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**Victims more than Villains:
Images of the Child in McEwan's Novels**

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Öz

Bu tez; Ian McEwan'ının, romanlarındaki çocuk karakterleri konunun geçtiği sosyo-politik dönemleri eleştirmek için kullanmasından yararlanarak, yazarın **The Cement Garden** (1978), **The Child in Time**, (1987) ve **Atonement** (2001) adlı romanlarını inceler. Kötücül, sapkın, yiten ve yetişkinlerin hayatına zorla giren çocuk karakterleri, Gerard Mendel'in **otorite** kavramının gölgesinde, yetişkinlerin kendi çıkarları, beceriksizlikleri, sorumsuzlukları ve bencillikleri için kullandığı, sömürdüğü birer araç olarak irdeler. Sonuç olarak aslında çocukların bu kötücül davranışlarının ve ortadan kayboluşlarının, yetişkinlerin baskıcı otoritesine karşı birer savunma mekanizması veya tehdit altındaki birini korumak için olduğu ileri sürülür.

Tezin giriş bölümü, çocukluk kavramının ve metinlerdeki çocuk algısının tarihsel sürecini açıklar. Birinci bölüm ise **The Cement Garden** romanında, kimi eleştirmenler tarafından yer yer kötücül ve sapkın olarak ifade edilen çocuk karakterlerin toplum tarafından kabul edilemeyeceği davranışları sergilemesini, toplumun otoritesine karşı bir direniş olarak betimler. Ayrıca bir anne ve babanın çocuklarına karşı ne denli zalimce davranabileceği de gösterilir. İkinci bölüm, **The Child in Time** romanında, yetişkinlerin çocuk yetiştirme ve ona bakmadaki beceriksizliğini ve ayrıca siyasi çıkarları için metinde neredeyse yer almayan çocukların eğitim sistemiyle nasıl oynadıklarını tartışır. Üçüncü bölümde **Atonement** adlı romanın konusu, bir çocuğun, ablasını koruma niyetiyle yanlış ifade vermesi sonucu yaratabileceği felaketi betimlerken, ailevi durum açısından bakıldığında yetişkinlerin çocukları cinsel ve baskıcı şiddetle ne denli istismar ettikleri incelenir. Yetişkinlerin çocukları üzerindeki bu sömürüsü, romanın sonunda savaş ile birlikte daha artarak devam eder.

Sonu olarak, ocuk karakterler; zararlı, tehlikeli, ktcl, Őeytansı olarak imlenmelerine raėmen, bu tez, yetiŐkinlerin kendi politik ve sosyal ıkarları iin ocukları zellikle aile ortamında ne denli smrdklerini vurgular. ocuklara atfedilen oėu olumsuz sıfatların aslında ocukların kendilerini savunmaları iin oluŐturduklarının altı izilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Edebiyatta ocuk imgesi, ktcl ocuk karakteri, masum ocuk karakteri, yetiŐkin otoritesi, ocuk smrs, savunma mekanizması.

**Victims more than Villains:
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Abstract

This dissertation, by taking the advantage of McEwan's using child characters who are vehicles to criticise socio-political conditions of England, scrutinises his novels **The Cement Garden** (1978), **The Child in Time**, (1987) and **Atonement** (2001). It discusses villainous, perverse, missing and intrusive child characters, under the authority (borrowed from Gerard Mendel) of adults, are in fact exploited by the adults' own benefits, unskillfulness, irresponsibility and selfishness. As a result, it suggests that their villainous, perverse, missing and intrusive characteristics are children's self-defence mechanisms against the oppression of adults or to protect the others who are in threat.

The introduction part focuses on the terms, child and childhood within a historical process. The first chapter (**The Cement Garden**) scrutinises the (as some critics state) villainous and perverse child characters' unexpected and unacceptable attitudes which arise as a reaction and self-defence against the authority of the society. Meanwhile, the novel also portrays how parents can be tyrannical against their children.

