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Questioning Totality: Decentering and Fragmentation In McEwan's *Enduring Love*

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Letter of Recommendation

Dambar Bahadur Paudel has completed his thesis entitled “Questioning Totality: Decentering and Fragmentation in McEwan’s *Enduring Love*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from April 2013 to April 2014. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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This thesis entitled “Questioning Totality: Decentering and Fragmentation in McEwan’s *Enduring Love*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Damber Bahadur Paudel has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

Enduring Love belongs to those works of literature which combine the typically postmodern elements that involves the themes of delusion and equivocal borders or limits of reality as well as the clash between science and reality or science and religion. The unreliability of any universal truth - or rather logic - is referred to repeatedly in the novel. The shifts from restricted to unrestricted narration represent an interesting dialectics and an example of a metanarrative approach. The use of pastiche is connected with the fragmentariness of the novel. It must be said that although the novel embodies many features of postmodern writing, such as the pastiche of genres, certain fragmentariness and mixing reality with fiction, the characters stand aside this characteristics as a result of the detailed psychological portraits provided by the author. The fragmentation in the narrator has been accompanied by the fragmentation in the narrative strategy in the novel.

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I: *Enduring Love*: Postmodern Characteristics

Introduction: Issues and Arguments

The characters in the novel, *Enduring Love*, are important to preserve the thematics of postmodernity. On a beautiful and cloudless day, a middle-aged couple celebrate their union with a picnic. Joe Rose and his long-term partner Clarissa Mellon are about to open a bottle of wine when a cry interrupts them. A helium balloon, with a 10-year-old boy in the basket and his grandfather being dragged behind it, has been ripped from its moorings. Joe immediately joins several other men in an effort to bring the balloon to safety. In the rescue attempt, one man, John Logan, dies.

The narrative complexity of the novel further proves its postmodern character. The narrating character Rose will be considered ambivalent, hence “unreliable.” The aim is to suggest inconsistencies in Rose’s thinking and the consequent subversion in the narration. The narrator’s purposeful telling in retrospect bears importance. The simultaneous prominence of contradictory discourses pervades *Enduring Love*. Nevertheless, the disunity of Rose’s train of thought throughout the text initiates the character’s ethical confusion. That is to say, with the coming of postmodernity, the former idea of morality is altered. Rose’s mind is used to the comforts of the “totalities” of modernism, in which the supposition of objectivity freed individuals of ethical responsibility. However, he is not released from the feeling of guilt he experiences with mere scientific explanation. In other words, the final plan of the present paper is to consider *Enduring Love*’s nostalgia for the tragic outlook.

Postmodern notions of searching the multiple centers, fragmentation, celebration at the loss of the order and the use of experimentation for the sake of

decentering are found in the novel *Enduring Love* proves it as postmodern in character. The present thesis analyses Ian McEwan's late novel *Enduring Love* in light of the theories of postmodernism. The aim is to reveal postmodernity as the subject matter of the given novel. *Enduring Love*'s inherent debate over the change of the approach to science in aftermath of the demise of the pro-Enlightenment modernity will be identified. The main protagonist's tendency to suppose an "objective" truth, his relentless endeavouring of rationalizing the reality and providing a unified account of it, will be described, along with the related postmodernist interest in deconstructing notions of truth and rationality.

The characters in the novel are important to preserve the thematics of postmodernity. On a beautiful and cloudless day, a middle-aged couple celebrate their union with a picnic. Joe Rose and his long-term partner Clarissa Mellon are about to open a bottle of wine when a cry interrupts them. A helium balloon, with a 10-year-old boy in the basket and his grandfather being dragged behind it, has been ripped from its moorings. Joe immediately joins several other men in an effort to bring the balloon to safety. In the rescue attempt, one man, John Logan, dies.

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freed individuals of ethical responsibility. However, he is not released from the feeling of guilt he experiences with mere scientific explanation. In other words, the final plan of the present paper is to consider *Enduring Love*'s nostalgia for the tragic outlook.

Postmodernism is general and wide-ranging term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, architecture, fiction, and cultural and literary criticism, among others. Postmodernism is largely a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific, or objective, efforts to explain reality. In essence, it stems from a recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it, but rather, is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality. For this reason, postmodernism is highly skeptical of explanations which claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races, and instead focuses on the relative truths of each person. In the postmodern understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually. Postmodernism relies on concrete experience over abstract principles, knowing always that the outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative, rather than certain and universal.

Fractions of post modernity are scattered throughout *Enduring Love*. A selection of those postmodernist notions relevant for the upcoming analysis of postmodernity in McEwan's *Enduring Love* will lay the foundation for the reasoning of the paper. McEwan seems to be profoundly interested in the counter-enlightenment impulse in postmodernism, its open anti-rationalism. In *Enduring Love*, McEwan reconsiders the postmodernist disillusionment with the enlightenment values and the related critique of humanism. As a matter of fact, the author's preoccupation with the scientific mind is clearly observable not only in the analyzed *Enduring Love*, but also

in the latest novelist contribution to his oeuvre called *Saturday*. *Enduring Love* concerns itself with the conflict between rationalism, emotionalism, and religion, which, in the postmodernist language, are considered different, but equally considerable ways of thinking. There are three prominent characters in the novel, each of them exemplifying one of the suggested types of thought, respectively: Joe Rose, Clarissa, and Jed Parry. McEwan's apparent passion for science causes the novel's implicit empowering (in terms of postmodernist ethics hardly tolerable), and in that privileging, of Joe Rose's rationality, his "pursuit of truth". In a sense, the novel takes sides with the modern age's idea of the superiority of rationalism, or science.

Postmodernism is "post" because it denies the existence of any ultimate principles, and it lacks the optimism of there being a scientific, philosophical, or religious truth which will explain everything for everybody - a characteristic of the so-called "modern" mind. The paradox of the postmodern position is that, in placing all principles under the scrutiny of its skepticism, it must realize that even its own principles are not beyond questioning. As the philosopher Richard Rorty states, postmodernism "cannot on its own principles ultimately justify itself any more than can the various metaphysical overviews against which the postmodern mind has defined itself.

Different critics have given multiple criticisms to the book depending on its various aspects that the book touches. Critics have not left a stone untouched to criticize the book which shows the universal recognition of the book. The critic, Terry Eagleton, says:

Enduring Love opens with a chapter so crafty (and complete as a story), that the rest of the novel must inevitably disappoint, following a kind of thermodynamic law of literature. Chapters two through twenty

four (plus appendices) comprise a very long epilogue, reversing McEwan's usual trick of making the first two-thirds of a book a prologue of red herrings, whopping you with a left-field climax irrelevant to the buildup. And the trick usually works. (12)

Here, Eagleton sees the very bonding of the novel. He analyzes the patterning, chaptering and other multiple fractions of the novel. Eagleton praises the trick of the writer to make the first two-thirds of a book a prologue. Daniel looks the novel as one of the best and an excellent novels of the literature. He is enchanted by the magical language of the novel. He is of the view that no one can disagree with his bravura beginning. He appoints:

Though *Enduring Love* is only two-thirds of an excellent novel, the book as a whole has a lot to recommend it: an abundance of vivid character detail and insights, wonderful language, and McEwan's scary ability to walk a grueling mile in very strange shoes indeed. (Readers of "The Child In Time" and "The Innocent" will find themselves half-convinced that McEwan himself once lost a child in an unexplained kidnapping, or that he personally spent some sweaty hours dismembering a corpse with a hack-saw). Sadly, after a bravura beginning, he loses control, starting with the shooting in the restaurant.(2)

The novel has touched the multiple aspects of modern life. In one vein it displays the characteristic of immortal and true love in other sense it talks about the varieties and change in the nature of love in the span of time. Kermit Lansner is of the view that:

What strikes me about this book is the lasting impression it's left on me. I read it last summer and still find myself thinking about it and talking about it a year later. I recently finished another book and my wife asked me to compare it to any two others as a point of reference. Better than one book we'd both read, I said, but not as good as

Enduring Love. For contemporary fiction, this one sticks with you. (13)

Here Kermit believes that McEwan does a fine job in painting the lead character Joe Rose, as well as the secondary players. His use of language is clear and simple, yet never elementary. The opening chapter is as powerfully imagined as any other I've read. The reader is literally hanging by a rope at the suspense of the scene. And it sets the tone for the psychological terror to come. More than a summer read, *Enduring Love* explores corners of our psyches and personalities that we don't often come face to face with. Suspense, terror, humor, and the very real idea of love and romance are alive in this book, which I recommend as enjoyable to readers of any of these genres.

Another of the would-be-rescuers is Jed Parry. Joe and Jed exchange a passing glance, a glance that has devastating consequences and that indelibly burns an obsession into Jed's soul, for Jed suffers from de Clerambault's syndrome, a disorder that causes the sufferer to believe that someone else is in love with him or her. Delusional and dangerous, Jed gradually wreaks havoc in Joe's life, testing the limits of his beloved rationalism, threatening Clarissa's love for him, and driving him to the brink of murder and madness.

Joe goes to meet Jean Logan (John Logan's wife) at her Oxford Home. Jean Logan does not want to hear about how her husband was a hero, but Joe tells her that her husband was a brave man acting out a fatherly instinct to protect a vulnerable child. Mrs Logan brings a bag through to Joe which holds a picnic and a scarf

smelling of rose water and asks Joe how many doors were open on his car. She accuses her dead husband of having an affair with another woman and asks Joe to phone other people at the accident to ascertain if they had seen anyone with him.

