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Disorientation And Fragmentation: A Postmodernist Perspective In Ian Mcewan's Amsterdam And Atonement

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to focus on the study of disorientation and fragmentation in Ian McEwan's novels. It attempts to give the explanation of postmodernism and employ in the novels of Amsterdam and Atonement. Ian McEwan has one of the controversial writers among other writers in Contemporary British Novelists. In his works, he has traced situation and circumvent of the individual characters which has exposed how their life is, how they are involved in worst situation and circumvent and how their mind is entangled due to personal issues. Primarily his works has reflected under the basics of postmodernism. Everything has analyzed according to the postmodern perspective. His works not only focus on disorientation and fragmentation but also on various themes such as guilt, unchangeable past, class difference, societal pressure and so on.

Keywords: Disorientation, Fragmentation, postmodernist perspective, Ian McEwan

INTRODUCTION

The analyses of disorientation and fragmentation has exposed in the novels of Ian McEwan. Here, it shows how Ian McEwan selects the themes and how it reflects through the characters of the novels. For this purpose, two of his works has chosen to analyze and expose how his novels depict the human characteristics such as loss of innocence, personal problems, class struggle and so on. Ian McEwan portrays many events and incidents which he has experienced in his life. He uses themes and techniques in his fiction to show the readers how he has used the firsthand experience. His novels are mixed with reality and fiction. The readers want to understand which types of themes and narrative has implicated in his novels. Here, the themes of disorientation and fragmentation has analysed through characters point of view. In postmodernism disorientation and fragmentation has considered as one of the themes to know

about the human characteristics and their condition of society. Disorientation and fragmentation has celebrated as themes in postmodernism which has only the possible way of existence to know the human condition. Barry asserts in his chapter, "postmodernism" explains as, "For the postmodernist, by contrast, fragmentation is an exhilarating, liberating phenomenon, symptomatic of our escape from the claustrophobic embrace of fixed systems of belief. In a word, the modernist laments fragmentation while the postmodernist celebrates it" (84).

Disorientation and fragmentation are the main part of characterization in Ian McEwan's writings. It deals with how characters are disoriented and fragmented which has analysed from the characters point of view. It is the study of human characters and their way of life. Ian McEwan highlights human's frustration, problems, and issues. He has portrayed that his characters are hard to become successful in their life. In order to understand, he selects a characters from real-life situation and has seen in his novels. Disorientation has applied as theme in the novel, *Amsterdam*. It analyses the characters point of view that explains how people's thought, feelings and behaviours are influenced in the relationship and deal with three characters, Molly Lane, Vernon Halliday and Clive Linely in Ian McEwan's *Amsterdam* which focuses on the individual variation in their life.

Disorientation is considered as main theme in postmodern writings. Indeed, Ian McEwan has focused disorientation as a theme to analyse how individual characters are entangled with one another in every situation and circumvent. Generally, disorientation has experienced when the characters suddenly loses their sense of direction in their life. It has examined their own internal thoughts, feelings and reflects what they are. It has focused on their confused state of mind. At the same way, psychological aspects play a visible role in Ian McEwan's novel to portray how characters face the complexities due to their disoriented existence.

In *Amsterdam* (1998) Ian McEwan highlights the theme of disorientation which has impacted the characters through their personal problems. Despite, the characters are encountered with the events through their worst experience which assumes the readers that the characters are functioned in disoriented life. The novel begins with the description of the two men at the funeral of Molly Lane who has died after a long illness. It asserts, "Two Former lovers of Molly Lane stood waiting outside the crematorium chapel with their backs to the February chill" (3). The characters of Vernon and Clive are surrounded by unexpected and unwanted scene has lead to disorganize their life. Ian McEwan attributes the shocking and traumatic experience of the characters which has depicted in all circumstances and events to prove their discontinuity. Vernon and Clive's are confronted with immoral dilemma and each of them makes a disastrous decision in life due to their personal crisis. Clive thinks about the Molly's friendship with him and Vernon, he admits about the condition and circumvent as, "I've been thinking about Molly," he said at last. "The way, she died, the speed of it, her helplessness, how she wouldn't have wanted it that way" (48). Molly's memory has daunted them eventually and they are possessed with misery and depression. Clive says about his unbearable pain to Vernon and admits:

