

- . *The Innocent*. London: Picador–Pan, 1990.
- . “An Interview with Ian McEwan.” Interview. By Eric Schoeck. *Capitola Book café* 16 Feb. 1998. 27 Mar. 2000.
<<http://www.capitolabookcafe.com//andrea/mcewan.html>>.
- . “Move Over, Darwin. . . .” *Observer* 20 Sep. 1998: 13.
- . “The Pleasure of Prose Writing vs. Pornographic Violence.” Interview. By Rosa González Casademont. *European English Messenger* 1:3 (1992): 40-5.
- . “The State of Fiction: A Symposium.” *New Review* 5:1 (1978): 50-1.
- . “The Wonder Is We’re Here At All.” *Times* 8 June 1998: 20.
- . “Wonderful Worlds.” *Guardian* 10 June 1998: 16.
- Miller, Laura. “Ian McEwan Fools British Shrinks.” *Salon Books* 21 Sep. 1998. 20 Apr. 2000.
<<http://www.salon.com/books/log/1999/09/21/mcewan/index.htm>>.
- Roth, Philip. *Portnoy’s Complaint*. 1967. London: Cape, 1969.
- Schoonakker, Bonny. “Enduring Myths.” *Sunday Times* (South Africa) 5 Sep. 1999
<<http://www.suntimes.co.za/1999/09/05/lifestyle/life12.htm>>.
- Slay, Jack, Jr. *Ian McEwan*. Twayne’s English Authors Ser. 518. New York: Twayne, 1996.
- Walker, Natasha. “Ian McEwan: Looks Like a Teacher. Writes Like a Demon.” *Observer* 24 Aug. 1997: 2-3.
- Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1984.
- Wood, James. “Why It All Adds Up.” *Guardian* 4 Sep. 1997: 9.

novel (the confrontation with the black dogs) is entirely religious; she believes the incident helped her to discover God. Looking at the event from a purely materialistic and rationalistic point of view, Bernard dismisses his wife's interpretation as "religious cant" (104). Penny Allen regards this resemblance between fiction and life as not accidental. In an article entitled "My Paradise Lost", she writes: "*Black Dogs* . . . was about a couple who lived in a house like ours in the south of France. Ian even gave directions in the book as to how to get there. . . . Several friends pointed out that Ian seemed to be not only writing about our French house, but also caricaturing our relationship, portraying himself as the rationalist male and me as the spiritual female" (4). (McEwan has dedicated *Enduring Love* to his new wife, Annalena McAfee, an arts journalist for the *Financial Times*.)

- ² It was not only literary critics who were taken in, some psychiatrists were too. Dr. Ronan J. McIvor, a consultant psychiatrist at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London, reviewed McEwan's novel in the *Psychiatric Bulletin*, a journal published by Britain's Royal College of Psychiatry, and wrote that *Enduring Love* was "based on a published case report" (qtd. in Miller). However, another psychiatrist wrote that the names of the authors of the appendix were not recorded in the list of members of the College of Psychiatry. Subsequently, another psychiatrist, Dr. Robin McCreadie, pointed out that the surnames of the authors were in fact an anagram of "Ian McEwan". See Schoonakker.

Works Cited

- Allen, Penny. "My Paradise Lost." *Sunday Times* 14 Mar. 1999: 4.
- Bragg, Melvyn. "Whose Side Are You On?" *Observer* 7 Mar. 1999: 1.
- Connolly, Cressida. "Over-Fished Waters." *Literary Review* Sep. 1997: <<http://www.litreview.com/199709/Connolly.html>>.
- Cowley, Jason. "The Prince of Darkest Imaginings." *Times* 6 Sep. 1997: 9.
- Dalley, Jan. "Blowing in the Wind." *Independent on Sunday* 31 Aug. 1997: 22.
- Daoust, Phil. "Post-shock Traumatic: Profile of Ian McEwan." *Guardian* 4 Aug. 1997: 6.
- McEwan, Ian. *Black Dogs*. London: Cape, 1992.
- . *The Child in Time*. London: Cape, 1987.
- . *The Comfort of Strangers*. 1981. London: Picador-Pan, 1981.
- . *Enduring Love*. London: Cape, 1997.

entry extracted from a psychological handbook, defining the mock-condition “Portnoy’s Complaint” as “A disorder in which strongly-felt ethical and altruistic impulses are perpetually warring with extreme sexual longings, often of a perverse nature” (1). What McEwan’s reviewers overlooked was the possibility that he was making use of the appendices to enhance the effect of the metafictional aspects of his novel. The ambiguity surrounding the authenticity of the appendices helps to draw our attention to the difficulty of distinguishing fact from fiction. Thus, like all metafictional novels, *Enduring Love* playfully raises the issue of reality and fiction’s imitation of each other.

Notes

¹. The publication of *Enduring Love* gave rise to much speculation among some critics about the break-up of McEwan’s own marriage. McEwan met his first wife, Penny Allen, in the early 1970s, when he was a postgraduate student at the University of East Anglia. Penny Allen was studying literature and was nine months pregnant with her second child. In 1974, she divorced her husband and started living with McEwan (They married in 1982). Penny Allen bore McEwan two children and separated from him in 1994.