The second chapter (**The Child in Time**) discusses how adults fail at looking after children who rarely exist in the text and manipulate their education for only their political benefits.

In the third chapter (**Atonement**), while the main plot of the novel indicates the potential harm of a child by focusing on her crime due to a wrong statement to protect her sister from danger, in domestic aspect, it reveals how the children are sexually abused and inhumanly oppressed by adults. As the novel progresses, the exploitation of adults over children becomes more violent with the war.

To conclude, although the child characters are portrayed as harmful, dangerous, villainous and evil at a certain point, this dissertation aims to stress how they are exploited for the political or social benefits of adult society and consequently indicates that these negative adjectives on children are a part of their self-defence mechanisms. The novels that are to be investigated are also good examples to depict the victimisation of children in domestic life.

Keywords

Child image in literature, child as a villain, innocent child, adult-authority, child exploitation, defense mechanism.

Preface

This dissertation aims to examine the situation of the child characters in a social and domestic context where the adult dominancy is currently superior in McEwan's novels. The importance of this dissertation derives from connection between British contemporary literature and children in literature. It employs the concept of exploitation of child characters by adults' authority as a generic theme in which perverse attitudes, vanishing and early deaths and intruding into the adult world of the children are questioned as a self defence to be able to cope with the pre-established adult impositions or as a protection of any other person who is under threat.

My intention is not to absolve the child characters' potential to do harm but to underline and scrutinise at under what circumstances a child becomes evil? Since the old beliefs such as either the children are innately good or innately evil have been deconstructed earlier; I believe that the stimulative forces to be human or inhuman are mostly related to the individual's social conditions and his/her interaction with the society around him/her. All of the child characters I have discussed so far are portrayed in such a world where the adults are dominant at all hands. This dominancy and the adults' need of continuation of their pre-established social and political system keep going at the cost of sacrificing the children. Children, in this sense, are both the sustenance and a barrier for the adults' system. That's why, probably the child image is seen as a **social threat** while, and on the other hand s/he keeps his /her naivety and victimised situation in adults' hands. As a reaction to the adult oppression, the child characters seem to create their own self-protective mechanism against the adults' power on them. Nevertheless, their self-protective attitudes are first labelled as villainous and sinister attitudes and then they are tried to suppress by the relevant authority of adults. In this sense, to be able to prove my argument Ian McEwan's novels are appropriate since he uses the child images as a vehicle to criticise the social and political system of England. Therefore, his novels give us good opportunity to investigate the child images where they are mostly portrayed as medium in the adult world. The child characters of Ian McEwan are

neither far away from the adult community as a symbol of utopia, nor so closely penetrate into the adults' lives as needy creatures; they are narrated as individuals who can act just as in an adult capacity. McEwan, in other words, portrays his child characters in a huge potential and capability to do everything depending on the circumstances of the social context. He in a way liberates them. This flexibility at characterizing a child image gives us a good opportunity to investigate the children more objectively in his fictions.

Because of the voiceless situation of the child figures in literature, they will always be narrated by adults, with a cost of being a medium in the hands of adult oppression. This scope for sure may be extended by adding other texts which include child images in literature and also by focusing on the patriarchal influence on children.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to my dissertation supervisor Asst. Prof. Ferah İncesu who has everlasting energy and patience and whose focusing on my dissertation in detail encouraged me to keep my concentration. Besides, I also would like to thank my colleagues and instructors (Asst. Prof. Clare Brandabur, Asst. Prof. Lamia Gülçur and Asst. Prof. Mine Özyurt Kılıç) who supported me through my writing process. Also, I shall show my kind appreciation to Prof. Dr. Esra Melikoğlu and Assoc. Prof. Kerem Karaboğa, due to their beneficial criticisms in my juries. And last, I would like to send my appreciation to my wife Uğur for her patience and everlasting support.