During a lunch with Clarissa and her godfather, Joe witnesses the attempted murder of another man, resulting in the man being shot in the shoulder. However, he realises that the bullet was meant for him and that the similar character of the people at the other table had misled the killers into thinking the other man was their target. Before the hit-man can deliver the fatal shot, Jed intervenes to save the innocent man's life before fleeing from the scene. In the subsequent interrogation, Joe insists that it was Jed who was behind this, but the detective does not believe him, possibly because he appears to get many of the facts of the incident incorrect. Joe leaves dissatisfied, knowing that Jed is still out there and looking for him. Like the detective, however, Clarissa becomes sceptical that Jed is stalking Joe and that Joe is in any danger. This, plus the stress Joe suffers at Jed's hands, strains their relationship.

Fearing for his safety, Joe purchases a gun through an acquaintance. On the journey home, he receives a call from Jed, who is at Joe's home with Clarissa. Upon arriving at his apartment, Joe sees Jed sitting on the sofa with Clarissa. Jed then asks for Joe's forgiveness, before taking out a knife and pointing it at his *own* neck. To prevent Jed from killing himself, Joe shoots him in the arm. He escapes without charges.

They then go to meet Mrs Logan and take her and her children on a picnic to which they have invited the woman that her husband was suspected of having an affair with. It turns out that on the previous occasion the young woman had been with her university lecturer with whom she was having a secret relationship; Mr Logan had simply offered them a ride to the picnic when their car broke down. The novel ends

with the children and Joe in the river, Joe telling the a story about how the river is made up of many particles. In the first of the novel's appendices (a medical report on Jed's condition) we learn that Joe and Clarissa are eventually reconciled and that they adopt a child. In the second (a letter from Jed to Joe), we learn that after three years, Jed remains uncured, and is now living in a psychiatric hospital.

The postmodernist idea of *Enduring Love* is that no kind of knowledge has a privileged access to reality and its explanation. That is to say, postmodernism's central values are multiplicity and difference. Therefore the ethical subsoil of postmodernity takes into account the need for tolerance of heterogeneity. The present paper will consider the main protagonist Joe Rose's approach to this postmodern "obligation." Does he value diversity entirely? Rose's treatment of the "other" (characters) will be outlined. Postmodernism's distrust of the modernity's project of rationality becomes the leitmotif of *Enduring Love*.

The immediate subject matter of *Enduring Love*, the subject of the present thesis is postmodernity. The issues of the life in the postmodern age and society are what these novels are clearly concerned about. The settings of McEwan's recent novels carry postmodern features and the writer's descriptions often evoke knowledgeability of the theoretical accounts of postmodernism (e.g. implicit comments on "hyperreality" in *Saturday*). Ian McEwan is a re-creator of the postmodernist experience in fiction. Moreover, McEwan's own narrative voice is affected by the dilemmas of postmodernity. The author himself is interpretable as a truly postmodern character, who oscillates between a "return to realism" and the metafictional postmodernist writing; a rather schizophrenic figure, indeed. Notable is the hybridity of McEwan's fiction, its simultaneous use of literary realism and inclusion of the postmodern era's issues in terms of his novels' content. It can also be

claimed that McEwan packs his nostalgia for modernism in a clearly postmodernist wrapping.

The author's late novels constitute a new phase in his oeuvre. McEwan abandons the classic relishing of his "trademark" shocking subject matter – the pathologies of modern life. Nerve-racking scenes and "tragic clashes" do not completely vanish from his fiction; yet, they are credited less detailed attention in the framework of any of the late novels. The rather favorable description of the family in *Saturday* positively contrasts *The Cement Garden*'s portrait of a disintegrating family. The shocking subject matter is practically transformed, recycled, no longer playing the central role; the need to "disgust" the reader no longer permeates McEwan's writing. Nevertheless, vexing moral questions become leitmotifs of all mentioned late novels all the same, even though McEwan is not sympathetic to the tragic outlook. McEwan is still one foot in modernist convictions, but is moving away from them at the same time. The balloon accident in *Enduring Love*, for example, does not "mean" anything but a deepening nuisance, in the end. In this, McEwan affirms postmodernity, as theories of postmodernism allow for Nietzschean notion of the death of tragedy. Yet, Joe in *Enduring Love* cannot stop thinking about his moral "failure" – letting go of the balloon's rope. The main character of the novel is driven by a dubious sense of guilt. Ethical considerations quietly centre the novel's train of thought. The characters' behavior becomes unjudgeable in postmodernity; the ethical confusion arises.

Enduring Love is set in the post-humanist, post-masculine world, but still echoes the ideas of humanism and superiority of masculinity. The novel is a contemplation of the concept of paranoia. The protagonists of the postmodernist novels sometimes suspect that they are trapped at the centre of intrigue, often with

justification. *Enduring Love*'s Joe Rose is haunted by the possessed character of Jed Parry and his homoerotic obsession. However, Rose's "paranoia" is resolved in the end of the novel as justified, in which the validity of rationality is established. Besides, the principle of paranoia features also the narration of the novel. McEwan hints his narrating character's unreliability, only to deny it in the end. The metafictional impulse is well present in *Enduring Love*, whose narrator frequently comments on the writing process.

The critique of Enlightenment universals is central to the thinking of the philosophers of the post-modern period. *Enduring Love* happens to scrutinize its main protagonist's rationalist thinking. The novel is a contemplation of the modernity's strategy of unity against the postmodernity's strategy of plurality. *Enduring Love* reveals McEwan's new preoccupation: the fascination with the scientific thought and the related rationality. The novel investigates the scientific mind of its main protagonist Joe Rose, and, at the same time, McEwan juxtaposes different ways of thinking in individual characters that are introduced. Interestingly, the main intellectual antipole of the rational main protagonist Rose is a *female* protagonist. As a matter of fact, Clarissa has affinities with literature; she is a scholar on Keats. McEwan puts emphasis on the fact of existence of diverse worlds – and the related plurality of acceptable ethics that should be taken into consideration.

Nevertheless, *Enduring Love* remains governed by what Michael Drolet coins as the "creative power of schizophrenia" (28), in which the seeming victory of scientific thought cannot be sustained. According to Mike Featherstone, schizophrenia is one of the key features of the postmodern culture (74). As a matter of fact, McEwan's leitmotif in the novel is the contemplation of the validity of grand narratives; what is important, the scepticism towards them pervades the postmodern

condition. The scientific thought, that is to say, is susceptible to being seen as a grand narrative, too, and in that prone to deconstruction, as well. Despite the final pretentious affirmation of Joe Rose's viewpoint at the end of *Enduring Love*, the novel has irrevocably questioned the rationalist stance throughout the course of its narrative. Because of that, the train of thought of McEwan's novel remains truly postmodern, despite its foregrounded favoring of its main protagonist Joe Rose and his rationalism.

The poststructuralist thinker Jean-Francois Lyotard took into consideration both scientific and narrative knowledge. The conclusion he arrived at was that the scientific knowledge was actually marked by a contradiction because "scientific knowledge cannot know and make known that it is the true knowledge without resorting to the other, narrative kind of knowledge, which from its point of view is no knowledge at all. In short, there is a recurrence of the narrative in the scientific" (Sarup 136-7). The scientific knowledge, so to say, can only prove its superiority with the help of the narrative. In other words, "Lyotard showed that science was like all other human activity" (Drolet 25). The postmodernist conduces science's "degradation". Furthermore, to yet again base the present argument on Lyotard theoretically, in John Docker's perception, "[i]n the postmodern age we no longer have a positivistic science that claims to know the truth; rather, science, as in the new quantum mechanics associated with Chaos Theory, now tells stories, competing stories, as in any other area of knowledge" (109). The view of the present thesis is that substantial change has affected science in postmodernity. Among other alterations, science thus will be considered as descended from its privileged status. What *Enduring Love* takes as its theme is the contemplation of the scientific reasoning's limits. It is fruitful to consider at this point that the other poststructuralist taken into

the debate, Jacques Derrida, also stands up against the Western tradition of rationalist thinking and its premise of reason, formed by the search for certainty and termed “logocentrism” (Appignanesi 77). Logocentrism is, also in the postmodernist vision, seen as invalid and subject to deconstruction. Though Joe Rose, *Enduring Love*’s main protagonist, primarily affiliates with the logocentric way of seeing the world, his reasoning inevitably simultaneously involves the deconstructive impulse - the tendency to subvert itself.

The present analysis of postmodernity in *Enduring Love* utilizes the poststructuralist notion of Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction. Related to the already mentioned notion of schizophrenia, the thinker’s concept of “différance” is the dominant feature of the novel. McEwan has created an aestheticized exemplification of this concept in the narration of *Enduring Love*, in which its postmodernity can be detected. What underlies *différance* is the assumption that texts are never uniform as they include also those possibilities that contradict their attestations, which is even the authors’ intention; in other words, “[m]eaning encompasses identity (that, which is) and difference (that, which is not) and, therefore, is ceaselessly “postponed”. Derrida invented a new term for this process – *différance*” (Appignanesi 80). The present thesis will attempt to describe the subversive foundation of *Enduring Love*’s text. “Deconstruction proves that texts have multiple meanings, and the ‘violence’ between the different meanings of text may be elucidated by close textual analysis. Derrida argued, however, that deconstruction is not a method or a tool, but an occurrence within the text itself” (“Postmodernism”). The subversive distortion of unambiguous meaning is to be observed in the text of McEwan’s, or rather, Joe Rose’s, *Enduring Love*. In Derrida’s own words, “any apparently coherent system of thought can be shown to have underlying irresolvable antimonies, such that there are multiple and

conflicting readings that must be held simultaneously” (qtd. in Drolet 23).