The tension between McEwan and Penny Allen is thought to have been rooted in their conflicting attitudes to rationalism and spiritualism. Penny Allen is a faith-healer and meditation expert, whereas McEwan believes that “life on earth can be explained without reference to God” (Cowley, “The Prince of Darkest Imaginings” 9). For the readers of McEwan’s novels, this is of course reminiscent of the conflict between June and Bernard in *Black Dogs*. June’s interpretation of the pivotal scene of the

chapters. Indeed, he says in an interview that, in the original draft, the novel began with Chapter Nineteen – where an attempt is made on the life of the narrator in a restaurant – but he subsequently decided to place the chapters chronologically (“An Interview with Ian McEwan”). The metafictional aspects of *Enduring Love* represent the narrator’s scientific mentality and his particular interests in science. Early in the novel, the narrator explains that he is much fascinated by the idea of narrative in science and how scientific judgements are affected by what he calls “the power and attractions of narrative”; accordingly, he speaks of his intention “to write about the death of anecdote and narrative in science” (41). He then goes on to describe the research he is conducting on this subject, illustrating his main idea (i.e., that scientists after Darwin’s generation discontinued the practice of storytelling in published articles) by explaining in full how the conclusions drawn by a contemporary of Darwin were clouded by his narrative mode of presenting his material. The narrator’s metafictional discourse, his altering of the point of view or his combining of the epistolary with the narrative modes are all meant to underscore his frame of mind and his keen interest in how a narrative is constructed.

Enduring Love garnered for McEwan many unfavourable reviews, mainly because critics mistook its two appendices for authentic papers. The first appendix is purported to be a case study of de Clérambault’s syndrome written by Dr. Robert Wenn and Dr. Antonio Camia; the second claims to be a letter written by the “real” patient “Mr J. Parry”. There is no firm reason, however, to believe that either of the appendices is authentic.² McEwan’s use of a fictitious scientific paper is not without antecedent. Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* has a “Foreword” claimed to have been written by a “John Ray, Jr., Ph.D.”. Also, Philip Roth opens his novel *Portnoy’s Complaint* with what appears to be an

frame”; and again: “Let’s give the half minute after John Logan’s fall careful consideration. . . . The best description of a reality does not need to mimic its velocity” (12, 17). In Chapter Nine, the narrator shifts the point of view, allowing the reader to see the events from another vantage point: “It would make more sense of Clarissa’s return [home] to tell it from her point of view” (79). Furthermore, he combines the epistolary and the narrative modes in the novel, so that Chapters Eleven and Sixteen are entirely made up of Parry’s love letters, and Chapter Twenty-Three is Clarissa’s letter to Joe.

The metafictional aspects of *Enduring Love* are all the more remarkable because McEwan has never been keen on experimental fiction. Writing in a symposium on the development of fiction, early in his career McEwan expressed disapproval of the experimental novels of the late Sixties and early Seventies on the grounds that they were “inaccessible and too often unrewarding — no pleasure in the text”. However, he went on to argue for a different kind of experimentation, one which ensured that innovation in the forms of representation did not preclude accessibility: “Experimentation in its broadest and most viable sense should have less to do with formal factors like busting up your syntax and scrambling your page order, and more to do with content — the representation of states of mind and the society that forms them” (“The State of Fiction” 51). The opposition that McEwan sets up between experimentation in form and in content provides a crucial explanation of how the metafictional aspects of *Enduring Love* are shaped. The guiding principles here seem to have been that (a) experimentation should not go beyond a limit where the text becomes unreadable for most readers, and (b) the purpose of experimentation should be to reflect the character’s way of thinking. Both these principles are evident in *Enduring Love*. For example, McEwan does not disrupt the chronological sequence of the

illusion . . . and the laying bare of that illusion. In other words, the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction” (6). It is this “opposition” – the narrator’s pretence, on the one hand, that he is recounting real events, and the foregrounding of his awareness of the fictional status of the narrative being recounted, on the other hand – that imparts a metafictional dimension to *Enduring Love*. For example, the narrator tells us that it was sheer idiocy for him “to be racing into this story and its labyrinths” when he ran to help the pilot of the balloon (1). He refers to his own account of how the would-be rescuers’ efforts failed to anchor the balloon as the “large-scale events that shaped our story” (18). The narrator and his wife’s recalling of the accident is described as “return[ing] to our stories”, during which he notices that “[a]long the narrative lines there were knots” (29). Elsewhere he speaks of “threading single perceptions into narrative”, and manifests a narratologist’s awareness that the most convincing beginning for a story is one which is structurally related to the subsequent events: “A beginning is an artifice and what recommends one over another is how much sense it makes of what follows” (30, 17-18).

The narrator of *Enduring Love* also displays an acute self-consciousness about narration and narrative techniques. He makes it clear that, as the teller of the story, he alone is the medium through whom information about the events is filtered to the reader. At times he openly declares that he is slowing down the pace of the narration because he does not want the reader to know certain details yet: “I am holding back, delaying the information” (2). At other times he states that he is focusing on a certain aspect of the event being described, suggesting that an artwork’s representation of reality has to be selective and not a mere imitation of events as they actually happened: “[L]et me freeze the

