing mode of production specific to that moment. For Jameson, this motivates the crude argumentation of the base-superstructure model where the possibility of change and dynamism is largely missing. Instead, by borrowing from Nicos Poulantzas, Jameson wants to name any chosen moment in the process of historical development a 'social formation' which consists

in the overlay and structural coexistence of several modes of production all at once, including vestiges and survivals of older modes of production, now relegated to structurally dependent positions within the new, as well as anticipatory tendencies which are potentially inconsistent with the existing system but have not yet generated an autonomous space of their own. (*The Political* 95)

In this way, Jameson overcomes the temptation of a typologizing analysis that rests on a static view of history and turns to a more dialectical understanding of any historical moment which consists of contradictions between a myriad of modes of production existing together. He names this approach cultural revolution: "with 'cultural' signalling the sense in which a social formation must be grasped as a total

structure or system, 'revolution' the sense in which a dynamic of opposing tensions organizes the structure and produces its transformations" (Dowling 138). In fact, for Jameson's third horizon, these contradictions are also what make up the fabric of the text:

I will suggest that within this final horizon the individual text or cultural artifact ... is here restructured as a field of force in which the dynamics of sign systems of several distinct modes of production can be registered and apprehended. These dynamics—the newly constituted "text" of our third horizon—make up what can be termed the ideology of form, that is, the determinate contradiction of the specific messages emitted by the varied sign systems which coexist in a given artistic process as well as in its general social formation. (*The Political* 98-99)

At this point, Jameson reveals that this process of identifying the existing heterogeneous sign systems and arguing the ideological messages they carry is largely dependent on a study of literary genres.

Then, the study of McEwan's works in the third horizon may focus on the generic dynamics of these texts. All the genres and subgenres, together with specific narratological and stylistic elements that McEwan makes use of in *Cement*, *Child*, and *Amsterdam* can be considered in this light. In *Cement*, for instance, an analysis of the intermixing genres and subgenres of realism, psychological thriller and gothic would be rewarding. The dominant gothic atmosphere, emanating from the elements of death, decay and mystery and amplified in the image of a claustrophobic house that looks "like a castle" (*Cement* 28), brings with it all the significations and meaning of aristocratic fears and decay from two centuries ago. Especially this fact would prove to be a fruitful starting point for a discussion of modes of production which always co-exist in any moment of social formation as Jameson states. In *Child*,

the generic and stylistic range now includes post-modernist magic realism, temporal distortions and metafictional references along with a dominating realist style and a romance plot. In *Amsterdam*, post-modernist techniques are more prevalent compared to these previous novels with pastiche where McEwan deliberately shapes the novel like a five-act Elizabethan comedy, meanwhile filling it with black humour, irony and playfulness. The intertextual bridge he builds between *Amsterdam* and the satirical tradition of Evelyn Waugh and Kingsley Amis, the references by the critics to it as a morality tale, and finally the fact that his readership finds *Amsterdam* to be an odd element among his other works hint at the tensions in the signifying processes of the novel that might be dwelled upon in an analysis within Jameson's third horizon.

Apart from these generic qualities, blends and contradictions, other more immediately narratological and stylistic features of these three novels are also suggestive. For instance, *Amsterdam* stands apart from the other two as the only third-person narrative. Both *Cement* and *Child* are narrated by a male voice, and there are hints that *Amsterdam*'s third person narrator is also a male voice. While *Cement* is completely ambiguous in terms of its setting, by the time of *Child*, McEwan starts including more specific references to real places and to the novel's contemporary time, culminating in the very specific setting of *Amsterdam* as the name itself suggests. *Amsterdam* features more dialogue, and free indirect thought is abundant in *Amsterdam* while *Cement* and *Child* are dominated by internal monologues. An analysis of the texts in Jameson's third horizon might benefit from a focus on all these signifying processes in the context of the modes of production as they appear in the late stages of capitalism.