Postmodernism’s deconstructive stance pervades Ian McEwan’s *Enduring Love*. That is to say, the present paper takes into account the category of the “unreliable narrator.” The talk is about the “literary device in which the credibility of the narrator, either first-person or third-person, is seriously compromised” (“Unreliable”). The unreliability of Rose as a narrating character unfolds throughout the novel.

While *Enduring Love* centers a rationalist narrating character, a scientist, and because of that cannot avoid supporting the validity of science as a superior way of explaining the world, it also lets this character doubt the legitimacy of “narratives”. The postmodernist theoretician Michel Foucault “was most interested in directing his genealogical method against what he called the ‘totalising discourses’, those great systems, syntheses or ideologies that dominate modern thought” and described “a constant struggle between different powers which try to impose their own ‘will to truth’” (Drolet 20). In the postmodern realm, Joe Rose is considered a “believer”, too; besides, his will to truth equals the scientific explanation. This protagonist’s creed inevitably comes into confrontation with other versions of truth, be it, particularly, Clarissa’s romantic belief in the value of emotion or Jed Parry’s religious fanaticism. The dramatic point of the novel is that its main protagonist is revealed as unable to reconcile with the fact of these competing strategies. In that, Rose defies the postmodernist ethics of multiplicity. As has already been suggested, a lot of Joe Rose’s thinking adheres to the (idealist) idea of the certainty of meaning. Rose’s structuralist “hyper-rationalism” is at stake, though, after his normally affirmed rationalism has been disturbed by the experience of watching another man’s tragic death. Presumably, Joe Rose, for once, is supposed to leave his usual, nearly dogmatic, imagery of the certainty of his reason, and rather thoughtlessly yield to the

enjoyment of helplessness. The abandonment of the scientific reasoning constitutes an option for Rose, in terms of dealing with the feeling of despair. This, however, he is unable to accomplish. Instead of actively facing the un-admitted emotional unease that has been troubling him since the balloon incident, which would be unattainable by reason alone, Rose inadvertently suppresses it, concentrating instead on being stalked by the (psychotic?) Jed Parry. That is to say, it is perfectly plausible to take Rose's intensified irritated interest in Parry as a front. With Parry, Rose can easily employ reason and render the stalker "madman", which is a convenient imposition of totality onto the situation, resulting in Rose's feeling of superiority.

Rose thus prefers to adhere to the trouble which can be resolved through reasoning and contain the one that exceeds his rationalist understanding. Later on in *Enduring Love*, Rose, even though he succeeds in making sense of Jed Parry's extraordinary behavior by means of classifying it as a pathological condition, and in that, "wins the battle", is left with his partner's incomprehension and rejection. The logical reason for Clarissa's stance is her awareness of not being "tolerated" enough by Rose. In Zygmunt Bauman's words, "tolerance as such is possible only in the form of solidarity: that is, what is needed is a practical recognition of the relevance and validity of the other's difference, expressed in a willing engagement in the dialogue. Tolerance requires the acceptance of the subjectivity of the other who is to be 'tolerated'. The rationalist Joe, however, is initially unable to see this obligation, which makes him a very modern character, indeed. In the postmodern ethics, the modern faith in the power of reason to free the human spirit from bondage is seen as arising out of ignorance and prejudice. Rose relies on the power of reason to help him overcome the emotional unease he has been facing after witnessing the accident, but the rational explanation does not help this time.

The justification of his anxiety brought about by Parry's presence fails to untangle Rose's and Clarissa's troubled relationship, because the justification is mere part of Rose's own will to truth and intolerant in relation to Clarissa's need to be recognized as differently understanding. Assuming that "we gain true self-awareness or become conscious of our selfhood when we face death", while "the rational principles associated with the Western philosophical tradition, the principles conjoined to modernity itself erect barriers against conscious selfhood and therefore obstacles to individuals' self-awareness" (Drolet 8-9), we have an explanation for Joe Rose's troubled psyche, for the difficulties of coming to terms with the unusual situations that accompany Rose. Rose's rationalist basis of thought prevents him from properly dealing with the extraordinary experience. Clarissa, his partner, is less susceptible to intellectual depression after the accident, because she is able to accept her feeling of despair after the extraordinary "spectacle" of death. Rose, on the other hand, merely suppresses his idea of the man's death as meaningless as impossible to rationalize. Rose's stubborn insistence on "truthfulness" of scientific knowledge (defied by postmodernism) deprives him of the chance to deal with the (ethical) confusion that has overwhelmed him lately.

Barry Lewis, trying to identify the dominant features of postmodernist literature, proposes fragmentation and paranoia as examples of the characteristic derangements the postmodern novel. Both can be spotted in *Enduring Love*, and thus help us display McEwan's postmodernist agenda. The notion of fragmentation in literary writing concerns the difficulty of the determination of the given novel's theme. "The postmodernist writer distrusts the wholeness and completion associated with traditional stories, and prefers to deal with other ways of structuring narrative" (127). An unambiguous completion of this novel's narrative is not accomplishable,

due to its postmodern project. The guiding principle of the narration thus becomes distortion. The “uncertainty principle” (127) Lewis comes to mention is undoubtedly part of the style of Joe Rose’s narrating strategy, as explained above. Moreover, paranoia, the other prominent concept in terms of the postmodernist literature’s critique, is a clearly visible ingredient of *Enduring Love*. “The protagonist of the postmodernist novel sometimes suspects that he or she is trapped at the centre of an intrigue, often with some justification” (130). Joe Rose dreads the threat that he sees in the figure of Jed Parry. The main protagonist is afraid of being engulfed in Parry’s persuasion. Rose’s difficulties inherent in his attempts to persuade the authorities of Parry’s threat can be seen as a notion of the conspiring society. The police seems to be tolerant of Parry’s conviction. All in all, Rose is paranoid in this respect indeed. He experiences the feeling of being a victim of an intrigue accomplished by Parry and the officials.

The tentative chapter division and allocation of the timeline of the dissertation are as follows. The first chapter provides the bird's eye view of the research. The second chapter is the discussion of the theoretical modality of postmodernism and the application of the novel from the perspective of postmodernism keeping in the attention the characters and the incidents. The last chapter concludes the research.

II: Questioning Totality: Decentering and Fragmentation in McEwan's *Enduring Love*

Enduring Love (1977) is a novel in which McEwan deals less with the actions of an event than with the consequences of one, and its impact upon the life of the novel's major character, Joe Rose. Joe's struggle to reconstruct his identity through narrating it to the reader reveals to be a fertile ground for the consideration of the close tie between narrative and identity. The novel begins with the major character's narration of a balloon incident, which has served as the starting point for the crisis in Joe's perception of his own identity, whom looking back at the incident, is now trying to put the fragments together to reconstruct his shattered identity. In this procedure, not only are we presented with Joe's narrative but also that of Clarissa, Joe's wife and Jed Perry, who believes there is a profound religious relationship between him and Joe, which has been forged during the balloon incident, and which Joe is denying. Each character has his/her own narrative to consider and neither is willing to give up in the face of the other's' narrative. The present study will attempt to follow the procedure involved in self-construction and the ultimate result of such narrative construction of identities.

The aim is to outline the structure of the novel's train of thought, which will be further analyzed later in the paper. The actual sequence of the notions discussed in the present thesis in terms of *Enduring Love* will be described here. To begin with, the suspensefulness of *Enduring Love*'s opening chapter has been marveled at by multiple literary critics. It has a way of extraordinarily absorbing the reader into the story of the novel. As Sven Birkerts concisely observes, "the ideal course of the classic novel: complications of character and situation creating a 'rising action' that culminates in a climactic moment" (7) does not fully concern *Enduring Love*. The

novel's specialty resides in the fact that its climatic event is introduced at the beginning of the narrative. The reader should better note this divergence as revealing. Suspicion about the normality of the novel's form is to take hold. McEwan himself admits: "I think of novels in architectural terms. You have to enter at the gate, and this gate must be constructed in such a way that the reader has immediate confidence in the strength of the building". The divergence cloaked in the novel's untraditional opening with a climax signals the novels' further destabilization. The "fundamental balloon situation" is rendered in still the same chapter, while the central character's nature starts revealing itself. (Joe Rose, the main protagonist of the novel, is its first-person narrator, which gives the reader of the text a misleading feeling of being close to the story told. The true significance of the first-person narration in *Enduring Love* will only take shape later in the novel. Ian McEwan has a reason to give his main protagonist the controversial first-person voice.) In the balloon incident, a man tragically loses his life. And, already in the first chapter, Rose is shown as a person who does a lot of rationalist thought. Naturally, the confrontation with tragic death affects Rose's ability to take life as a series of facts. The second chapter of the book is dedicated to Rose's sorrowful reminiscence of the immediate aftermath of the accident. The third chapter lets Rose's partner, Clarissa, voice the idea that Rose in fact suffers from the accident even more than she does, because he is unable to account for this recent experience, bound to always rationalize what happens around him. Rose cannot somehow make sense of his own stirred emotional state or does not even realize it.