up between materialism and spiritualism in *Enduring Love*. Parry stresses over and over again that there is a spiritual/religious dimension to his love for Joe: “The purpose is to bring you to the Christ that is in you and that *is* you. That’s what the gift of love is all about” (66, original emphasis). When Joe asks Parry if he is after homosexual sex, Parry reacts dismissively. Parry considers himself to be a “messenger”; his mission, as he sees it, is to make Joe aware of the inadequacies of his rationalism: “The study and measurement of nature is really nothing more than a form of extended prayer. . . . The more we find out about the intricacies of His creation, the more we realise how little we know and how little we are. . . . Your articles add up to a long cry of loneliness” (25, 135). Joe’s rejection of Parry’s love, therefore, has to be seen not as primarily a refusal of homoerotic love, but as rationalism’s symbolic opposition to the spiritual element in love. Read in this context, *Enduring Love* can be regarded as a thematic sequel to *Black Dogs*; the discourse, begun in the earlier novel, on rationalism and spiritualism is carried on, and complicated by the introduction of the theme of emotionalism, in the more recent novel. The thematic link established here between these two novels is echoed in a comment McEwan makes in an interview. Asked about Parry’s statement that “[W]ithout an awareness of God’s love you are living in a desert”, McEwan replied: “Perhaps I’m continuing a conversation I had with myself in another novel, *Black Dogs*” (“An Interview with Ian McEwan”).

Although in *Enduring Love* McEwan returns to a familiar theme, his style for developing this theme is without precedent in his previous novels. *Enduring Love* is in fact the first novel in which McEwan engages in extensive metafictional experiments. As Patricia Waugh has remarked, “Metafictional novels tend to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional

Time, it is the reviving effect of love which saves Stephen and Julie's marriage from disintegrating. In the novel's closing scene, the "[s]omething" that Stephen and Julie, during their sexual reunion, feel is "gathering up around them, growing louder, tasting sweeter, getting warmer, brighter" (215), is love itself, which is returning to their married life, as well as the new child who is just about to be born and relieve their sense of grief over the loss of Kate. This optimistic view about the resilience of love, its endurance in the face of adversities, is diminished but is still maintained in *Black Dogs*. June, who five years after her marriage to Bernard decides to live apart from him, emphasises that, despite estrangement, their love has never wavered: "The truth is we love each other, we've never stopped, we're obsessed. . . . We couldn't give up the love" (52). The narrator of *Black Dogs* too – who wants to find out why June and Bernard have separated, who is distressed by the break-up of his sister's and his niece's repeated marriages, and whose own married life is not an entirely happy one – continues to believe in the healing power of love: "I would be false to my own experience if I did not declare my belief in the possibility of love transforming and redeeming a life" (20). *Enduring Love* rules out this possibility, suggesting that love inspires neither meaning nor hope. Having read a note by his wife, signed "Love, Clarissa", the narrator of *Enduring Love* contemplates: "I looked at the [word] love, trying to extract meaning, or hope, from the upper case 'L' " (183). Thus, *Enduring Love* finally completes the downward curve of optimism in McEwan's novels: after the decline of the unqualified optimistic vision of *The Child in Time* to the sceptical optimism of *Black Dogs*, *Enduring Love* offers a pessimistic view based on the idea of the impossibility of love.¹

That in his penultimate novel McEwan is mounting a critique of the idea of love invested in *Black Dogs* is suggested by the opposition set

‘Courage to shite!’ She drew her breath sharply and shot me a beam of angry green. ‘An actress! He’s living inside a cliché!’ (52)

The thematic analogies between this sub-plot and the novel’s main plot are too obvious to go unnoticed. In both, love is missing and a family is disintegrating. The sub-plot relates to the main narrative, therefore, as a *parallel*, reinforcing the theme of love’s vicissitudes and fragile impermanence.

The second sub-plot involves Logan’s widow and her suspicions about her husband’s loyalty. Having found a scarf and a small picnic left behind in Logan’s car on the day of the accident, she believes that a woman must have accompanied her husband. Subsequently it turns out that there had indeed been a woman in Logan’s car, but that she was no lover of Logan. She and her lover had been on their way to a picnic in the Chilterns when their car broke down; they were then given a lift by Logan, but their journey was interrupted by the balloon accident. This sub-plot, too, mirrors the main plot in that it demonstrates how the arbitrary interpretations of “signals” can vitiate love. It is precisely this kind of (mis)interpretation that leads to the breakdown of trust between Joe and Clarissa. Uncertainty about the permanence of love, corrosive suspicion about their lovers’ loyalty, permeates the marital lives of all of McEwan’s characters in *Enduring Love*, thus establishing the interdependence between the two sub-plots and the main narrative.

III

Li comparison with two of McEwan’s earlier novels, *The Child in Time* and *Black Dogs*, which have similar thematic concerns of love and marriage, *Enduring Love* appears extremely pessimistic. In *The Child in*

you got a lot of things right, but in the process you forgot to take me along with you, you forgot how to confide” (217). That Joe and Clarissa’s is a conflict between two opposite world-views is evident from Joe’s principal objection to her letter: “[Clarissa’s] letter appeared to me simply unreasonable. I disliked its wounded, self-righteous tone, its clammy emotional logic, its knowingness” (222). It is significant that Joe refutes Clarissa’s “emotional logic” by recourse to *feeling* (“I disliked . . .”), an approach that he associates with Clarissa and for which he always shows outright contempt. This is reminiscent of Joe’s earlier statement when he says: “I’d never *liked* [Clarissa’s] line of thinking [about] Logan’s death” (32, emphasis added). In this way, McEwan depicts rationalism as being dependent on feeling (likes and dislikes) too — a paradoxical correlation also suggested by the oxymoronic phrase “emotional logic”.