Dedication

To my beloved children Özgür Güzide and Tarık Deniz

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Victims more than Villains: Images of the Child in McEwan's Novels

*We will regard our children
not as creatures to manipulate or to change
but rather as messengers from a world
we once deeply knew,
but which we have long since forgotten.*
Alice Miller

Introduction

The child images in McEwan's novels are vehicles to criticise domestic and socio-political conditions of England. Although, according to most critics such as Anne Tyler, Tom Paulin, Ellen Pifer, the child characters are mostly represented as villains and portrayed as perverse, dangerous, unethical, harmful, and as a threat to the adults, McEwan's narratives also strongly underline the oppression of adult characters who exploit the children for their own benefit, unskillfulness, irresponsibility and selfishness. In the light of these arguments, this dissertation claims that the children's villainous and perverse attitudes, vanishing and early deaths and intruding into the adult world in McEwan's novels **The Cement Garden** (1978), **The Child in Time**, (1987) and **Atonement** (2001) are, in fact, self-defence mechanisms against the victimisation of adults' authority or to protect the others who are in threat.

McEwan seems to want to convince the reader that the child is acting according to what the parents have taught or failed to teach. The villainous and damaging aspects of the children are exacerbated in reaction to the adult oppression, as self-defence, and inevitably as an effort to adapt to an adult-dominant society. McEwan's first novel, **The Cement Garden**, in this sense, reflects how the siblings try to protect themselves from the adults' social and governmental imposition and parental oppressions through challenging the norms and taboos of the adults. The children

become a vehicle to reveal the irreversible authority of adults on the children. **The Child in Time** portrays how the children are exploited for the sake of the adults' political ideology and power. The children, in this novel, become a vehicle to stress how the adults can be violent and manipulative against the children for their ideological benefits. **Atonement** reveals that the children have a potential to cause catastrophic consequences, yet the novel also implicitly releases how the adults contribute to the **guilt** of the children and besides, how the adults have a potential to victimise the children in various ways such as raping, exploiting them in the house and killing them in the adult-made war. The children in this novel are used as a vehicle to depict unlimited brutality of the adults and their ideologies against the children. And in a more general sense, McEwan uses the child characters to critique the social norms such as the nuclear family, society and political views which inevitably are nourished by exploiting the child characters for the adults' existence.

To start, I will firstly give a brief historical background of the concept of childhood and then discuss the integration of this term to literature. After viewing the basic points of historical evolution of the depiction of children in various literary periods, the child characters in Ian McEwan's novels will be discussed with a reference to the concept of **authority** of Gerard Mendel to depict how the child characters are under the oppression of adults.

Theories of Childhood in Literature

The debate about the term **other** has been represented throughout the centuries. Each period, each country, each society constructed the meaning of the term according to their socio-political situations. In other words, the image of childhood is a social and cultural construction. The term **other** has been a focus in the West also. The child is an **other** that has been created by the dominant figure, the adult. In the past thirty years historians have shown a great interest in children and childhood. Yet, they have rarely been in agreement with one another. Most of the sources about childhood refer

to the French medievalist and historian Philippe Ariès's pioneering book **Centuries of Childhood** first published in 1962. Ariès points out that in medieval society the concept of childhood did not exist; it emerged in the 17th century. He states that "Medieval Art until about the twelfth century did not know childhood or did not attempt to portray it. It is hard to believe that this neglect was due to incompetence or incapacity; it seems more probable that there was no place for childhood in the medieval world" (Ariès, 1973: 31). His purpose was to study the family. "He sought to prove that the family as we know it today, a private, domestic circle, was a new concept" (31). He studied the child to develop his hypothesis.

But Ariès's idea has been criticised by many other authorities. Daniel T. Kline, for instance, in his article "'That child may doon to fadres reverence': Children and Childhood in Middle English Literature" asserts that "Middle English texts portray children as visible and significant in medieval society [...] the figure of the threatened and endangered literary child does not indicate that medieval children were not valued but instead raises ethical questions about the organization of a just society" (Kline, 2012: 5).

