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Gender Identities and Cultural Transformation in Ian Mcewan's the Cement Garden

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Abstract-This paper discusses about how gender identities are social formations, gendered roles, and specific codes that emerge as a result of social and cultural hegemony institutionalising and interpellation an individual's psyche in Ian McEwan *The Cement Garden*. It also looks at how the siblings in *The Cement Garden's* family deal with the changing relationships and views of their nuclear family, as well as how cultural changes affect their sense of who they are as men and women. This novel focuses on the disintegration of a sudden nuclear family structure, as well as the ephemeral Aspects of sex identities and the strange sexual behavior of abruptly abandoned kids who, after their parents die, become attracted to other family members. To protect their mother's body from the disciplinary society, Julie, Jack, Sue and Tom all make the decision to bury it in the cellar. Mentions of the binary distinctions between masculinities and femininities are frequent. As a result, each member of this androgynous society voluntarily tends to desire self-repression as a result of familial mechanisms of subject-formation rather than being able to threaten the territorialization or maintenance of the power structures of patriarchy.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Deterritorialization, Identity, Desire, Gender,

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Ian McEwan is one of the most renowned writers of English novels nowadays. In honour of his outstanding contribution to the literary world, the British Broadcasting Corporation has aptly dubbed him the "International Voice of Modern British Fiction" (Rosenhelm, 1).

In 1978, McEwan released his debut novel, *The Cement Garden.* and seems to be a continuation of his prior two-story volumes. This paper examines how McEwans, *The Cement Garden* portrays seductions, betrayals, and the resulting gender identities through cultural changes. By examining how betrayal is simultaneously brought on by these seducing agents and how this results in a change in culture, this chapter aims to advance the analysis of the effects of various seducing agents, such as love, money, frustration, optimism, pessimism, violence, death, maturity, innocence, and the sense of loss.

The Cement Garden is jam-packed with dark themes that conjure up a creepy ambiance in a run-down house. The father of the family's four defenceless children suddenly dies of a heart attack, leaving his sick and bedridden wife to carrya the entire family's financial burden alone. After their ill mother passes away, the four children Jack (15), Julie (17), Sue (13) and Tom (16) are abruptly left behind. They are shocked to learn this and are troubled by their sense of estrangement, abandonment, and severance from their family. They instantly adopt the role of adults and decide not to inform anyone of their mother's passing outside their closest family. They lock themselves inside the house and stop paying attention to what is happening outside. In order to escape getting arrested, the children cover their mother's body in their basement with cement to hide it from onlookers. Tom and Sue as children and Jack and Julie as parents grow up with little awareness of the loss she leaves behind. Their family life goes on as usual, save for Tom's periodic weeping and Derek's (Julie's lover) brief visits.

As they examine Sue's concealed organs and watch their own physical development in the mirror of the semi-dark house, the youngsters continue to play the roles of doctor and patient. They prevented Derek, a strong sportsman and supporter, from going near them. However, he discovers the truth regarding the burial's subterranean site. A dreadful scent starts to

permeate the cellar as the mice enter in search of the dead body. Jack and Julie are called out for their incestuous behaviour by Derek. Finally, he makes the announcement about the incest and the burial underground. The children's childhood dream of coexisting in peace for all time has been derailed by their transgressions of both English and human rights laws. In the neutral tone of the book's opening, Jack confesses his betrayal in relation due to his father's passing:

I did not kill my father, but I sometimes felt I had helped him on his way. Despite his health problems, Jack's father keeps on working hard and struggles to maintain cleanliness in and around the house. His plan was to surround the house, front and back, with an even plane of concrete. (16)

The area's cleanliness and contemporary decor were what most drew Jack's father in. He was taken in by the image of cleanliness and neglected his weak heart. He was too focused on providing for his family to pay attention to his deteriorating health. Because of his act of self-betrayal, which prematurely ended his life, his physical presence and sense of self were completely destroyed. The same is shown in Jack's unconscious efforts to hide his father's body markings on the damp cement surface: "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" (19).