The tone of the present description of the novel's flow is intentional. The above account of the narrative's chronological winding off exemplifies its competing tendencies and foregrounding of contradictory meanings. There is a lot of the

paradoxical going on in *Enduring Love*'s narration. Rose's paranoia only gets substantiated at the end of the narrative. Significantly, though, this resolution's reliability is unsure. In the narration of *Enduring Love*, McEwan has taken steps to ensure his first-person narrator's dubiousness. It is not insignificant that McEwan combines the description of the story of Jed Parry's stalking of Joe Rose and the simultaneous disintegration of the relationship between Joe and Clarissa with Rose's extensive philosophizing about the precarious usage of narrative in science. McEwan's project in *Enduring Love* is the destabilization of his characters' righteousnesses. Joe Rose internalizes the Nietzschean "will to truth" concept. The notion pervading the text, in a form of a question, is: "What is the proof that my proof is right?" The novel is an exemplification of how "believed proofs" are seeming and how just about any interpretation can be shown as invalid, in a sense. All can be viewed from a different perspective and be contested. To add, in McEwan's own words, "[t]he reader is supposed to be wondering whether he can trust this narrator (Joe)" (Schoeck). Also, about an excerpt from McEwan's *The Innocent*, Alice Truax says the following: "The scene is vintage McEwan--in its suspense, its violence, and the sickening swiftness with which it unfolds. But perhaps its most emblematic characteristic is its ability to provoke a flustered and ambivalent response in the reader". The vintage Ian McEwan postmodernizing, pervading his fiction, is described here rather well.

That is to say, McEwan devotes *Enduring Love* to the debate over the postmodern condition, in a very specific way. McEwan's foregrounding of Joe Rose's figure also becomes a study of subjectivity. The first-person narration, accomplished by this character, is purposeful. The resulting increased, yet misleading subjectiveness of the text is evident. Tammy Clewell, in his contribution to the *Encyclopedia of*

Postmodernism dedicated to the discussion of “subjectivity” in the postmodern era, assumes that:

The postmodern conception of subjectivity can be distinguished by its opposition to the Cartesian notion of the subject: a strongly bounded agent of rational self-legislation conceived in traditional epistemology (from Descartes to Kant) as the counterpart to the object. Despite diverse and sometimes oppositional formulations, postmodernist and poststructuralist critics share an impulse to ‘deconstruct’ the humanist subject as the intending source of knowledge and meaning. Such accounts redefine the human self as an entity constructed by, and not simply reflected in a culture’s social discourses, linguistic structures, and signifying practices. (381-82)

McEwan, in a clearly postmodernist way, makes Joe Rose’s humanist subject dissipate. Joe Rose is an evidently contradictory individual. Moreover, his authority as an author is established, but subverted. All in all, the notion of schizophrenia is already present in the book’s title: “Indeed, there is a blatant irony in the double meaning of the term *enduring*: the adjective giving a positively toned meaning to love as long-lasting, defying time, the verbal gerund-- suffering an unpleasant, painful or imposed experience—a meaning that negates pleasure. Thus the very title alone seemed to destabilize the meaning of love and the narratives that support it” (Kahane 3). Similarly destabilized main protagonist and his ambivalence permeate *Enduring Love*.

Postmodernism has been identified as a continuation, that is, a late phase, a successor, of the previous formation called modernism. For that matter, this shift is implied in the obvious term *post-modernism*. It is postmodernism’s fate to be defined

in opposition to modernism. The two grand notions are often posited as contrastive and follows what is an attempt to identify the major notions of their variance. Antony Easthope, for instance, contrasts “the confident, iconoclastic affirmations of modernism and a postmodernism founded on ambivalence” (17). Here, one of the basic principles of the difference between modernism and its successor, postmodernism, is outlined. While modernism is affirmative, confident, or, in other words, interested in totalizing, postmodernism, on the other hand, favors ambivalence, that is the diversion from the totalizing tendency. In Robert Barsky’s words, “there is a postmodern suspicion about totalizing social programs, attempts at solving all of society’s ills with an overriding ideology or agenda” (305). The division of interests implies modernism’s belief in autonomy as opposed to postmodernism’s affirmation of diversity and relativity. In yet other words, and this time, along with a consideration of the postmodernist literary writing. According to Michel Drolet:

One of the most significant differences between modernism and postmodernism is the concern for universality or totality. While modernist artists aimed to capture universality or totality in some sense, postmodernists have rejected these ambitions as ‘metanarratives’. This usage is ascribed to the philosophers Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard. [...] Following Ludwig Wittgenstein's critique of the possibility of absolute and total knowledge, Lyotard also further argued that the various ‘master-narratives’ of progress, such as positivist science, Marxism, and Structuralism, were defunct as a method of achieving progress. Writers such as John Ralston Saul among others have argued that postmodernism represents an accumulated disillusionment with the

promises of the Enlightenment project and its progress of science, so central to modern thinking. (12)

Furthermore, Michel Drolet reminds us of the fact that the poststructuralists, including Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, took part in the assault on what Foucault called “totalizing systems”, in which they rejected “the structuralist *claim* that there is any deep or final truth that such discourse can uncover” (Drolet 18). This notion presents the basic standpoint for the present description of postmodernity in *Enduring Love*. McEwan’s agenda is to destabilize Joe Rose’s belief in the existence of a “final truth”. As has been suggested in the above quote, to discriminate modernism and postmodernism, the question of their individual attitudes toward the Enlightenment project, the belief in the rationalizing powers of science, takes on significance. What happens in the postmodernist discourse is that the scientific knowledge, formerly privileged, in the modern era, experiences certain degradation. Lyotard’s famous *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), a foundational text of postmodernism, addresses the question of the status of science in the postmodern world. “Lyotard produces a radical and unsettling review of how knowledge has operated in the West since Renaissance, starting from the viewpoint that for us today science has come to be deeply involved with language” (Easthope 18). The present analysis of *Enduring Love* adheres to the understanding of postmodernism as “a movement whose conscious purpose was to overrun ideas integral to modernism, in particular those of narrative and representation” (Drolet 3). Lyotard, the postmodernist theoretician, comes to doubt the validity of science. According to him, the scientific knowledge cannot be seen as superior to other discourses. That is to say postmodernism downgrades science and, in that, posits it as being tantamount to other ways of explaining the world. The claim of the postmodernist theoreticians that “‘truth’ and ‘reality’ are obsolete ideas, that

knowledge is always and everywhere a function of the epistemic will-to-power” (Barsky 308), is also one of *Enduring Love*’s central claims. To even further elaborate on the assumption outlined, “[t]he last third of the 20th century developed under the sign of ‘post,’ which signaled the demise of such concepts of modernity as ‘truth’ and ‘objectivity’” (Epstein). The understanding of the postmodern age as involving a certain denial of rationalism and science’s priority as an explaining force is common to a plentitude of thinkers, which is even further confirmed by the following quote:

Vast sectors of the humanities and the social sciences seem to have adopted a philosophy that we shall call, for want of a better term, ‘postmodernism’: an intellectual current characterized by the more-or-less explicit rejection of the rationalist tradition of the Enlightenment, by theoretical discourses disconnected from any empirical test, and by a cognitive and cultural relativism that regards science as nothing more than a ‘narration’, a ‘myth’ or a social construction among many others. (34)

Postmodernism clearly distances itself from the “absoluteness” of the grand narrative, and “[t]he absolute appears under various names: ‘totality,’ ‘canon,’ ‘center,’ ‘logocentrism,’ ‘metaphysics,’ etc.”. (34) Problematic, from the postmodernist point of view, must be Joe Rose’s apparent logocentrism.

The criticism of an individual’s adherence to a totalizing explanation of the world is an evident leitmotif of *Enduring Love*. The talk permeating the novel is about what Ian Buchanan, in his account of Fredric Jameson’s theorization, identifies as “false consciousness” (195). At a point in the novel, Rose considers the nature of faith, naming it a “passionate conviction, the brute strength of single-mindedness [...] bringing cohesion and identity, and a sense that you and your fellows were right, even

– or especially – when you were wrong” (159). Elsewhere in *Enduring Love*, other possible instances of unlucky adherence to one’s own persuasion are outlined, in which the presence of the motif in the narrative yet again strengthens. For instance, in the conversation at Clarissa’s birthday lunch with Jocelyn Kale, the “Miescher story” gets mentioned. The talk is about the inscrutability of science’s discoveries.