Today, it is very normal for us to know our age but most people, according to Ariès, living before the 18th century did not know their ages. Or they did not care to know their exact ages. Ariès shows the Church and State as the reasons to keep records of births. Moreover, before the 18th century, the concept of age was quite different from today: an individual was referred to as an **infant**, **youth** or an **old** person not considering his/her chronological age but based on his or her physical appearance and habits. Even the terms **infancy** and **youth** were perceived in different ways than today: in the 16th century for instance, a child who was six years old might still be called **infant** while a man of fifty years might be called **youth**. According to Ariès, young children did not have "mental activity or recognizable body shape" but they were **neutral** beings between life and death (Cunningham, 1995: 39).

By the 17th century, according to Ariès, the concept of childhood flowered within the concept of family. The rise of the family, he says, was the result of a general movement from sociability to privacy. His concept of family, too, has been criticised by other scholars. Joan Acocella, for instance, states that the pictures Ariès used to decipher the concept of family in the medieval age are full of Bruegelesque “life and variety, tumble and zest”, while the image of modern life in his text is much darker and more severe. That is to say, Acocella states that Ariès romanticised the medieval period as a period of great sociability while he stressed the negative developments of the modern era (Ariès, 1973).

Moreover, as Hugh Cunningham importantly reveals: “Ariès refers only to those aesthetic objects which support his argument concerning the ‘discovery’ of childhood in the modern era”, and seems quite “unaware of other medieval sources showing a naturalistic of childhood” which might complicate his argument (39).

In our own times children’s psychological and physiological differences from adults have been acknowledged remarkably in a sense. Besides, as self gratification is today’s one of pioneer values, people seek for pleasure and self indulgence in their lives. Individuals who are in search of self gratification are not only adults but also children. The disappearance of restriction on children to a certain degree, improvements in the domestic economics of the family, discussing their rights in the light of human rights, endless efforts on the pact of foundations such as UNESCO to protect children’s rights and freedom, can be considered as the reasons for children’s opportunity to express their own desires among adults. Yet this does not mean that children are totally liberated. There is still the shadow of “superiority” and authority of adults over them so long as these opportunities given to them as presents are filtered by adults.

Coming back to Ariès, his book did not immediately become famous. It was received in social sciences as important and authoritative in the late 1960s and 1970s. But after a decade, historians and scholars such as Lloyd de Mause, the editor of **The History of Childhood** (1974); Edward Shorter, in his book **The Making of the Modern**

Family (1975); and Lawrence Stone, in his book **The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800** (1977) started to investigate the history of children and childhood. All these books are linked to Ariès's book **Centuries of Childhood**. Mause radically stated that the relationship between parents and children was central to “‘psychogenic’ interpretation of history” (Mause, 1995: 21). He explains that “[t]his interpretation had ramifications far outside the history of childhood, for the quality of parent-child relations was seen as the motor force of history” (8). In this sense, “the central force for change in history is neither technology nor economics, but the ‘psychogenic’ changes in personality occurring because of successive generations of parent-child interactions” (8). Mause refers to three ways that adults can respond to children: the projective reaction, the reversal reaction, and the emphatic reaction. Mause’s theory of reactions is significant since it points out the flexibility and versatility of adult treatments toward children.

In the projective reaction, adults use children as a “vehicle for the projection of their own unconscious, that is the children become the repository of all the adults’ unacknowledged bad feelings and fears about themselves” (8). Mause asserts that this projective reaction lies behind the idea of original sin. Moreover, he states that “this led to practices such as infanticide and abandonment and later to various actions aimed at suppressing the evil within the child” (8). The physical forms of this unconscious are revealed in such practices as “the swaddling of babies, leading strings to restrain infants, and severe beatings for older children” (8). This overflow of powerful and physical restraint, Mause says, “was often accompanied and later replaced by mental restraints achieved through terrorising children with stories of ghost-like figures, corpses and witches” (8).