The son's attempt to downplay his father's perception of him is a moral violation. Therefore, even though Jack acts solely on instinct and without any thought, the message it sends to the readers is one of treachery. By doing so, Jack is one step closer to becoming the family's head.

The Freudian part of the Oedipus complex is first seen in young Jack, who quickly demonstrates it as he "becomes nearly catatonic with his newly discovered independence and wanders listlessly around the home," according to the book's opening. (Williams 211-13). His older sister Julie is seduced by the idea of mother replacement, and she takes over the household and starts taking care of Sue and Tom just like their mother did when she was alive.

There's Julie the eldest, a ripe and wilful beauty who is almost a woman…These four form an uneasy family, slowly learning to be self-sufficient in this strangely apocalyptic setting. (Wylie 1)

As a result, it come across a six-person family, later reduced to four, that is made up of a beautiful athlete mother named Julie and a self-obsessed, "masturbating" father named Jack. Jack starts to explain what happened as his mother is dying using his impressionable adolescent perspective on the complicated and depressing domestic setting and the purposefully ignored outside world, which is limited to his attendance at school and Derek's irregular visits.

After this unfortunate small family is made to live without them, Jack and Julie step in to assume the position of their father and mother. Due to the fact that Julie is Jack's senior by two years, she tries to control everyone. Her efforts are concentrated on raising Tom in a loving and caring manner, talking to and consoling Sue about how her thinking is changing as a result of her physiological changes, remembering their mother, and immersing herself in her memories.

After their mother died, Sue had a complete makeover. Sue had been like an object for Jack and Julie to play patient-doctor games with before their mother passed away. She accepts the death of her mother and remains silent forever. She struggles to deal with the void her mother's disappearance has left behind. In a manner, their mother's absence torments them all, making them feel as though they had abandoned her.

Jack has always been the filthiest youngster in the family. She made an attempt to keep him alert, interested, and appealing when his mother was still alive. He was a slothful man who constantly hid the truths of the big shoulders and freckles from himself. Whenever he feels uncomfortable, he gives in to the overwhelming urge to masturbate, releasing himself and finding relief in the process.

His first attempt at self-seduction is masturbation, and he enjoys it. The moral scientists of the society ban open debate about it. As a result, a boy like Jack grows accustomed to it, and in his attempts to hide it, he experiences guilt. In fact, the creator's role-play, which identifies outlets for the previously accumulated complexity of the chaos, transforms the incomplete grasp of human biology and the reproductive system. Jack defines this self-seduction as pseudo-masochism:

I worked on myself rapidly. As usual, the image before me was Julie's hand between Sue's legs … Then it happened … colourless. As I watched, it dried to a barely visible shiny crust which cracked when I flexed my wrist; I decided not to wash it away. (18)

Just before she dies, Jack's mother learns about this habit and gently warns Jack about the dangers it poses, including physical decline, black circles under the eyes, and decreasing endurance. Jack experienced scary night-time nightmares in which he is being pursued by a figure he cannot see or discovers a box containing an evil being.

As a result, before to mother's passing, we notice something unsettling almost like a premonition in the form of a kitchen in disrepair, wasps and flies, mice rustling, and the foul smell of a dead body. Jack characterises idleness as losing focus on the present, daydreaming endlessly, and forcing a fake ejaculation as a kind of release. His egocentrism acts as a seducing force, causing him to behave in an antisocial, ant pathological, and anti-cultural manner that is akin to betraying himself. He rarely grooms himself, takes pride in his growing body, and has freckles when he looks in the mirror. In defiance of his father's unstated command to look in the mirror, feel, and change through time, Jack withdraws to his gloomy bedroom. As the frequency reflects on his lifeless face, his mother assumes the role of his father and aids him in understanding the other side of it, which is just as horrifying as self-immolation. Jack and his new family talk about marriage, the intimate relationship between husband and wife in general, and their parents in particular.