Sometimes even revolutionary revelations can go unnoticed: “He was absolutely certain that DNA was a boring irrelevant molecule containing random sequences of those four letters, ACGT. He dismissed it, and then, in that peculiar human way, it became a matter of faith with him, deep faith. What he knew, he knew, and the molecule was insignificant” (165). The described scientist, believing too much in the unimportance of his discovery, happened to overlook its actual significance. Strong faith, that is strong persuasion in a single direction, is not useful or advisable. The twentieth chapter thus provides a fitting summary of the book’s principal issue. Rose, the narrator, gives here a lot of thought to the concept of “self-persuasion”, that is, the existence of totalizing, exclusive and subjective narratives:

[W]e lived in the mist of half-shared, unreliable perception, and our sense data came warped by a prism of desire and belief, which tilted our memories too. We saw and remembered in our own favor and we persuaded ourselves along the way. Pitiless objectivity, especially about ourselves, was always a doomed social strategy. We’re descended from the indignant, passionate tellers of half truths who in order to convince others, simultaneously convinced themselves when it didn’t suit us we couldn’t agree on what was in front of us. Believing is seeing. (180-81)

Joe Rose arrives at the partial realization of the impossibility of objectivity. By drawing attention to the fact that we “all” are “tellers of half-truths”, the protagonist subverts also the credibility of his own voice.

McEwan is demonstrably interested in showing how different people, or characters, out of pragmatic reasons, depend upon different personal grand narratives. In *Enduring Love*, a whole multitude of structuralisms compete for the reader’s trust. An individual’s devotedness to a particular world view or interpretation of his or her life is governed by expediency. The notion of an inadvertent manipulation of reality, in order to “explain” it in the given individual’s preferred way, arises. Glenn Jordan and Chris Weedon designate the “personal grand narrative” as a “universal”:

‘Universals’ are discursive constructs with which particular groups seek to legitimate their own particular interests. [...] In the postmodern world there is no single truth. There are, at best, more or less comprehensive and convincing versions which carry with them particular social implications. Truths are discursive constructs” (547).

Especially Rose’s science-based world view, his “truth”, which reckons with the possibility of objectivity, is bound to come out as problematic, then. Already Martin Heidegger:

went on to argue that Western thinking was dominated by a subjectivism or humanism in which individuals defined and manipulated reality according to their needs [...] He believed humanism to be a [...] psychologically consoling strategy, and he devoted much thought and energy to attacking its principal aspects associated with the modern age – science and technology – which he believed to be the worst and most alienating aspects of Western

thought because they objectified reality and constrained thought to instrumental thinking. (Drolet 17)

A part also of the postmodernist agenda is to alter science's status as the most reliable of worldviews. Rose's scientific objectifying of reality, his lingering, though fading, lack of awareness of his own "instrumental thinking", makes him a modern character lost in the context of postmodernity.

Peculiar is *Enduring Love*'s author's mirroring in the novel's main protagonist of Joe Rose. That is to say, McEwan affirms the assumption of a certain superiority of the scientific thought himself, claiming in one of his published articles that "[s]cience [...] as an intricate, self-correcting thought system, advances and refines its understanding of the thousands of objects of its study. This is how it derives its power and status" ("Parallel"). The novelist presumably thinks of science as possessing an empowered status. Wittily, Zadie Smith uncovers "a truth about McEwan: he is not a dilettante or even a natural, neither a fabulist nor a show-off. He is rather an artisan, always hard at work; refining, improving, engaged by and interested in every step in the process, like a scientist setting up a lab experiment". Moreover, McEwan's demonstrable fascination with the scientific thought could have an origin in his son's choice to study biology. Apparently, there are reasons to see McEwan as an apologist of science. Nevertheless, ambivalence pervades, supposedly, both Joe Rose's and Ian McEwan's account of science. Rose, rather inadvertently, allows for science's deficiency, when he admits to his inclination to polish the often uncanny, or even ambiguous, scientific vindications: "People say I have a talent for clarity. I can spin a decent narrative out of the stumblings, back-trackings and random successes that lie behind most scientific breakthroughs" (75). McEwan points at the fact of science's dubiousness here, too.

Jed Parry is the extreme case of a person viewing the world through a prism, which, in his eyes, is not impugnable. The totalizing mind is implicitly proposed dangerous in *Enduring Love*, which is all the more true in Parry's case, who, struck by "de Clerambault's syndrome", is completely unable to understand his own single-mindedness. As Rose, the narrator, appositely formulates:

[t]he pattern of his love was not shaped by external influences, even if they originated from me. If I had written him a letter declaring passionate love, it would have made no difference. He crouched in a cell of his own devising, teasing out meanings, imbuing nonexistent exchanges with their drama of hope or disappointment, always scrutinizing the physical world. He illuminated the world with his feelings, and the world confirmed him at every turn his feelings took. (143)

In yet other words, "Parry listened only to the inner voice of his private God" (153). In *Enduring Love*, McEwan scrupulously discusses the human compulsion to impose meaning, often very specific meaning, upon the surrounding world. Symptomatic for the present idea is the Nietzschean notion that "truths are illusions whose illusory nature has been forgotten" (qtd. in Wheeler 215). McEwan is determined to show the traps of the described urge. Even though man cannot help rationalizing his or her life, he or she should be able to be fully aware of the limits of his or her type of rationalization. That is to say, "when Joe [Rose] points out that his stalker is bound within 'love's prison of self-reference,' he is also making a point with a broader human application. We all have a tendency to filter events through the narrow lens of self, especially when those events are terrible and seemingly random" (Nesson). The advice, it follows, is to take care and listen to the other voices as well. "Joe makes

sense of Parry's infatuation by classifying it as an instance of a pathological condition, 'de Clérambault's syndrome', one of whose peculiarities is, ironically, that it can last indefinitely, since it isn't dependent on reciprocation" (Mars-Jones). The cited critic points at an important aspect of any totalizing urge – its factual disinterest in reciprocity. A totality's validity is ascertained "from within.

Joe faces Jed Parry's "grand narrative" and, even though he is aware of its deconstruction's possibility, is intrigued by it. In this, McEwan accentuates the notion of a convincing narrative as prone to being accepted despite its falseness. Rose admits not unequivocally rejecting Parry's point of view. As he is thrown into a conversation with his stalker, he realizes that he is actually influenced by Parry's persuasion, even though perhaps on a much lower level than Parry would desire him to be. Talking to Parry, the following Rose's thoughts arise:

It was as if I had fallen through a crack in my own existence, down into another life, another set of sexual preferences, another past history and future. I had fallen into a life in which another man could be saying to me, We can't talk about it like this, and My own feelings are not important. What also amazed me was how easy it was not to say, who the fuck are you? What are you talking about? It took an act of will to dismiss the sense that I owed this man, that I was being unreasonable in holding something back. In part, I was playing along with this domestic drama, even though our household was no more than this turd-strewn pavement. (67)

Rose comes to imagine another life, in which different rules apply, as hypothetically possible. The narrating character describes Parry's "language" as influential; it has, after all, created response in Rose. What Rose calls "old emotional sub-routines"

happens to come into existence in his psyche, despite his categoric rejection of acclaiming Parry's suggestions. Any narrative of a substance, that is any narrative that manages to appear cogent, can "set things in motion". Rose's partner Clarissa senses Rose's being influenced by Parry, despite the protagonist's clear rejection of his stalker: "Joe's partner Clarissa is not entirely sympathetic to Joe's plight. In some ways she sees him as complicit, partly to blame, for Jed's obsession" (Schoeck). Joe Rose's trouble with Jed Parry is the resultant destabilization of Rose's all-encompassing trust in his usual rationalist viewpoint. Regina Rudaityte, in fact, summarizes our present assumption, "[t]he stalker Jed Parry's homo-erotic obsession becomes destructive not only for his own personal integrity but it does test to the limits the protagonist Joe Rose's mental stability and scientific rationalism" (34). Moreover, the critic reminds of another salient feature of the "totalizing" mind, which is its liking for complexity, perfection, or beauty.

Joe Rose's constant oppugning of other people's creeds is one thing. Yet, *Enduring Love*'s agenda is to question every single personal attempt to totalize, any subjective grand narrative. And in that philosophy, Joe Rose, even though he is the narrating character, cannot present an exception. The validity of his personal vision also has to become a subject of scrutiny. This has to be considered in order to be able to show McEwan as an author who is interested in exemplifying an individual's dilemma inherent in the transition from the realm of modernism to that of postmodernism. The description of how his main character, Joe Rose, comes to doubt his own vision is vital for the main argument of *Enduring Love*. The very subject of the novel is the impeachment of subjective grand narratives, as explained above. The subsequent main protagonist's hesitation, his uncertainty about himself, becomes a leitmotif of the book. For instance, Rose admits, from time to time, the existence of a

realm that escapes the scientific explanation: “However scientifically informed we count ourselves to be, fear and awe still surprise us in the presence of the dead” (23). Rose admits here that his life is governed by the logic of the scientific knowledge. And at the same time, the character doubts the monopoly of science, when the explanation of the world is to be given. Elsewhere, the character allows for the acknowledgement of the existence of something as unreasonable as *déjà vu*: “In the second or two it took for Logan to reach the ground I had a sense of *déjà vu*” (18). Not everything can be taken into account by means of scientific explanation. The character of Rose is able to question, that is subvert, himself even explicitly: “[T]he matter of our differences was unbroachable. I glanced at her and thought she looked beautiful and sad. Or was the sadness all mine?” (223). The discussed idea of people’s projection of their own understanding into what they observe is voiced here, and what is even more important, Rose uncovers this in relation to himself alone, which does not happen many times throughout the novel. His anticipation of Parry being present in the library, where Rose is writing an article, is well described, but there is no way the narrator can clearly prove his point; he has not seen Jed Parry. All he can do is closely describe his feelings of the strange anticipation. The reader cannot be sure about the narrator’s reliability. “I had sensed him behind me even before I saw him. The unreliability of such intuition I was prepared to concede. But it was him” (47). Joe Rose, in fact, is surprised at his newly acquired ability to believe things that have not been grounded on fact.