As in *Black Dogs*, where failure of marriage is a theme in the main plot of the novel as well as in its two sub-plots involving the narrator’s sister and his niece, in *Enduring Love*, too, McEwan reinforces the theme of the disintegration of marriage and love through two sub-plots. The first of these concerns the break-up of the marriage of Clarissa’s brother, Luke. After fifteen years of married life, Luke is leaving his wife and twin daughters to live with an actress whom he has known only for three months. It is not surprising where Clarissa’s sympathies lie in this dispute; the narrator tells us that she is “fond of her sister-in-law” and would be listening in shock when her brother begins “the relentless plainsong of the divorce novitiate” (46).

‘Reckless courage,’ I said. ‘He must be living inside a
hard-on.’

signal” (132). The novel suggests that signals circulate freely between the three main characters and each of them (mis)interprets the signals in his or her own way. It is important to note that the reader too is meant to be involved in this uncertainty of interpretations. Neither at this stage of the narrative, nor after the shooting incident in the restaurant, does any “signal” in the text definitely remove the ambiguity surrounding Parry’s morbid passion. It is only in Chapter Twenty-Two (the novel has twenty-four chapters), when Parry holds Clarissa hostage and threatens her with a knife, that his psychotic state is revealed. McEwan suggests that readers’ interpretations, their readings of the “signals” provided by the text, may be as arbitrary as the interpretations of Joe the rationalist, Clarissa the emotionalist and Parry the deranged stalker.

The strain of Joe and Clarissa’s mutual distrust of each other finally ruins their marriage. Joe sums up the accusations that he and Clarissa bring against each other: “To her I was manic, perversely obsessed, and worst of all, the thieving invader of her private space. As far as I was concerned she was disloyal, unsupportive in this time of crisis, and irrationally suspicious” (139). Joe’s statements suggest the limitations of his rationalistic approach: he accuses his wife of being “irrationally suspicious”, not realising that this describes his own groundless suspicions when he thought that Clarissa had an affair. Soon they are so alienated from one another that they cannot share a bed, and Clarissa decides to sleep in the room that they keep for children. Even after the incident in which Clarissa is taken hostage by Parry and is subsequently freed by Joe, the couple fail to reconcile. Clarissa leaves Joe and moves to a flat owned by her brother. In a letter to Joe, she accuses him of being blind to the necessity of emotional partnership and trying to find only a rationalistic solution to the problem created in their married life: “You did the research, you made the logical inferences and

This explains why she changes the topic to whether or not Parry was actually seen in the library, whenever Joe speaks of his “bad feeling” or of the situation being “scary”. Clarissa’s reactions are, thus, suggested to be far more balanced and reasonable than those of her husband.

McEwan develops further the theme of rationalism’s collapse in a crisis, by suggesting that, in proportion to the intensification of Parry’s stalking, Joe’s behaviour too becomes more and more irrational. Almost whenever Parry speaks with or writes to Joe, he makes a point of emphasising that he is only *returning* Joe’s passion, that it was Joe who gave the first signals of love: “It was you. You started this, you made this happen” (90). Yet it is clear that what Parry calls “secret signals” (91) are in fact things which he arbitrarily construes as indicators of Joe’s love. These are things which Joe either has not done, like drawing the curtains, or has done with no such intention as Parry imagines, like touching the hedge: “When you came out of your house yesterday evening and you brushed the top of the hedge with your hand — I didn’t understand at first. . . . Then I got it. You had touched them in a certain way, in a pattern that spelled a single message. . . . What a fabulous way to hear of love” (96). Although Joe boasts of his scientific, rationalistic approach, he duplicates Parry’s irrational behaviour when he starts to suspect his wife’s loyalty: “Was she beginning to regret her life with me? Could she have met someone? At work? A colleague? A student?” (103-4). There is, obviously, no sign or signal of Clarissa’s disloyalty; they are as illusory as the signals that Parry detects. However, rationalising his action as an attempt to rejuvenate their love, Joe invades Clarissa’s privacy by reading her letters. Clarissa’s reaction, when she finds out, is one of resentment and fury. Now *she* starts interpreting what she regards as evident signals given by Joe: “You even left the drawer open so I’d know when I came in. It’s a statement, a message, from you to me, it’s a

‘Clarissa, it’s scary.’ I told her about the presence in the library, and how I had run out into the square. She interrupted me.

‘But you didn’t actually see him in the library.’

‘I saw his shoe as he went out the door. White trainers, with red laces. It had to be him.’

‘But you didn’t see his face.’

‘Clarissa, it was him!’

‘Don’t get angry with me Joe. You didn’t see his face, and he wasn’t in the square.’

‘No. He’d gone.’

She was looking at me in a new way and was moving through the conversation with the caution of a bomb disposal expert. ‘Let me get this straight. You had this idea you were being followed even before you saw his shoe?’

‘It was just a feeling, a bad feeling. . . .’

‘And then you saw him.’

‘Yea. His shoe.’ (57)

The passage implies that fear impairs rationalism. Reversing the couple’s stances, McEwan now portrays Joe as constantly drawing on feelings; he never saw Parry in the library, but he *felt* Parry’s presence. Ironically, it is now Clarissa who stresses, over and over again, the importance of concrete evidence to prove that Parry actually followed Joe. The metaphor of “bomb disposal expert” is used, therefore, to suggest a double meaning: not only is Clarissa cautious about making comments which might incense her husband, but also she is more concerned about the *practical* steps which need to be taken in order to defuse the crisis.

of countless interrelated neural and bio-chemical exchanges” in dead bodies (23); and in the subsequent conversation with Clarissa, when she remarks that Logan’s readiness to sacrifice his life “must mean something”, again he fails to show any feeling of sorrow: “I’d never liked this line of thinking. Logan’s death was pointless” (32). McEwan, then, makes use of the episode to suggest that the couple’s underlying differences extend to their understanding of life and death.