The children saw their father's death as a relief for everyone, since it frees them from "a frail, irascible, obsessive man" (9). It might be possible given that both Jack and Tom had serious problems with their sense of self. The devoted and watchful father seems to be luring the story's author, McEwan. Tom's transgression and cross-dressing are the principal anti-social behaviour that does not deter McEwan from thinking about the father of the family. McEwan claims that, after paying close attention to the book's beginning, "starting actually belonged with the father." (Hoffendon's Interview, 12).

After his mother is buried, Tom becomes dependent on Julie, but it turns out that he really wants a new mother. A change in perspective is seen in his attempt to pass as a girl by dressing in Sue's school clothes; he now thinks that by doing so, he can be more cautious. A child's domestic innocence, along with their need for affection and safety, make it clear that a seduction is occurring. The transvestism that Tom exhibits as a result of his transgender behaviour makes him less susceptible to bullying from his classmates. Jack tries to help Tom by punishing his other school bullies, but Tom is unimpressed. He is continually considering changing himself into a woman, but outwardly:

What is it like being a girl? And I said, 'It's nice, why?' and he said he was tired of being a boy and he wanted to be a girl now … I said, 'Why do you want to be a girl?' and he said, 'Because you don't get hit when you're a girl!' (46-7)

In reality, Jack hates it, and the girls are furious at his outright rejection, trying to express their disapproval in a way that extreme feminists would have. When they make an effort to protect their "introvert independence" by burying their mother in the house's cellar, the turning point in this story of childhood and adolescence is about to occur. Reluctantly, the choice is taken without giving any thought to the departed person's soul, its purification, the day of judgment, or salvation.

Although McEwan does not explicitly state the family's religion in this book, it is safe to presume that they are Christians. They don't seem to have given much thought to the body's preservation, church regulations, or the ethical and moral repercussions of the hidden burial as they bury mother's body in the cellar. Both their father's old trunk and the recently acquired cement sacks for the garden help them. The wider room that is available in the cellar also inspires them. They do npt send the mother to the public graveyard because doing so would result in them being placed in an orphanage, adopted by a family, or have their house confiscated by their neighbours. They willingly bury their mother's body in wet cement to avoid being caught.

They worry that if word of the death gets out, the small family would break apart into its various members. It seems as though they are using the

inheritance to distance themselves from one another and the tumultuous metropolitan life of 20th-century England. They are inspired by seeing themselves change, accomplishing something amazing, and exhibiting their fortitude, capacity to set an example for others, and ability to mature several years ahead of time. Derek's presence in Julie's life and in their home is held responsible for a number of embarrassing and undesirable circumstances.

They are all tense and worried because of the familiar smell that permeates the house, the awful sight of their mother's nightgown poking out through cracks in the cement, and the untrue rumours that Cosmo died. They suddenly realise that hiding the death, burying the body, and continuously lying were mistakes. Regardless of what they did, they did it quickly and for reasons they can plausibly explain. It's clearer now that Jack said it straight out:

If we tell them … they will come and put us into care, into an orphanage … They might try and get Tom adapted … The house will stand empty … People will break in, there'll be nothing left. (58)

The writers of the 20th century presented fresh perspectives on youth and adolescence thanks to Freud's theory of Oedipal urges, which challenged the idea of childhood's perfect innocence. The young main characters in Lewis Carroll, R.L. Stevenson, and J. M. Barrie have a propensity to run from the truth. The egocentrism of adolescence and the emergence of sexual desire are represented by Joyce's children. In post-war literature, children are shown as the objects of adult desires, degraded to ferocious primitivism.

The sullen and sluggish Jack and the infantile grownup Julie are two examples of McEwan's young characters. That young children may experience emotions but not grasp them is a point on which Jack and company and Charlotte Bront agree. In the course of playing the position of family leader and being confused by his expanding body and physical cravings, Jack makes the unfortunate mistake of forgetting that he is Julie's brother.