Where Jed Parry is concerned, Rose is even willing to trust his intuition. Rose’s mind, as has been outlined, inadvertently imposes the scientific explanation to happenings, “Some people find their long perspectives in the stars and galaxies; I prefer the earthbound scale of the biological What I thought might calm me was the

reminder that, for all our concerns, we were still part of this natural dependency” (206-7). Importantly here, Rose admits the reassurance he draws from his scientific understanding. The character would expect the scientific look negate the emotional turmoil he acquired after witnessing the accident. However, as is hinted in the above quotation, this time, the usual strategy does not work. With the facing of death, Rose’s mind becomes slightly more aware of its scientific basis’ limits. It is a disappointment for the rationalist Rose. He would expect being spared the feeling of guilt by means of rationalizing the incident.

The function of the minor characters in the novel, Clarissa and Parry, is to contest the main protagonist’s, Joe Rose’s, vision. Joe Rose is the first-person narrator of the given story. It is the sign of his generosity, then, to allow for other voices to be heard. Or, in other words, it is a sign of the gradually pervading postmodernity of this character, his latent openness to and acceptance of diverse interpretations. As Regina Rudaityte claims, “the author resorts to literary history (life-stories of the Romantic poets John Keats and William Wordsworth) as well as to the facts of sciences, medicine, of psychopathology to be more exact, thus moving among heterogeneous discourses incorporated into the narrative. This sets the rules of the interpretative game” (33). Rose’s voice, naturally, is dominant in *Enduring Love*. Yet, it comes to subvert itself at times, by means of venting other voices. Significantly, Rose, the narrator, dedicates three complete chapters to Parry’s voice. Three chapters in their entirety follow Parry’s thought, as they are taken over by letters addressed to Rose, written by Parry. In Claire Kahane’s words:

Joe is the reliable narrator of a realistic discourse about love and its breakdown through traumatizing contingencies. McEwan casts a particle of doubt on Joe’s subjectivity, or rather objectivity, even on his

point of view as narrator, a doubt that is voiced within the novel by Clarissa, who has distanced herself from Joe's love through her doubt of the truth of his story. (12-13)

Jed Parry's second letter, which takes hold of the thirteenth chapter, discusses Rose's career in journalism, based on the popularization of the scientific thought, which he so keenly adheres to. Parry pities Rose's "sad dry thoughts" and expresses his wish to "set him free from his little cage of reason" (133). Moreover, Parry proposes: "[h]ow is it possible to love God and love you at the same time? Through faith alone, Joe. Not through facts, or pretend facts, or intellectual arrogance" (134). The assumption that the scientific thought has its limits is voiced. Apparently, Parry's vision is also afflicted by a concrete grand narrative, his belief in God, and thus is also in itself prone to be seen as totalizing. However, it manages to confront and resists Rose's personal grand narrative of the superiority of the scientific rendition of the world, all the same. Parry even implicitly alludes to the concept of *différence*: "Somewhere in among your protestations about God is a plea to be rescued from the traps of your own logic" (135). What McEwan draws attention to is the fact that anyone's personal logic entails "traps", and thus all logics must become the subjects of disputation. The aim is to prove also Rose's assumption of the superiority of rationalism wrong. The resultant ambivalent picture of the protagonist impresses us as rather postmodern. To resume the poststructuralist stance, in Clewell's wording:

When applied to the human self, difference [Derridean coinage] suggests a discursively constructed subject that never coheres to form a complete or non-contradictory individual. Foucault has similarly proclaimed the death of both the Cartesian subject and the traditional idea of the author, giving special prominence to the concept of

‘discourse’ as the primary medium in the constitution of subjectivity, knowledge, and power. (382)

Joe Rose is an evidently contradictory individual. His authority as an author is established, but unsure. In his contribution to the debate over ethics in postmodernity, Arik Evan Issan mentions that “[o]ne’s [postmodern] self is without underlying coherence, hierarchy, or core and is but an unstable combination of opposing underdeveloped selves randomly and multiply formed” (115). Joe Rose’s instability is a postmodern stance, the sign of a postmodern identity. In a certain way, and a different sense, Joe Rose represents science in *Enduring Love*. The postmodernist Jean-Francois Lyotard claims that “[s]tepping over Benjamin’s and Adorno’s reticences, it must be recalled that science and industry are no more free of the suspicion which concerns reality than are art and writing. To believe otherwise would be to entertain as excessively humanistic notion of the mephistophelian functionalism of sciences and technologies” (76). Joe Rose’s falling under suspicion is a metaphor of the science’s superiority’s weakening in the postmodern era.

To sum up, there is a different reality for each character in the novel. Rose is tolerant, as the narrating character. All things considered, Rose’s alter ego (the other half of his schizophrenic self) does presuppose the existence of different minds, and thus, in the text which he controls, also allows for contrasting minor narratives to co-exist. Nice is the juxtaposition of his point of view and the Clarissa’s viewpoint he is generous enough to take into consideration: “To her I was maniac, 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). The confrontal of these two characters’ subjectiveness becomes a visible theme of the novel, despite the fact that Joe Rose enjoys the privileged

position in the text, as a consequence of being chosen by McEwan as the narrator:

“Joe is a jack of all sciences, while Clarissa is an academic whose specialty is Keats.

McEwan can't resist equipping Joe with a full expressive panoply of language. In

theory, he and she occupy different worlds, in practice he inhabits both - one chapter

is even done from his imagining of her point of view, with Joe presented in the third

person” (Mars-Jones). In the course of the novel, that is to say, McEwan describes the

gradual disintegration of the harmonious partnership of Rose and Clarissa that is

outlined at the beginning of the novel. Their inability to reconcile each other's

understanding of what is happening causes the gradual alienation they go through.

Clarissa's way of thinking is frequently shown as fundamentally different from

Rose's. “Clarissa thought that her emotions were the appropriate guide, that she could

feel her way to the truth, when what was needed was information, foresight and

careful calculation. It was therefore natural, though disastrous for us both, that she

should think I was mad” (150). This quote even acknowledges the fact of the fatality

of the partners' disagreement. Yet, the description of the difference in their thinking is

commenced a lot earlier in the novel:

She had written me some beauties, passionately abstract in their exploration of the ways our love was different from and superior to any that had ever existed. I had tried to match hers, but all that sincerity would permit me were facts, and they seemed miraculous enough to me: a beautiful woman loved and wanted to be loved by a large, clumsy, balding fellow who could hardly believe his luck. (7)

The narrator outlines the essential diversity of mentalities, and the consequent

differences in personal interpretations of the world. Even two people drawn together

by love are more than likely to think of their relationship diversely. It is the narrating

character's insistence on the factual explanation of what is happening that causes the growing disagreement between him and his partner, his intolerance. Also the third chapter elaborates on the difference of Rose's and Clarissa's way of thinking: "‘It must mean something,’ she said dully" (32). When Clarissa suggests that the balloon incident bears some significance, Rose is unable to react. This is not his understanding. A minor disagreement arises between them. Clarissa summarizes this moment of dissension with the following, and at the same time the nature of Rose's incomprehension is outlined: "‘You’re such a dope. You’re so rational sometimes you’re like a child...’ Did she mean that rationality was a kind of innocence?" (33). McEwan comes to point at the inevitability of ignorance in case of one-sided perception. It is only through the presentation of Clarissa's, that is another protagonist's, statements that Rose comes to explicitly describe himself as a "rationalist": "‘I love you more now I’ve seen you go completely mad,’ she said. ‘The rationalist cracks at last!’" (35). The narrating character thus makes the reader sense the possibility of observing him "through other eyes" - through Clarissa's world view, for instance. It is Clarissa's arguments that, in confrontation with Rose, help to undermine the narrating character's credibility:

A few years ago, science book editors could think of nothing but chaos. Now they were banging their desks for ever possible slant of neo-Darwinism, evolutionary psychology and genetics. I wasn't complaining, business was good, but Clarissa had generally taken against the whole project. It was rationalism gone beserk. 'It's the new fundamentalism,' she had said one evening. 'Twenty years ago you and your friends were all socialists and you blamed the environment for

everyone's hard luck. Now you've got us trapped in our genes, and there's a reason for everything. (70)

Clarissa's disagreement incites a dispute between the partners, which even further illustrates the difference in Rose's and Clarissa's thinking:

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 [...] Clarissa said I had not understood her. There was nothing wrong in analyzing 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. (71)

Clarissa is the main counterpoint of Rose's rationalism in the novel. Jed Parry also confronts Rose's science, but his opinion's validity is less credible, for it is undermined due to the reader's sensing of the character's madness.