What brings the couple’s disagreements to a climax is Parry’s stalking. Like Stephen in *The Child in Time*, who – as Jack Slay has put it – “anesthetizes himself with his desperate search for Kate” (*Ian McEwan* 130), Joe presses for action. He contacts the police, but fails to convince them that Parry’s behaviour amounts to harassment as defined by them. Nor does Clarissa share Joe’s anxiety about Parry’s obsession; she tends to think that her husband “is making too much of this man Parry. . . . [H]e’s really not that much of a problem” (84). So, as Parry’s persecution escalates, Joe takes it upon himself to counter the danger posed by Parry. Always trying to validate his claims by empirical facts, he conducts research into Parry’s mental disorder to prove that Parry poses a real threat to his life: “Well over a half of all male de Clérambaults in one survey had attempted violence on the subjects of their obsession” (142). Thus, Joe believes that such statistical findings, as well as the shooting event in the restaurant, justify his subsequent course of action.

However, McEwan gives an ironic twist to the novel by suggesting that Joe’s rationalism is, in practice, not entirely devoid of speculation and subjectivism. Joe’s non-objective approach is revealed in the following passage, for example, where he is trying to convince Clarissa that earlier that day Parry had followed him to the London Library:

patient and never resorting to disparagement, she tries to draw Joe's attention to the inadequacy of his rationalistic approach. Thus, the scene illustrates the incompatibility of two intellectual worlds bound to come into collision in the crisis caused by the balloon accident.

The balloon accident heightens the tension created by the disparity of Joe's and Clarissa's beliefs, and finally forces them apart. Every detail in the couple's reactions to the accident is a rehearsal of their underlying differences. For example, Clarissa regards Logan, the man who loses his life in the accident, as being motivated by altruism. While watching Logan fall down, a line from Milton's *Paradise Lost* flashes through her mind: "Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Sky". Later she tells Joe that what had come to her mind "were angels, not Milton's reprobates hurled from heaven, but the embodiment of all goodness and justice in a golden figure swooping from the cloud base to gather the falling man in its arms. . . . Logan's fall was a challenge no angel could resist" (31). Her power of empathy, coupled with her immense love for children, make her value Logan's effort to hold on to his rope as an exceptional act of self-sacrifice to save a child's life: "The boy was not his own, but he was a father and he understood" (32). The dichotomy between the couple's views on Logan's death is evident from their immediate reactions on the scene of the accident. When Logan hits the ground, Clarissa displays her emotion(ality) by holding Joe and weeping; Joe, however, is not as moved as his wife is: "What surprised me was she was already crying (I could feel the wetness on my shirt) whereas to me, sorrow seemed a long way off" (19). But Joe never feels sorrow at Logan's death, neither then nor later. When he confronts Logan's body, with its internally shattered bones that have contorted Logan's face into "a radical, Picassoesque violation of perspective", the thought uppermost in Joe's scientific mind concerns the "closing down

I told her I thought she had spent too much time lately in the company of John Keats. A genius, no doubt, but an obscurantist too who had thought science was robbing the world of wonder, when the opposite was the case. If we value a baby's smile, why not contemplate its source? That smile must be hard-wired, and for good evolutionary reasons. Clarissa said that I had not understood her. There was nothing wrong in analysing the bits, but it was easy to lose sight of the whole. I agreed. The work of synthesis was crucial. Clarissa said I still did not understand her, she was talking about love. I said I was too, and how babies who could not yet speak got more of it for themselves. She said no, I still didn't understand. There we had left it. No hard feelings. We had had this conversation in different forms on many occasions. (71)

The passage exemplifies McEwan's careful choice of nuance and shift in tone to elaborate the novel's central conflict. Unable to view the issue from Clarissa's perspective of love, Joe scoffs at her research interests and derides Keats as anti-science. (That Joe resents literature and non-scientific disciplines is evident also from the comments that he makes in another scene: "The science collection [in the London Library] was derisory. The assumption appeared to be that the world could be sufficiently understood through fictions, histories and biographies. Did the scientific illiterates who ran this place . . . really believe that literature was the greatest intellectual achievement of our civilisation?" (42).) The rancour that Joe shows in his tone, therefore, adds to the irony of his conclusion that there were "[n]o hard feelings". By contrast, Clarissa's line of argument remains unvaried throughout the scene. Consistently

she keeps a room for the many children who adore her and sometimes come to stay with her, “[n]ephews, nieces, godchildren, the children of neighbours and old friends” (31).