In the reversal reaction, “adults use children as a substitute for an adult figure important in their own childhood, that is the parent becomes a child, and the child becomes a parent. Thus, parents look for love from their children” (9). According to Mause, the child satisfies “parental needs and is seen as a source of love, protection and nourishment” (9). Here the child is misused to fulfil the physical, emotional, sexual and economic needs of the parents. Foremost amongst these excesses are

sexual abuse and child labour. An additional and interesting consequence of this interaction was infant deaths following overlaying (9).

The last one is the empathic reaction. Here “adults empathise with children’s needs, and attempt to satisfy them” (9). In this reaction, the adult is “able to regress to the level of a child’s need, correctly identify it and without imposing adult projections, satisfy it” (10). The first two reactions; the projective and the reversal, are “adult-centered with the child existing as either an extension of the adult or to provide for the needs of the adult” (10). But in the empathic reaction the focus of attention shifts from the adult to the child.

Children, who were seen as evil or a mixture of projective and reversal, were both bad and loving. It is the empathic reaction that played a significant role in showing respect to children as individuals. The first two reactions do not indicate lack of love for their children by historical parents but rather an inability to accept the child as an individual separate from themselves. Children were viewed as bad and loving, hated and loved; rewarded and punished (10).

Classification of childhood is truly a debateable point through history since childhood is a term that inevitably needs to be defined by adults. For adults, **child/hood** is a representation of the experiences of the past as far as our memory allows. As Tim Morris says it is “a form of Otherness, possibly its archetypal form” (Morris, 2000: 9).

For most people, childhood is a period which cannot be realised in their early ages but can be defined after getting older. Therefore, childhood is both familiar and yet unknowable to adults. Susan Honeyman posits that

The concept of childhood has been defined by adult discourse as that which cannot engage adult discourse. There is a language gap, an inherent inaccessibility, between the concept of “child” and the adult minds that create it. The position of childhood is typically constructed as prelapsarian, relatively preverbal, outside empowered discourse, unsophisticated, unknowing, irrational—the very opposite of

(though constantly shifting to foil) “adulthood.” Childhood is whatever adults have lost and maybe never had (4).

This loss can be one of the reasons that stimulate adults to write about childhood in literary history. Authors whose subject is child are usually nourished in their endeavour by the historical background. Since literature does not stand entirely apart from life, the novelists proved that “literature is not created in a historical vacuum but can offer analysis and synthesis of social reality” (Victorianweb). Although there are still debates about the “levels of constructedness of the ‘real’ child as examined by historians, sociologists, psychologists, and educationalists” (Gavin, 2012: 2), there is no doubt about the constructedness of the literary child.

This dissertation, in this sense, will discuss the children under the authority of adults in McEwan’s novels. Here authority as borrowed from Gerard Mendel, in his **Decolonizing the Child** (1992), refers to the exploitation of children who have “less intellect or mental capacity” than adults. This exploitation may occur through conditioning related to a threatening to withdraw love unless he or she obeys. The child, says Mendel, is exploited with this threat as well as by disparity of power (46). Adults not only hold the authority in their hands but they are mostly incapable of coping with raising the children. Therefore, in the light of McEwan’s contemporary fictional characters, this dissertation will also suggest how the “authority” of adults remains incapable of caring for children and more than this how it exploits children. Here the aim is not to justify children. Children can also be harmful, dangerous and their behaviour can cause catastrophic consequences. Yet, keeping in mind this potential of children, this dissertation will focus on the authority of adults that inevitably consumes children in order to reach its target.

The Reference dictionary defines authority as: “the power to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle issues; the right to control, command, or determine; a power or right delegated or given; authorization, a person or body of persons in whom authority is vested, as a governmental agency, persons having the legal power to make and enforce the law; government; an accepted source of information, advice, or

substantiation; an expert on a subject; persuasive force; conviction; a statute, court rule, or judicial decision that establishes a rule or principle of law; ruling, the right to respect or acceptance of one's word, command, thought, etc.; commanding influence.” (“authority”) What they share in common is that the institution or person that has the power is accepted as superior to those who have to obey them. **Encyclopedia of Postmodernism** also defines the term as “the legitimate capacity to implement and enforce rules governing political institutions” (Winqvist, 2001: 23). The same source indicates that authority “is considered necessary for the preservation of political society, and that the analyses of authority often have assumed a central role in moral, political, and legal theories” (23). The encyclopedia categorises the term authority as follows: premodern, modern and postmodern. According to this distinction, premodern views assume authority as the “dominance of religion”. Modern views, on the other hand, identify authority with reason which arises from “cultural transformations of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century”. Therefore, modernism puts emphasis on rationality as the basis of political authority (23).