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ÖZET

IAN MCEWAN'IN *BETON BAHÇE*, *KAYIP* VE *AMSTERDAM'DA DÜELLO* ROMANLARINDA SİYASAL BİLİNÇDİŞİNİN İNCELENMESİ

Bu çalışmada, Fredric Jameson'ın ağırlıklı olarak Marksist bir edebiyat yaklaşımına dayanan siyasal bilinçdışı teorisi kullanılarak Ian McEwan'ın *Beton Bahçe* (1978), *Kayıp* (1987) ve *Amsterdam'da Düello* (1998) başlıklı romanlarının okunması, analiz edilmesi ve yorumlanması amaçlanmaktadır. Bahsi geçen romanların anlatılarında gizli olan siyasal ve toplumsal ortaya çıkarmak dışında, aynı zamanda herhangi bir anlatı ile onun çağdaş sosyal-politik gerçekliği arasındaki ilişkinin üzerine McEwan'ın romanlarından yola çıkan bir tartışma sunmak da bu çalışmanın bir amacıdır. Bu amaçla, bu çalışmada seçilen metinler Jameson'un anlambilimsel zenginleştirme yönteminin ilk iki ufkı ışığında incelenmiştir. Her üç romanın da gerçek bir siyasal-toplumsal çelişkiye simgesel bir çözüm getiren birer simgesel edim olduğu üzerinde durulmuştur; *Beton Bahçe*'de Britanya imparatorluğunun çöküşü ardından gelen birlik arayışına, *Kayıp*'ta Thatcher döneminin çelişkili neoliberal/yeni muhafazakâr politikalarına ve *Amsterdam'da Düello*'da ise Soğuk Savaş sonrası paradigma değişimine yönelik. Bunun ardından, her bir romandaki anlatı, biri hâkim diğeri ise emekçi olmak üzere muhalif iki sınıf anlatısının diyalojik ilişkisini barındıran bir ideologeme olarak okunmuştur. *Beton Bahçe*'de, ya emperyalist idea ya da neoliberal globalleşme ikilemine sıkışmış olan anlatı aygıtının, emekçi sınıf tarafında oluşum halindeki sesler olan ve bu ikilemden çıkış alternatifleri öneren sendikal hareket ile punk alt-kültürünü gizli tutmaya çalıştığı görülmüştür. *Kayıp*'ta, anlatı aygıtının, kapitalist biriktirici-devamlı zaman anlayışını temsil eden eril bir zamansallığa geçit vererek bu dominant anlayışa daha döngüsel ve difüze bir zamansallık alternatifi öneren dişil zaman anlayışını

baskıladığı görülmüştür. Son olarak, *Amsterdam'da Düello*'da, anlatı aygıtının daha iyicil, mesuliyetli ve dengeli türden bir siyaset alternatifini inkâr eden kontrolsüz bir serbest piyasanın hegemonyasına teslimiyeti açığa vurduğu görülmüştür. Sonuç olarak, Jameson'ın teorisinin, McEwan'ın yapıtlarını yeni bir bakış açısıyla ele almayı sağladığı, ve bu yapıtlardaki anlam zenginliğini ortaya çıkartarak yüzeyde ifade ettiklerinin ötesinde bilinçdışlarında çağdaş sosyal-politik gerçeklik ile nasıl kökten ilişkilendiklerini görmeyi sağladığı ortaya konmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ian McEwan, *Beton Bahçe*, *Kayıp*, *Amsterdam'da Düello*, Fredric Jameson, *Siyasal Bilinçdışı*, birlik, çocukluk, zaman, ahlak, siyaset

ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATION OF THE POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS IN IAN MCEWAN'S *THE CEMENT GARDEN*, *THE CHILD IN TIME*, AND *AMSTERDAM*

This study aims at reading, analysing and interpreting Ian McEwan's novels *The Cement Garden* (1978), *The Child in Time* (1987) and *Amsterdam* (1998) by Fredric Jameson's theory of political unconscious that mainly rests on a Marxist approach to literature, in order not only to bring forth the political and the social in McEwan's fiction but also, in the same process, to present an argumentative statement on the relationship between contemporary British fiction and contemporary social-political reality through McEwan's fiction. To this end, this study explores the selected texts in the light of Jameson's two horizons of semantic enrichment. It is discussed that, each of the three novels is a symbolic act attempting at a symbolic resolution of a real socio-political contradiction; i.e. *The Cement Garden* that of a search for unity after the British empire's demise, *The Child in Time* that of contradictory neoliberal/neoconservative politics of Thatcherism, and *Amsterdam* that of the post-Cold War paradigm shift. In each case, the narrative is then read as an ideologeme that registers the antagonistic class dialogue between a dominant and a labouring class. In *The Cement Garden*, the narrative movement is confined to a choice of either an imperial ideal or a neoliberal globalisation, suppressing the emergent voices of trade unionism and punk subculture that offer alternatives to the former two. In *The Child in Time*, the narrative movement yields to a masculine version of temporality that represents a capitalist version of accumulative-progressive time as opposed to a feminine version of temporality which offers a more cyclical and diffuse alternative to the former dominant version. Lastly, in *Amsterdam*, the narrative movement betrays an acquiescence to the hegemony of an

unchecked free-market that suppresses and denies the alternative politics of a more benevolent, responsible and balanced nature. In conclusion, it was shown that Jameson's theory makes it possible to reconsider McEwan's fiction in fresh terms. It opens up new meanings of McEwan's novels, and by way of doing that, it reveals how these texts deal with their contemporary socio-political reality in more fundamental ways than what is apparent on the surface.

Key words: Ian McEwan, *The Cement Garden*, *The Child in Time*, *Amsterdam*, Fredric Jameson, *the Political Unconscious*, unity, childhood, time, morality, politics