In order to render the break-up of the couple's marriage plausible, McEwan makes it clear that the differences in their attitudes stem from the fundamental incompatibility of their contrary world-views. He illustrates the inevitable clash between these irreconcilable frames of reference in a scene that the narrator calls “one of our late-night kitchen table sessions” (71). Joe intends to contribute an article to an American science magazine which is going to dedicate a whole issue to the subject of the impact of biology and evolutionary psychology on the social sciences. Clarissa deprecates the whole project as “rationalism gone berserk”, telling Joe that twenty years earlier he and his fellow scientists “blamed the environment for everyone's hard luck. Now you've got us trapped in our genes, and there's a reason for everything!” Joe reads out a sentence from an article in which the author, a human biologist, argues that the uniformity of the infant smile in different cultures demonstrates that, “[i]n the terminology of the zoologist, it is a social releaser, an inborn and relatively invariant signal that mediates a basic social relationship”. The quotation makes Clarissa “perturbed”; reducing human beings to genetic patterns amounts to losing “some larger meaning”. Not surprisingly, she believes the mystery of that smile can be solved within the larger context of love: “What a zoologist had to say about a baby's smile could be of no real interest. The truth of that smile was in the eye and heart of the parent, and in the unfolding love which only had meaning through time” (70). Joe's response manifests his failure to understand Clarissa's argument or, worse still, Clarissa herself:

turns back to see her entering his study, Joe goes through an elaborate explanation of the nervous system: how the secretion of noradrenalin by nerve terminals accelerates the heart's pumping of blood, and how, simultaneous with this process, the visual or auditory cortex starts "sorting and resolving into awareness" the sensory data received by the eye or the ear (51). The narrative voice being that of Joe himself, the events of the novel are recounted in a tone of absolute certainty. It is implied through this tone that Joe's narration, his interpretation of events, is based on his habitually precise observation and objective evaluation. McEwan ironically reverses this implication at the later stages of the narrative, when he reveals Joe's rationalism to be mingled with subjectivism and speculation. McEwan's construction of rationalism is, therefore, a preparation for his subsequent deconstruction of it.

An antithetical mentality is represented through the novel's other principal character, Clarissa. A lecturer in English literature, fascinated by the life and works of the Romantic poet John Keats, she spends part of a sabbatical term travelling around Spain and Portugal and working in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, in search of clues to three or four unpublished letters of Keats, one of which, she believes, might be a love-letter addressed to his lover, Fanny Brawne. Portraying her as a woman who, in her research as well as in her personal relationships, is in pursuit of love, McEwan underscores Clarissa's great capacity for affection – for her husband, her colleagues, her sister-in-law, and children –, thus highlighting the incompatibility of her emotional temperament with her husband's rationalism. Her love for children, for example, is suggested by the fact that she is godmother to seven children. Having been mistakenly sterilised during a routine surgical procedure in her early twenties, Clarissa is unable to conceive. Nevertheless, she has developed a strong feeling of fondness and caring for children, so that

At one point, Parry makes a proxy attempt on Joe's life, sending two gunmen to a restaurant to shoot him. After the incident, and as he realises that neither the police nor even his wife see Parry as a deranged and dangerous stalker, Joe procures a gun which he then uses to shoot Parry and free Clarissa who has been taken hostage by him. Parry is arrested and subsequently put in an asylum. Parry's relentless harassment having thus ended, Joe and Clarissa begin to re-examine their divergent responses to the threat that had been posed to their married life. Bitter, mutual recriminations are exchanged and the couple decide that this whole affair has opened such a rift in their marriage that they can no longer maintain their relationship. They, therefore, separate.

As in *Black Dogs*, the central conflict in *Enduring Love* is between rationalism and emotionalism. The two main characters of the novel, Joe and Clarissa, embody this conflict. As the epitome of rationalistic thinking, of the tendency to prove everything with evidence and through reasoning, Joe is portrayed as being steeped in science. Holding a doctorate on quantum electrodynamics, he constantly, almost inadvertently, tends to account for every phenomenon with reference to a "scientific" paradigm. For example, while waiting for Clarissa to come through the arrivals gate in Heathrow, he starts to ruminate about the universality of humans' facial expressions, concluding that the uniformity of these expressions corroborates Darwin's theory: "If one ever wanted proof of Darwin's contention that the many expressions of emotions in humans are universal, then a few minutes by the arrivals gate in Heathrow's Terminal Four should suffice. I saw the same joy, the same uncontrollable smile, in the faces of a Nigerian earth mama, a thin-lipped Scottish granny and a pale, correct Japanese businessman as they wheeled their trolleys in and recognised a figure in the expectant crowd" (4). Elsewhere, describing his momentary impression of Clarissa as he

Love. Narrated by one of its central characters, the novel is an account of the disintegration of a couple's marriage in the aftermath of a bizarre ballooning accident. The accident happens when the narrator, Joe Rose, who is an atheist science writer, and his wife, Clarissa Mellon, are picnicking in the Chilterns. Clarissa has just returned from a six-week research trip and the couple are celebrating their reunion. Their celebration is interrupted when they hear alarmed shouts and see a man struggling to tether an out-of-control helium balloon with a child trapped in the basket. Joe, along with four other men who happen to be in the vicinity, join the pilot and try to anchor the unmoored balloon by grabbing the dangling ropes. When strong buffeting winds lift the balloon upward, the men hold on, hoping that their combined weight will bring it down. However, "enact[ing] morality's ancient, irresolvable dilemma: us, or me", soon all but one of them let go (15). Inevitably, the one man left hanging loses his grip and drops to his death.

