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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DEPTH IN THE CHARACTERS OF IAN MCEWAN'S SELECTED NOVELS

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Abstract: Psychological depth refers to the complexity and richness of an individual's inner world including their thoughts, emotions, motivations and beliefs. It encompasses the various layers and dimensions of a person's psyche which can be explored through self-reflection, introspection and psychological analysis. Exploring psychological depth involves delving beneath the surface level of conscious awareness to uncover and understand the deeper aspects of one's personality and experiences. Ian McEwan is widely regarded as one of the most accomplished contemporary writers known for his psychologically rich characters. He has won the Somerset Maugham Award for his collection of short stories, *First Love, Last Rites* (1975), the Prix Femina Etranger (1993) for *The Child in Time* and Germany's Shakespeare Prize in 1999. He has been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction numerous times, winning the award for *Amsterdam* in 1998. His novel *Atonement* received the WH Smith Literary Award (2002), National Book Critics' Circle Fiction Award (2003), Los Angeles Times Prize for Fiction (2003) and the Santiago Prize for the European Novel (2004). In 2006, Ian McEwan won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for his novel *Saturday*. His novel *Solar* won The Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction in 2010 and *Sweet Tooth* won the Paddy Power Political Fiction Book of the year award in 2012. One of the key aspects of McEwan's character development is his emphasis on the inner lives and thoughts of his protagonists. He often employs techniques such as stream of consciousness and introspective monologues to provide readers with direct access to the character's mind. This allows readers to witness the characters' most intimate thoughts, fears and desires providing a deeper understanding of their psychological states.

Keywords: Psychological, Morality, Consciousness, Guilt, redemption, Inner conflict, stream of consciousness, inner psyche, characters.

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When we read literature, we begin our adventure with new discoveries and investigation into the social and psychological world. Since the beginning of the civilization, literature has narrated many journeys through the psychology or inner world of the human mind. Literature creates characters by delving into the interior world. Human behavior is always linked to the carried on such expedition of exploring the inner psyche of his characters. Briony Tallis in *Atonement* is obsessed with storytelling and considers herself as the center of each story which leads her to only see things from her perspective *"Everything connected. It was her own story, the one that was writing itself around her."* McEwan is a skilled artist who has portrayed the complexities of human mind. McEwan has a keen ability to depict emotions with great authenticity and realism. He is adept at capturing the subtleties, contradictions and complexities of human feelings, making his characters relatable and believable. He skillfully reveals the intricacies of their emotional landscapes, allowing readers to empathize with and understand the emotional experiences of his characters. His characters are not immune to vulnerability and the depth of their emotions. He portrays their vulnerabilities, allowing readers to connect with their struggles and experiences on a deep psychological level. In *Atonement*, at the end of the book, Briony says, *"The problem these fifty nine years has been: how can a novelist achieve atonement when, with her absolute power of deciding outcomes, she is also God? There is no one, no entity or higher form that she can appeal to or be reconciled with, or that can forgive her. There is nothing outside her. In her imagination she has set the limits and the terms. No atonement for God, or novelists, even if they are atheists. It was always an impossible task, and that was precisely the point. The attempt was all."*(371). Briony's whole story was to show that she recognizes her sins as unforgivable. McEwan has described human condition in his novel *Amsterdam* as, *"we knew so little about each other. We lie mostly submerged, like ice floes, with our visible social selves projecting only cool and white. Here was a rare sight below the waves, of a man's privacy and turmoil, of his dignity upended by the overpowering necessity of pure fantasy, pure thought, by the irreducible human element-mind."*(71) In the novel, *Saturday*, McEwan reflects upon the nature of degenerating mind and its impact on one's sense of self and concern for others' opinion *"It's the essence of a degenerating mind periodically, to lose all sense of continuous self, and therefore any regard for what others think of your lack of continuity"*. (173) through this quote Ian McEwan explores the psychological complexities and consequences of a degenerating mind. The potential disconnection from social norms and expectations that can occur when the continuity of one's thoughts, memories, or sense of self is disrupted.