The novel's preoccupation with the questions of objectivity, connected to reliability, is evident. In postmodernity, unreliability is counted on. Joe's determination to prove his point with the help of "facts" is rendered almost ridiculous when McEwan lets his character dwell on speculating which sections of Parry's letters should be copied and showed to the police to make the police believe Rose's statement of being subject to assault. This is, unfortunately for Rose's respectability, an evident step to censorship. Rose takes his time to select convenient passages from Parry's letters that would convince the police of Parry's deviation: "I was attempting to compile a dossier of threats, and while there were no single obvious examples, there were allusions and logical disjunctures whose cumulative effect would not be lost to the mind of a policeman" (151). Rose imagines the policemen reading

suspicious parts of Parry's letters out of context, without realizing their actual un-objectiveness. Under these circumstances, the police will only be yielding to Rose's pre-established "truth" reading his concise compilation of Parry's disjunct sentences. Going back to Joe Rose's inauspicious ice-cream slipup, Mars-Jones' elaboration on the subject shall be fore grounded:

Immediately before he lies to the police, or to himself, or merely the reader, Joe has been thinking about a truth free of self-interest, doubting whether a willed objectivity can save us from our engrained habits of mind, and has even asked explicitly, in a sentence standing alone as a paragraph: 'But exactly what interests of mine were served by my own account of the restaurant lunch?' (98)

The reviewer agrees with the assumption that Rose comes to doubt the possibility of an objective point of view, despite the fact that he still somehow believes in it (he attempts to pass his narrative off as objective by means of trying to appropriate Clarissa's point of view). The idea of the schizophrenic stance of the character is yet again taken into account here.

The narrator's ambivalent approach described above inevitably results in a schizophrenic pattern taking hold of the whole text of *Enduring Love*; a happening which, in terms of the postmodern logic, has to be seen as - ethical. That is to say, the equivocal vision successfully eliminates totalizing:

The postmodern shift to the approach to the mind is palpable, in that it rebuts the formalist or behaviorist dreams of systematic and predictable results, in favor of a lack of center, 'deterritorialization' and connections through 'rhizomes'. These terms are explored in the complex work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who, for example,

celebrate schizophrenia (schizoanalysis) for its inventiveness and refusal of totalizing approaches. (306)

Rose's juxtaposition of his former understanding and the present understanding of the story being told has the schizophrenic stance in itself. The two Rose's viewpoints do not stand in hierarchy, they are almost equally prominent. Even though the ending of the novel donates the "truth" to Joe Rose, the one, who craved his theory's vindication, the narrator's simultaneous and consistent address of the fact of any personal narrative's dubiousness is still aloft.

The fragmentation of the subject, taking place in *Enduring Love* through the schizophrenic narrating strategy, is a postmodern notion. According to Michael Drolet, already poststructuralism "sought not to constitute the subject, but to dissolve it" (3). Also important for the present thesis is the poststructuralist assumption of the need to "emphasize multiplicity of interpretation, perspectivism and limitedness of any one point of view" (Wheeler 213). Furthermore, to remind us of the preceding and related discussion of rationalism's place in terms of *Enduring Love*, "[p]oststructuralism is integral to a broader critique of rationalism and subjectivism" (Roman 309). What is questioned by post-structuralists is the possibility and validity of an unambiguous determination of the meaning of a text. Multiple interpretations are seen as inevitable.

Rose's only regret is that Clarissa is not made happy by means of being provided with facts. Factuality is just another grand narrative to be contested, even though Rose would like to think otherwise. Clarissa needs Rose to allow for her dissatisfaction. Rose encounters difficulties, as to tolerating his partner's distrust of mere factuality. Yet, in that, he fails to be ethical in the postmodern way.¹ Maryanthe Malliaris relatedly assumes that, "[s]ince postmodernity is a time of visible plurality,

the rational reaction is no longer active hegemony but the awareness and appreciation of difference” (31). But is Joe Rose fully able to accept Clarissa’s right to have a different point of view (one that does not find Rose’s “factual truth” convincing enough to forgive him)? The postmodern realm values the ideas of pluralism and democracy. The need for objectiveness no longer applies. Independent interpretations shall coexist, tolerating each other. As, once again, Zygmunt Bauman reminds us, it is necessary to take into account the “diversity of human kind”, for “[v]ariety and coexistence have become ‘cultural values’” (“Intimations” 18). It could be alleged that the “character of modern attributes Joe Rose” is spotted by McEwan at the moment of his coming to terms with the postmodern logic. Moreover, McEwan’s making of *Enduring Love* metafictional along the way in which the whole subversion of Joe Rose as a narrator aims to pose questions about the act of narrating as such is a classic postmodernist technique.

Inseparable part of Joe Rose’s schizophrenic impulse is his latent ethical confusion. At this stage of the present analysis of postmodernity in *Enduring Love*, the novel’s climatic, horrifying and foundational moment is to be recalled. As Clarissa’s voice insinuates in her final whole-chapter entrance into the novel, addressed to the narrating Joe, “you were troubled by the thought that it might have been you who let go of the rope first your feelings after the accident were real enough. Isn’t it possible that Parry presented you with an escape from your guilt?” (217). Attention is yet again drawn to the main protagonists’ witnessing of the unfortunate death of John Logan in the fields. This scene both starts the narrative of *Enduring Love*, and is actually the very reason for the narrative’s coming into existence. This particular experience, that is to say, resulted in Joe Rose’s mind’s intellectual turmoil. Joe’s being influenced by Jed’s persuasion has something to do with the

circumstances under which the characters met. Was it not for the extraordinary and terrifying encounter of the two, simultaneous with the encounter with tragic death, Rose's impermeable rationalism would not allow for any succumbing to Parry's influence. Yet, it is a matter of human condition to be touched by the unexpected and horrifying experience:

We, too, tend to assign a mythic significance to every bad thing that happens, so that we can say, as Jed does, that we have been brought closer to God; or, more likely, that each grievous misfortune brings us more in touch with our emotions. To the extent that we look for redemptive meaning in the horror of *Enduring Love*, we are just as solipsistic as the stalker who believes that the balloon accident was heaven-sent. Like him, we believe in better living through tragedy. (65)

Rose cannot help the reminiscence of tragic feelings after the balloon accident. The human compulsion to unconsciously desire tragedy, in order to reach different levels of consciousness, and in them, altered subjectivity, is present in his mind, too; despite the fact that he will not admit it neither to Jed Parry nor Clarissa. The reason is his mind's tendency to totalize, discussed previously. More importantly, as the above quote indirectly suggests, it is also counted on by McEwan that the reader is prone to expect a justification of Clarissa's and Parry's claim that the accident "meant" something, in which also the reader's increasing doubt about Joe's reliability is laid. Especially in terms of a classic literary novel, a tragedy is supposed to bear special significance. Also from this derives the interpretative game of *Enduring Love*.

Joe's narration goes against the reader's expectations, in a clearly postmodernist way. Yet, let us consider Michael Drolet's point, taken from his introduction to *The Postmodernism Reader*: "Bell also attacked values he believed to

be rooted in what he called ‘the pseudo-moralities of science’. The faith in scientific objectivity and progress he thought left individuals spiritually weak, and emptied life of metaphysical wonder” (5). This notion is what is elaborated on by McEwan in *Enduring Love*. “The fully authentic experience of life was no longer possible in Western civilization because its intellectual and spiritual orientation was overly rationalized. Western civilization was obsessive and relentless in intellectualizing all human experience” (Drolet 7). Along with his doubt about the invalidity of objectivity, Rose arrives at the realization that, in case he is to account for the accident in the field, he needs to employ subjectiveness. Zygmunt Bauman provides the basic standpoint for the present statement:

I suggest that ethical choice and moral responsibility assume under the postmodern condition a totally new and long forgotten significance; an importance of which modernity tried hard, and with a considerable success, to divest them, moving as it did toward replacement of ethical discourse with the discourse of objective, translocal and impersonal truth. Modernity was, among other things, a gigantic exercise in abolishing individual responsibility. The authorship of moral rules and the responsibility for their promotion was shifted to a supra-individual level. With societies (institutionalized as nation states) losing interest in the promotion of cultural uniformity and renouncing their role as spokesmen of universal reason, agents face ethical confusion. (xxii)

Rose is not only haunted by the psychopathic circumvent. His other great enemy is his actual repudiation of the formerly sustained belief in universality of moral choice.² Rose’s feeling of guilt is the cause of his doubt about his own primarily modern thinking, shown in his insistence on the superiority of the scientific rationalization. As

a consequence, the main protagonist comes to acknowledge that there are, ultimately, more standpoints from which to judge morality of the human action.

There are many parallel interpretations, all of them equal. And it is Rose's task to choose the one that will make him blameless, so that he can safely return to his protected life. Yet, his scientific mind cannot accept that there is no explanation of binding force, that no verification can be undertaken to solve his moral dilemma: "Had we killed him really? Or simply refused to die with him?" (56). In order to let Zygmunt Bauman's voice in again, in postmodernity, "[i]n a cacophony of moral voices, none of which is likely to silence the others, the individuals are thrown back on their own subjectivity as the only ultimate ethical authority" ("Intimations" xxii). Joe Rose should interpret the circumstances of the accident for his own sake.

Lyotard's affiliations here would seem to be with the *Anti-Oedipus* of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who also warned us, at the end of that work, that the schizophrenic ethic they proposed was not at all a revolutionary one, but a way of surviving under capitalism [...]the dissolution of the self into a host of networks and relations, of contradictory codes and interfering messages, is prophetically valorized. (xviii-xix)

The preceding section of the present paper addressed the issue of *Enduring Love's* schizophrenic pattern as a dominant of the text. The novel's structuring of thought complies with the notion of fragmented morality, arising in the postmodern era. Joe Rose adopts a schizophrenic stance to his behavior at the site of the accident, he cannot decide on his blame or blamelessness. The uncertainty of his morality strikes him as unpleasant. This uncertainty was despised by the totalizing frameworks of modernity, but has become acceptable in terms of postmodernity. *Enduring Love*

suggests that perhaps both options, this uncertainty's rejection or its acceptance, have flaws.