This tragic accident, as the narrator notes, proves to be "a kind of furnace in whose heat identities and fates would buckle into new shapes" (3). In the immediate aftermath of the accident, Joe and Jed Parry, one of the would-be rescuers, exchange a passing glance, after which Parry develops an obsessive passion for Joe and begins to stalk him by phoning more than thirty times a day, writing three or four ardent love-letters every week and hanging around Joe's house for hours. Following Parry's reference to what he takes to be Joe's sending him a signal by drawing the curtains, Joe finds out that Parry suffers from a mental disorder known as de Clérambault's syndrome. Joe recalls from his readings that the condition derives its name from the French psychiatrist who first identified the syndrome in one of his female patients. The woman was under the delusion that King George V loved her and that he communicated with her by drawing the curtains of Buckingham Palace.

Arbitrary boundaries between various academic disciplines are collapsing, so that even human nature, “which used to be the preserve of the novelist, is now wide open territory for evolutionary psychologists as they expound adaptationist accounts of our behaviour” (“Wonderful Worlds” 16). If indeed human beings’ limitations and capacities are, as the narrator of *Enduring Love* claims, genetically prescribed, and if, as McEwan asserts in one of his articles, “[t]he mind, and its vastly complex artefact, culture, are ultimately biological products” (“Move Over, Darwin. . . .” 13), then literature, in its effort to understand human nature, could well benefit from drawing on scientific procedures and insights. McEwan stresses the ground for unity between literature and science when in one of his articles he states that, “Even a novelist now might usefully consult a biologist on the elusive matter of human nature” (“The Wonder Is We’re Here At All” 20). The choice of a scientist as the narrator of *Enduring Love* exemplifies the type of beneficial use that McEwan believes a novelist could make of science. McEwan himself points out in an interview: “I’ve always wanted prose that has about it a great clarity. Having a scientist narrate this novel I was able to indulge my own taste for precision in what’s happening” (“An Interview with Ian McEwan”). His genuine interest in scientific thought suggests that, contrary to critics like Melvyn Bragg’s contention, McEwan does not “chew scientific fat in [his] fiction” (1); rather, McEwan’s fiction, in the past as well as more recently, reflects a growing interest in what McEwan takes to be the explanatory power of science in unravelling the mysteries of life.

II

Science and a scientific frame of thought serve, too, as a crucial background to the conflict that is at the heart of the events in *Enduring*

As a science journalist, the narrator of *Enduring Love* repeatedly digresses on a host of scientific theories, among them neo-Darwinism, evolutionary psychology, the future colonisation of space, and Einstein's General Theory. The topic that most frequently weaves in and out of the narrator's story is the impact of biology on the social sciences, an "intellectual revolution" which he sums up as follows:

Biologists and evolutionary psychologists were re-shaping the social sciences. The post-war consensus, the Standard Social Science Model, was falling apart and human nature was up for re-examination. We do not arrive in this world as blank sheets, or as all-purpose learning devices. Nor are we the 'products' of our environment. . . . We come into this world with limitations and capacities, all of them genetically prescribed. Many of our features, our foot shape, our eye colour, are fixed, and others, like our social and sexual behaviour, and our language learning, await the life we live to take their course. . . .

A few years ago, science book editors could think of nothing but chaos. Now they were banging their desks for every possible slant on neo-Darwinism, evolutionary psychology and genetics. (McEwan, *Enduring Love* 69-70)

The striking resemblance between the two texts suggests that novelists are as enthusiastic as science book editors about "every possible slant on neo-Darwinism, evolutionary psychology and genetics". It is not difficult to see the reason for this enthusiasm. McEwan argues in his articles that the domain of science is no longer confined to the phenomena which can be subjected to empirical observation and experiments in the laboratory.

synthesis, and the boundaries with the social sciences . . . must succumb” (13). A reiteration of McEwan’s views about science appears in “Wonderful Worlds”, an abridged version of the speech he made at the award ceremony of the 1998 Rhone-Poulenc Science Book Prize, for which he was chairman of the judges. Here too McEwan lavishes praise on science: thanks to “the restless energies” of neuro-science, paleontology, molecular biology and physics, there has been “an explosion of new knowledge” during the past ten years. What he singles out as the most momentous consequence of this “explosion”, is, predictably enough, “the trend in contemporary science towards synthesis”, or consilience (16).

Reading McEwan’s articles, one cannot help feeling that some of his statements are almost verbatim quotations from the narrator of *Enduring Love*, or vice versa. To illustrate the point, we can compare the following lines, extracted from “Wonderful Worlds”, with a passage from *Enduring Love*:

[T]he most crucial area of synthesis is likely to be between biology and the social sciences. . . . There is no biological foundation to the old social science model - that we arrive in the world as blank sheets, waiting to be written on by culture.

We arrive with limitations and potential. We cannot spin webs, but we can learn language. . . . In the social sciences the sterile debate about nature and nurture is giving way to [a] more coherent concept of co-evolution.
(16)

Implicate Order by the contemporary English physicist David Bohm) is a scientific text; of the ten books listed in the Acknowledgements to *Enduring Love*, by contrast, as many as eight are non-literary books, mainly on biology. Indeed, the titles of these books speak for themselves: *The Diversity of Life*, *Biophilia*, *Dreams of a Final Theory*, *Descartes' Error*, *The Language Instinct*.