1.1 Guilt and Redemption:

The novel *"Atonement"* is a fantastic examination of psychological complexes and human behavior. Each and every character in this novel represents human complexities. The way individual characters perceive and interpret the events of their daily is illuminated by multiple tales of the same episode told from various perspectives. In her analysis of the novel, Laura Vipond stresses this point, she proposes,

"the pivotal scene at the fountain is described in detail from the perspectives of Briony, Cecelia and Robbie, and so the reader is not only prompted to empathize with each, but also choose between them, demonstrating how the reader is still in command of the ultimate meaning."(10)

The central character, Briony Tallis, undergoes a profound transformation throughout the novel. McEwan masterfully portrays Briony's shifting emotions, from youthful innocence to guilt and remorse, as she grapples with the consequences of her actions. In the beginning of the novel we find Briony as a brilliant, gorgeous and aggressive thirteen year old girl. She believes in order and perfection and her aversion to flaws can be linked back to her hatred towards her older sister's room. She believes that she cannot be erroneous in her judgment of others. Her imaginative nature is both strength and a flaw as it fuels her desire to create a different reality and control the narrative. She wrongly accuses Robbie Turner of a crime he did not commit. As a consequence she

ences overwhelming guilt. She recognizes the irreparable damage she has caused and spends the rest of her life trying to atone for her mistakes. This is explained by Behrendt and Ben-Ari as they quote, "*a person who feels guilty [tries] to ameliorate their predicament by confessing, apologizing or otherwise repairing the damage done*"

Briony has tried to portray or rather create a fictional reality in which she reunites the lovers Robbie and Cecelia, despite the fact that reality had permanently separated them. This demonstrates the impact of the unconscious on human behavior. Briony lives in a world of fairy tales and fantasies which forms the basis of her knowledge. Briony has dreams of absolute freedom, dreams in which she can achieve her goals and she realizes that real life might not actually give her such freedom, but writing about life can. "*Wasn't writing a kind of soaring, an achievable form of flight...of the imagination?*" Her strong emotional reaction to the fountain scene and later the letter which she receives from Robbie depicts her failure to understand the real, adult world.

According to Morten Jensen, "*her organizing mind contradicts and competes against her discovery of a much more complex world than that which she is accustomed to.*" [7-8]

Through Briony's internal reflections, McEwan explores the themes of memory perception and the unreliability of human recollection, which adds to the psychological depth of the novel. Cecelia Tallis is a psychologically complex character who undergoes a transformative journey, breaking free from societal constraints and discovering her true desires. She is Briony's older sister and plays a significant role in the story. She is an intelligent and independent woman who is rebellious against societal expectations of her time. The novel explores the forbidden love affair between Cecelia and Robbie, which Briony witness and misinterprets. Briony's misinterpretation of their relationship leads to a series of devastating events that impact the lives of all involved. Cecelia's love for Robbie is a central theme in the story, and despite the challenges they face, she remains devoted to him. Through her relationship with Robbie Turner, she begins to challenge societal norms. Her actions and choices represent a rebellion against the repressive social structure and the limitations imposed on women during that time. Her psychological journey reflects the broader themes of self-discovery, authenticity and a quest for personal freedom.

Robbie Turner is a character who is ambitious to become a doctor and is fueled by his desire to transcend his social background. However he harbors self-doubt and insecurities, wondering if he truly deserves the opportunities that come his way.

He carries a profound sense of guilt over the false accusation made against him and the consequences it has on his life. He wrestles with remorse and seeks redemption for his past mistakes. Throughout the story, Robbie engages in deep self reflection, questioning his actions and searching for ways to make his amends. Robbie's lower social status and prejudices he faces contributes to his internal struggle with identity. He questions whether he fits in society or not. His dreams and aspirations are tempered by the harsh realities he faces. His idealism clashes with the stark truths of war and social injustice, leading to moments of disillusionment and a reshaping of his worldview. His inner psyche is a complex tapestry of ambition, guilt, love, resilience and the psychological impact of war and social prejudices. His journey in "Atonement" explores the depths of his thoughts and emotions, providing insights into his internal struggles and the complexities of his character.