Julie forgets that she is Jack's older sister and that Derek is her loving, kind, and attractive boyfriend when she is portraying Sue and Tom's mother. In reality, their attraction had been present for a while. Since they both played doctors and examined Sue's privates, Jack had always wanted to look at Julie's personal body parts. Whether she was sunbathing, partially undressed on the rockery, or sprinting on the ground with swift and lovely legs, he had always kept a close eye on her. He also observed her eyes, hair, and swollen cheeks, as well as her changed appearance after meeting Derek. He even admitted to having grown envious of Derek and repeatedly referred to Derek as weak in comparison.

Jack's modern lifestyle, pristine laundry, well-maintained nails, and fashionable wardrobe attract Julie. They become attracted to one another as a result of Derek's intrusion, involvement, and unwanted questions regarding the crumbling cement pile and their parents' absence. They both become enchanted by the situation in this way, and they gradually yearn for each other's companionship. Beyond simple brotherly love and care, Jack's strong perception of Julie's physical traits extends beyond that.

Jack intently watches her actions as she competes and adds unneeded commentary, such as "she wore stockings and black knickers, strictly forbidden" (20). Jack was actually accurately watching Julie's revelry in an undesirable way when mother was still alive and he sung "Green sleeves": "Her skirt fell down over her head... A few black hairs curled out from the white crotch." (38). According to Christina Byrnes' psychodynamic analysis of McEwan's work, these kinds of encounters are typically not harmful.

Derek and everyone else refer to them as mentally ill because of the incest. Both of them, but especially Julie, betray Derek's feelings for her and his plans to take over their family in place of their missing father. Derek's response is immediate and entirely genuine. He feels anxious when a privilege is denied. He calls the police, uses his father's sledgehammer to plough open the trunk, and reveals all the previously hidden information.

Derek betrayed the family. Unanswered is a question that no lover on earth would find easy to answer. This makes it clear that the story's flaws are all rooted in seduction and betrayal. At the conclusion of the dark book, a horrible and sad occurrence occurs. The minds of people who are adapting are shown at the end to transform from

young to old. The book would have been about the boys who kept the family together and loved their mother for all time if Julie hadn't had sexual contact with Derek, if she had truly loved him, if she had involved him in the secret burial, and if she had been a "wise" lady.

The major goal of researching this contemporary English author was to ascertain how insightful his perspective on the world of man is and how he copes with seduction and betrayal. It's good to see that his book *The Cement Garden* is straightforward about how people behave and interact with one another, and that the last scene provides a powerful illustration of how civilizations may evolve. McEwan depicts various levels and modes of seduction in his writing. All human impulses are founded on it, with sexual attraction being one aspect of it. But in his writings, treachery might be compared to love without personal engagement or emotional awakening.

The primary characters in McEwan's books slightly differ from others. In addition to beginning to have relationships with other men, Jack buries his mother in the cellar. The majority of McEwan's female characters are moms who cherish their homes, some of whom cherish them purely out of want. Julie rejects Derek, keeping her family together. McEwan present a different aspect of European life in the company of the seducer or in the betrayer's labyrinth. The view is ordinary and occasionally gloomy, yet when the universe's camera clicks, the actual is captured on film like a replica of a world that has been altered by culture.

It is simple to understand that what McEwan is alluding to is nothing more than an organic whole, a meaningful visible object, and a collection of discrete, independent things when one considers the changes in politics and culture brought about by scientific advancement. They both concur that a novel is about a live man and better than any historian recounts the tale of what man produces of himself. It took a little more leeway to interpret and apply seduction and cultural because they are typically new perspectives on a man's life. The thorough examinations of McEwan's novels provide a comprehensive picture of how civilizations change from the perspectives of seduction and gender identities.

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