Thinkers such as Locke and Hobbes sought to “justify the state’s authority from the perspective of a rational individual initially situated in a pre-political state of nature” (23). On the other hand, Kant asserted that freedom is possible only with submission of an individual to the authority “of the moral law derived from reason” (23). However, the postmodernist view questioned all these religious and rational doctrines. It is unable to accept “modernism’s moral justification of political authority” (23). As Habermas claims postmodernism with its “incredulity” causes a “legitimation crisis” (23). The postmodernist crisis of authority’s delegitimation “stems from the loss of certitude these norms have suffered throughout the course of the twentieth century, plagued by authoritarianism, genocide, and technological destruction of the environment [...] A noteworthy feature of postmodernism is its exposure of the controversial modernist assumption that legitimate authority is necessarily opposed to domination and repression” (24). Yet Foucault underlines the fact that this does not mean that there is no distinction between authority and

repression. Authority, consequently, cannot be categorised as a unique form of action “opposed to power” or as an institution that “merely wields power” but it can be assumed as such an instrument of “political management that is composed by the fluid exercise of power throughout society”. In this sense, postmodernism does not eliminate authority but points out that authority is constituted through the shifting and contextual uses of power, such that its legitimacy does not transparently derive from either natural right or rational consent (24).

Since postmodernism clarifies disbelief in authority, it cannot be legitimised by considering natural rights or rational consent. Nevertheless, authority inevitably has a purpose. Its existence arises through the intention of enforcement for its own benefit. Therefore, the connection between authority and repression establishes its dynamics which are merely the ideologies of authority. Since it is not relevant to rational consent and elimination, it also functions as a totalitarian entity. Mendel shows how this authority can be blind or wants consciously to ignore the result of its own purposes. That is to say, if we consider the oppression on children, authority can be destructive for the children. If it is institutionalised through government, it can even be extremely exploitative and violent.

Considering these descriptions of the term **authority**, this dissertation particularly focuses on the concept of Mendel’s **authority** because his perception of the term specifically relates with the children. As a means of this, his concept includes our understanding of authority. Besides, as McEwan’s novels problematise the adult dominancy and its parental and governmental power on the children, the texts’ implications on the victimisation of children under the adult authority are revealed more clearly. Mendel while discussing children as the most colonised group in a society by adults shows the other function of authority. He says the authority sets forth **pedagogic changes** to control the (in Jerks’s term Dionysian) children. For this reason, it strongly underlines the necessity of an education started at an early age. This early education is supposedly required to teach children how to live (Mendel, 1992: 19). According to him, adults use violence on children under the guise of “for

their own sake” (47). Socio-political institutions do not seem so strong on any subject but on the legitimization of using violence on children. Mendel, in that sense, does not use the term **violence** simply to refer to physical context but expands its meaning to social and cultural contexts.

Authority gets its legal basis through various institutions or hierarchical order. Authority uses its power from top to bottom, from big to small (23). The child is the last step of the authoritarian hierarchy. Everybody above them becomes authority: god, government, parents, teachers, even a passerby can adopt authoritarian power on them or scold them. But the child has no effect on the adults, even on him/herself (24). Mendel here makes a bold generalisation which is difficult for us to accept since we have very dangerous child personages who not only unintentionally but deliberately harm other children or adults or even their parents in life and in arts. Nevertheless, we can agree upon the idea that adults have authoritarian power over children who are mostly incapable of getting together when faced with unfair situations. They generally cannot get organised like adults. In the light of Mendel’s authority, the three novels will be discussed as they display adult-dominated system on the children: **The Cement Garden** problematises a ghost like governmental, incurious and tyrannical parent authority, **The Child in Time** indicates hypocrisy of Thatcherism on children; and **Atonement** reveals how the adults selfishly manipulate and exploit children under the rule of parental and governmental relationship. But before this, to be able to see how the governmental and political influences effected the child characters in fiction, I will briefly summarise literary movements which inevitably match with the concept of **authority**.