Just 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, not knowing the names of things or who I was, the kind of thing. I'd like to know there was someone who'd help me to finish it . . . I mean, help me to die. Especially if I got to the point where I couldn't make the decision for myself, or act on it. (49)

The novel is concerned with personal crisis of Molly, Vernon and Clive who have engaged with dilemma and trauma in their lives. Molly, Clive and Vernon's experience and situation has determined their personality and attitudes. Shapiro asserts in his research book, *Surviving Postmodernism: Some Ethical and not so Ethical Debates in the Media and Universities* explains as, "There are many experiences and situations that are far more complex, where an individual or a characteristic faced not with an interpersonal relationship, with an ethical choice but rather with a relationship to some determining force vaster than self or any individual" (24). It examines the depression and frustration of characters. Over all, the characters has presented their individual thought in the events and circumstances to approach the successful life instead of that, the characters lose their life and ends with pain and loss.

Examining the personal conflict, Molly, Vernon and Clive are faced social dilemma. While facing the consequences of unexpected event, characters are drowned with psychological issues to make the readers to know about the condition of individual characters in Ian McEwan's novel. Karam asserts in his research chapter, "Mind Representation in Amsterdam, Atonement, and On Chesil Beach and the Aim of the Study", explains as "Although the fictional minds in AM are situated and constructed socially, the communication among them fails mostly because the intramental side of their mental functioning overcomes the intermental one or the balance between them is disrupted" (11-12). It emphasis human condition through the characters of Ian McEwan to prove each and every character has disoriented in their life. Consequently Ian McEwan has chosen to emphasize the behaviour and attitudes of the characters from the thematic analysis of postmodern perspective.

In *Atonement* (2001) Ian McEwan highlights the theme of fragmentation which has exposed through the characters of Briony, Cecilia and Robbie's behaviour and attitudes. The narrative structure of the novel depicts the characters point of view and it analyses the individual characters which has explained their life lead to fragment. Ian McEwan has presented his characters according to the conscious and unconscious mind which has remained the human characteristics. The title itself shows the central thematic of the sin that some characters has done mistakes in their life and the readers is tempted to reconsider what the story unfolds. It assumes title leads to positive insights, eventually it leads to misleading. Briony, the protagonist of the novel has done mistakes in her life and seduces the life of Robbie and Cecilia. Due to her misconception and misunderstanding has dominated her to do crime in her life. Briony's family suffers especially her sister Cecilia. Ellam states in the chapter "The Novelist" explains about Ian McEwan's *Atonement* as, "In *Atonement*, Briony's accusation and decision to stay firm to it are at the centre as Part One leads the readers with deliberation to the time she commits her crime" (9-10). By examining the characters, Robbie and Cecilia has frustrated and depressed due to the behaviour of Briony. Briony, who accuses Robbie as maniac and tried to explore the information to the cop that Robbie rapes Lola and she is the victim of that cause. Consequently Robbie and Cecilia's life has got tragic moments and their life is fragmented. Once Briony knows the fact, she feels atone for her mistakes and try to write a novel for atonement. Angelo comments in her research article:

Briony's attempts to make amends for her crime through fiction will inevitably fail; in fact, this seems to be the point. Although atonement is only possible through act of writing, the result of that writing remains limited by the restrictions of fiction. To put it simply, fiction cannot absolve or undo transgressions that have taken place in real world (88).

Due to her false accusation Robbie and Cecilia's life has fragmented at last they have died at the war. Briony has wrote the novel for atonement but she has felt atone in her whole life. Consciously and unconsciously Briony leads to live fragmented life and the novel ends with fragmented. The whole events and characters situation try to live fragmented life due to their behaviour and attitudes. Ian McEwan selects the characters to know about the condition of the human how they are misinterpreted and misunderstand by their action and behaviour which drag characters to live unhappy life.

The lifestyle of common people's character is portrayed in the novels of Ian McEwan. The flaws of human society are presented through his characters and the ethics of society is also reflected in the novels. To find out the solution and possibilities of the characters Ian McEwan's novels are disoriented and fragmented. The contemporary state of postmodernism and ethics in society has exposed through situation and circumstances of individual characters. Moreover, the characters have never determined society but they are extremely lost their life in personal issues. The major flaws of human condition are represented in the novels. Most of the characters deal with various aspects of human life. The novel presents a realistic picture of the complexities face by the people in their day-to-day life.

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