1.2 Moral and ethical dilemma:

McEwan delves into the complexities of human nature and relationships in "Amsterdam". The novel examines the dynamics of friendship, loyalty, betrayal and fragile nature of trust. It delves into the psychological motives and desires that drive individuals to make certain choices, exploring the depths of their characters and the consequences of their actions.

According to Allain de Botton, "*Amsterdam is a pitiless study of the darker aspects of male psychology, of male paranoia, emotional frigidity, sexual jealousy, professional rivalry and performance anxiety*" [McEwan 1998, cover]

Clive Linely, a renowned composer, struggles with professional and personal challenges. He experiences intense self doubt and struggles with his creative process, leading to feelings of frustration and anxiety. His inner turmoil and desire to leave a significant artistic legacy. Molly's funeral and her mental decline had a strong emotional impact. Clive, for instance feels powerful sensations that he considers "simple night fear" but which are instilled by Molly's death.

"His feet were icy, his arms and chest were not. Anxieties about work transmuted into the base metal of simple night fear: illness and death, abstraction which soon found their focus in the sensation he still felt in his left hand. (McEwan, 25)

Vernon Halliday, a newspaper editor is driven by ambition and desire for recognition. He is portrayed as an assertive and competitive character but beneath his confident façade, there are insecurities and fears of failure. He is also known for his manipulative and calculating nature. He is willing to exploit situations and individuals for his own gain. His character exhibits moral ambiguity, as he frequently compromises ethical standards for the sake of achieving his goals. He navigates a grey area between right and wrong, often making morally questionable decisions. His psychological depth lies in the complex motivations that drive his actions, including envy, resentment and a hunger for power. Vernon often has lingering feelings of regret and the fear of not living up to his own expectations and aspirations.

1.3 Individual and society:

Henry Perowne is the protagonist of Ian McEwan novel "Saturday". He is a middle aged neurosurgeon living in London. Throughout the novel, Henry engages in deep introspection and self-reflection. He delves into his own thoughts, desires and fears allowing readers to gain insight into his psychological landscape. His inner monologues offer a window into his emotional state, motivations and contemplation of existential questions. As a neurosurgeon, Henry approaches life with a rational and analytical mindset. His profession requires him to make logical decisions under pressure and this aspect of his character is reflected in his thought processes and decision making. His analytical nature influences his perception of the world and how he navigates various situations. Henry confronts moral dilemmas and ethical considerations throughout the novel. He wrestles with the moral implications of his actions, his role as a physician and the broader ethical challenges in contemporary society. He is a deeply contemplative character who reflects on his own life, his work and the state of the world. He often engages in internal monologues and philosophical musings, contemplating his place in society and the larger human condition. Henry perowne is a complex and introspective character who embodies the tensions between reason and emotion, mortality and meaning and personal responsibility and societal concerns. His character provides a lens through which the novel explores larger themes of identity, mortality and anxieties of contemporary life.

I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This paper adopts qualitative research methodology that includes descriptive research to describe in detail the character's deep psychological insight and in-depth analysis of the complex human behavior. The paper depicts the chaotic and disoriented state of human mind through close reading and interpretations of literary texts.

III. CONCLUSION:

This paper portrays the remarkable variety of characters in Ian McEwan's work. McEwan's characters exhibit deep psychological consciousness that adds richness and complexity to their narratives. McEwan's ability to delve into the innermost thoughts, emotions and conflicts of his characters allows readers to explore the intricacies of the human psyche. From the haunting trauma of war to the complexities of love and guilt, McEwan's characters struggles with a range of psychological challenges that shape their actions and decisions. Their inner struggles, vulnerabilities and aspirations create multidimensional portrayals that resonate with readers and offer profound insights into the complexities of the human condition.

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