Further, more recent evidence of McEwan's interest in science can be found in his articles published shortly after *Enduring Love*. Within a year after the first publication of the novel, McEwan published three articles on science in general and biology in particular. In "The Wonder Is We're Here At All", McEwan describes as "spectacular" the attention that Darwinism has attracted in the past fifty years, adding: "It began in the 1940s, with the so-called Synthesis of [Darwin's] theories; in 1953 DNA was discovered, and the blossoming of molecular biology and genetics have given us an understanding of the mechanics of natural selection. The "grand narrative of evolution," he believes, is an unequalled story of creation, more impressive in grandeur and beauty than that of Genesis. Also he praises "Darwinian, or biological, thinking" for having greatly influenced other disciplines, including the humanities (20). A similar line of thinking is evident in "Move Over, Darwin. . . .", where McEwan reviews E.O. Wilson's recent book, *Consilience*. A biologist whose early work concerned insects, Wilson argues in his book for a general theory of knowledge based on the tenets of all disciplines — from the experimental sciences to the social sciences. Borrowing a term from the nineteenth-century scientist William Whewell, Wilson calls such an all-applicable theory "consilience". This synthetic approach, needless to say, appeals to McEwan with his Darwinian outlook. He refers to consilience as "the intrinsic unity of knowledge", remarking that "the distinct specialisations of science are dissolving into a coherent

concluded: “McEwan sprinkles some judicious science [in *Enduring Love*]. The contemporary novel is not considered gustable without a scientific aroma. . . . For a while, early in the book, it looks as if McEwan might be essaying a study in mental breakdown” (9). Also critical of McEwan for having “weighed down [*Enduring Love*] by a surfeit of scientific information”, Cressida Connolly commented that “You can’t pick up a novel these days without being bombarded by Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, or the latest theories on Darwinism. . . . Novelists should tell us stories, not recite particle physics. . . . An author’s individuality is drowned in this sea of science”. She, therefore, called for “an immediate, worldwide moratorium on novelists reading works of science”, arguing that like “oceans plundered of whales, science books have become over-fished by voracious, imaginative writers”.

It could be argued that, rather than indicating McEwan’s following a fashionable trend in novel writing, the many references in *Enduring Love* to scientific theories represent its author’s genuine, growing fascination with science and scientific thought. The earliest indications of this fascination can be traced back to one of McEwan’s previous novels, *The Child in Time*. There the narrative abounds with what one of the characters, who is a lecturer in theoretical physics, calls “a whole supermarket of theories” about time (117). Throughout *The Child in Time*, McEwan constantly juxtaposes Newtonian and Einsteinian notions of time and some of the novel’s episodes stage the differences between the two theories. In the accident scene, for example, where the novel’s protagonist witnesses a lorry overturn, McEwan validates relativity theory by demonstrating that the duration of the time taken for the accident to happen depends on the observer. It is significant in this regard that among the three books McEwan mentions in the Acknowledgements to *The Child in Time*, only one (*Wholeness and the*

Keywords: Metafiction, Clérambault's syndrome, Rationalism, Narrative self-consciousness

I

The publication in 1997 of the controversial novel *Enduring Love*, helped to dispel an old accusation against its author (the contemporary British novelist Ian McEwan) at the same time as it gave rise to a new one. This new novel left no room for critics to duplicate the well-worn cliché that McEwan was “the enfant terrible of British fiction” (Walker 2), a writer obsessed with gratuitous violence. Indeed, one critic suggested that the conventional demonisation of McEwan as “Ian Macabre” had grown so trite as to require revision: “Perhaps it’s time to bury the Ian Macabre tag. Anyone for Ian Makesyouqueasy?” (Daoust 6).

What did unite many critics, however, was not Daoust’s suggested sobriquet, but an unprecedented accusation against McEwan: he was now seen as being desperate to keep up with the current vogue for overlaying novels with scientific theories. Frequent digressions to such theories, as well as the novel’s two appendices (the first of which is an eleven-page long case study of a patient suffering from “de Clérambault’s syndrome”, which lists twenty other papers and books on the disorder and which is claimed to have been reprinted from the *British Review of Psychiatry*) prompted critics to accuse McEwan of having yielded to a fashionable trend among many contemporary novelists to incorporate new scientific ideas in their fiction. For example, Jan Dalley remarked: “There is also an overlay of science [in *Enduring Love*] – now so fashionable in the literary novel (cf Jeanette Winterson and others) – . . . which we could probably manage without” (22). James Wood, a fierce critic of McEwan who believes that his novels “suffocate with design [and] trap their subjects in prim webs of information and argumentation”,

Metafictional Experimentation in *Enduring Love*

Hossein Payandeh *

Abstract

The publication in 1997 of a novel entitled *Enduring Love* in England sparked off heated controversy. As a science journalist, the narrator of *Enduring Love* repeatedly digresses on a host of scientific theories, among them neo-Darwinism, evolutionary psychology, the future colonisation of space, and Einstein's General Theory. The novel also includes two appendices, the first of which is an eleven-page long case study of a patient suffering from "de Clérambault's syndrome", which lists twenty other papers and books on the disorder and which is claimed to have been reprinted from the *British Review of Psychiatry*. After the publication of this novel many critics accused McEwan of having yielded to a fashionable trend among many contemporary novelists to incorporate new scientific ideas in their fiction. What McEwan's reviewers overlooked was the possibility that he was making use of the appendices to enhance the effect of the metafictional aspects of his novel. Even some psychiatrists were taken in to believe that the appendices were genuine scientific papers. It is argued in the present paper that the ambiguity surrounding the authenticity of the appendices helps to draw readers' attention to the difficulty of distinguishing fact from fiction. The paper concludes that like all metafictional novels, *Enduring Love* playfully raises the issue of reality and fiction's imitation of each other.

* Allameh Tabataba'i University.