McEwan believes that *truax* draws a link between the author's suspenseful narrative voice and the tragic subject matter he employs in his novels. Nicholas Nesson takes the notion even further, associating the morality's presence in *Enduring Love* with its inclusion of a tragedy. First, he describes Aristotle's making a distinction between horror and tragedy, in which "[h]orror just happens, and we learn nothing from it", while "tragedy is morally instructive because we follow the story of the tragic protagonist, and can see where he goes wrong and why". The critic then comes to arrive at a crucial realization, which will help us identify McEwan as a postmodernist thinker:

But while Aristotle was making a distinction between different forms of drama, McEwan takes that formulation one step further, by applying it to life. [...] [There is] a difference between the two men that can be expressed in Aristotelian terms: Jed has a tragic outlook, whereas Joe believes that life is sometimes marked by plain bad luck and unredeemed horror. It's clear that Ian McEwan is not sympathetic to the tragic outlook.

It is certainly clear that McEwan is less sympathetic to the figure of Jed Parry than to his narrating protagonist of Joe Rose. Rose resists the fullness of the tragic look, indeed (in which his postmodernity resides). He senses it, though. *Enduring Love*'s "schizophrenia" is determined also by Rose's oscillation between yielding to the tragic vision and resisting it with the help of the rationalist discourse. Rose's scientific mind takes the final hold of the narrative of *Enduring Love*, in which also the annihilation of the tragic feeling takes place, as that has fully been displaced by Rose's concern for Jed Parry. Though McEwan denies the tragic outlook this way, it

cannot be considered altogether missing from the text. It has been given a lot of subconscious thought by Joe Rose and it has been the subject of the reader's expectations. There is a sense of resentment, but supposition, of the sentimental outlook. It can only be Clarissa, whose voice is firstly let in the peculiar ninth chapter of *Enduring Love*, not Joe Rose, who discloses Rose's actual being impressed emotionally by the experience of the balloon accident:

The trouble with Joe's precise and careful mind is that it takes no account of its own emotional field. He seems unaware that his arguments are no more than ravings, they are an aberration and they have a cause. He is therefore vulnerable, but for now she cannot make herself feel protective. Like her, he has reached the senseless core of Logan's tragedy, but he has reached it unaware. (83)

As Michael Drolet aptly outlines, "the rational principles associated with the Western philosophical tradition, the principles conjoined to modernity itself, which governed the way individuals thought and made sense of their surroundings, alienated them from it. These principles, concepts and categories erected barriers against conscious selfhood and therefore were obstacles to individuals' self-awareness" (9). Joe Rose's rationalist mind prevents him from a smooth reconciliation with what he had to experience. As Clarissa appositely confirms, Rose has difficulties realizing his emotional assets, in which the lack of his self-awareness resides, identified by Drolet as a modernist "handicap". The postmodernism's solution for this unfortunate lack of self-awareness is the return to subjectivity. The death of tragedy in the postmodern era is outlined by Mikhail Epstein, as well:

The tragedy of the division between the individual and the absolute, between the individual and society, and between consciousness and reality, becomes as

impossible as the avant-garde utopia and ecstasy of overcoming that division. What kind of alienation is possible for a theory (postmodern) that does not accept anything as one's 'own' and 'originary'? There is nothing left to become alienated from. The cause of tragedy has thus disappeared, just as has the possibility of utopia.

In Joe Rose's mind, as well as in the text of *Enduring Love*, a doubt about morality in the postmodern era is voiced. If tragedy has ceased to be important in the world, where does it take the ethics? The relativity of ethics makes universally valid morality impossible, which confuses Joe Rose, indeed. "The collapse of 'grand narratives' (as Lyotard put it) – the dissipation of trust in supra-individual and supra-communal courts of appeal – has been eyed by many observers with fear, as an invitation to the 'everything goes' situation, to universal permissiveness and hence, in the end, to the demise of all moral, and thus social order" ("Ambivalence" 251).

Enduring Love expresses a doubt about the morality's shape in postmodernity. Joe Rose, the novel's main protagonist and narrating character, adheres to the modernist style of thought for he senses the dissipation of the traditional morality in the postmodern order.

Ultimately, the whole text of *Enduring Love* is governed by a schizophrenic pattern and grants the readers the freedom to select the way of reading the text they personally favor. Yet another interpretation of the protagonist of Joe Rose comes to mind, as Tyler Roberts' notion is considered that Nietzsche:

never simply rejected enlightenment, but he constantly sought to identify and disrupt the limits of reason and consciousness. His thought oscillates, therefore, between the promise of enlightenment and its impossibility, leading some to condemn his thought as nihilistic and

others to celebrate his liberation from the metaphysics of conceptual, ethical, and religious foundationalism. (264)

Joe Rose, in a very specific way, might remind of the Nietzschean thinking, and be considered the metaphor of the “ideological father” of postmodernism. McEwan’s fiction can be characterized as “cleft,” for its reasoning is carefully ambivalent and interpretation endlessly varies. The author’s narrative voice avoids being univocal, while this schizophrenic stance of the author’s writing makes it postmodern. The subject of the present conclusion thus shall be the identification of the postmodernist schizophrenia of *Enduring Love*. A rich series of opposing notions resides in the novel. While *Enduring Love* is set in the post-humanist, post-masculine world, it still echoes the ideas of humanism and the superior masculinity. “Certainly, in its negotiation of narrative form and of masculinity alike, *Enduring Love* is not a text of affirmation. Instead, its articulation of unease about the efficacy of both is everywhere apparent within the novel” (Morrison).

Enduring Love is a text of destabilization, indeed. Rose’s less prominent, but definitely present, tolerant postmodern self is accompanied by a modern and oppressive alter ego, which actually overwhelms Rose’s consciousness. The narrating character tends towards the logocentric thinking of the traditional scientific reasoning, but senses its invalidity (especially in terms of the postmodern ethics of plurality). He attempts throughout the text to grant other characters, that is, other agents participating in his story, freedom of speech, but denies their “truths” towards the end of the narrative. Joe Rose stands halfway between modernity and postmodernity. His text of *Enduring Love* shows striking symptoms of *difference*, Derrida’s notion of the deconstructive impulse’s occurrence in texts. The novel is an embodiment of a subversive play. McEwan takes sides with his scientist character, the author’s

sympathy to Joe Rose is evident; yet, McEwan simultaneously proposes Rose an unreliable narrating character and equips him with inconsistent thinking, on the top of it. Ambivalence is *Enduring Love*'s main structuring principle. The postmodernist disillusionment with Enlightenment, connected to Foucault's repudiation of "totalizing discourses" and Lyotard's definition of postmodernity as "incredulity towards metanarratives," and the modern faith in "the power of reason to free us" collide in the novel.

III: Experimentation Leading to Fragmentation in *Enduring Love*

The narrating character of *Enduring Love*, Joe Rose, adheres to the rational thought, rather excessively. The outcome is his weakened ability to account for his and the surrounding characters' feelings. The duplicity of the narration touched upon above, that is the ambivalence of the central narrating protagonist, takes shape in the notion of schizophrenia controlling *Enduring Love*. The autonomy of the narrator is constantly subverted. Rose's present recollection of the past, which he is narrating, carries latent sensitivity to the character of Clarissa. All things considered, the narrator is conscious of his own status as a maker of fiction (a postmodernist stance, indeed), and his being doomed to subjectivity. In Zygmunt Bauman's words, "the language of necessity, certainty and absolute truth cannot but articulate humiliation – humiliation of the other, of the different, of the not-up-to-the-standard. The language of contingency, on the contrary, creates a chance 'of being kind, by avoiding humiliation of others'" ("Ambivalence" 235). This is how Joe Rose's compulsion to the "absolutist" scientific explanation causes his insufficient acceptance of Clarissa's right for her autonomy. Rose needs to respect Clarissa's otherness, to comply with the postmodernist requirement.

To add to the debate over the ethics in postmodernity, as mirrored in terms of *Enduring Love*, another Joe Rose's ambivalent standing needs to be addressed. Rose's obstinate faith in scientific objectivity made him unable to cope with the experience of being one of the actors in a scene of accidental death of a man. Postmodernity bears the idea of tolerance, which happily accommodates diversity. The postmodern is tolerant to Rose's "moral failure" at the balloon accident, because it recognizes his personal interest in that stance. What McEwan comes to (indefinitely) mourn in *Enduring Love* is the loss of tragedy in postmodernity. Joe Rose, the novel's main

protagonist and narrating character, adheres to the modernist style of thought for he senses the dissipation of the traditional morality in the postmodern order. What Joe Rose goes through is the nostalgia for modernity and its elevation of science, as well as the implicit nostalgia for the tragic outlook. The character's dilemma is whether to accept postmodernity's "trap" of relative ethics or not. Rose wishes for a universal morality, but resents it on grounds of wanting to escape the feeling of guilt.

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