Children in Literature

Childhood has been an important concern in British literature for over 800 years. According to the common opinion about childhood, the child is categorised as either **innately bad** or **innately innocent**. The concept becomes a matter of particular

cultural concern. There are various approaches to the concept of childhood. They are represented in two different paradigms: on the one hand they are “victims who need greater protection from abuse and neglect” and on the other hand “semi-feral victimisers who make the streets unsafe for adults and signal society’s disintegration” (Gavin, 2012: 1). According to Honeyman, childhood is a stage which moves into ideal adulthood. Romantics see adulthood as a fall from **intuitive, natural, untainted civilization state of childhood**, whereas, still other critics such as Chris Jenks divide childhood into two: the Dionysian or Apollonian child. According to the Dionysian child theory, as Gavin states, “the child represents an older image of childhood which ‘rests on the assumption of an initial evil or corruption within the child’ from which the child must be curbed and broken” (3). Chris Jenks relates the Dionysian child with imagery which is “from the doctrine of Adamic original sin” (63). That is why they are “impish” and “harbour a potential evil” (63). This kind of child, as Jenks suggests, should be controlled and they should not “fall into bad company, establish bad habits or develop idle hands” (63); if the adults cannot control them, “all of these contexts will enable outlets for the demonic force within, which is, of course, potentially destructive not just of the child but also of the adult collectivity” (63). This impetus inside children is driven by the Dionysian spirit since it lives for pleasure. Jenks states that “it celebrates self-gratification and it is wholly demanding in relation to any object, or indeed subject that prevents its satiation” (63).

Of course, parenting had an important role in rearing these Dionysian children through “distant and strict moral guidance, through physical direction” (63). “Institutionalized violence” was essential to rear children. Jenks sees Dickens as a “great source of such tales” (63). Moreover the Dionysian child as Jenks asserts “was being deafened, blinded and exploited through factory labour, and still being sent up chimneys with brushes as late as 1850-in Britain alone!” (64). The Dionysian child is perceived as a target to be suppressed and controlled or even manipulated in the societal order created by adults.

The Appollonian child, on the other hand, is more modern, ‘angelic, innocent and untainted by the world’ (3). In contrast to the Dionysian child, the Appollonian child has “natural goodness and a clarity of vision that we might ‘idolize’ or even ‘worship’ as the source of all that is best in human nature [...] this is humankind before either Eve or the apple” (Jenks, 2005: 66). The Appollonian child is associated with Rousseau who suggests that children are innately good: they have virtues and unique potentials which, as Jerks states “only require coaxing out into the open” (65). The Appollonian child can also be associated with the Romantic vision and Edwardian perception of the child. They are romantic because they are innocent and angelic; they are Edwardian because in this period they were mostly represented in the garden- a regained paradise- and adults adore them as they are the messengers for adults.

As a sign of hope, some novelists have represented the child as dead so that it may not be contaminated by the adult world. Peter Coveney’s definition of childhood shows two poles. He states that modern literature “situates at one pole representations of the child who is better off dead and at the other pole the child as symbol of growth and life and future” (Gavin, 2012: 4).

As it is evident from these definitions, they were/are the object and never became or will become the subject of their definitions. They are inevitably tools in adult power and **authority** which gets its dynamics from parental and governmental formations.

The situation of children in literature has changed from period to period, from era to era on the basis of socio-political and cultural doctrines. Below I will briefly give a summary of the periodical changes from the Romantic period to the contemporary.

18th C., The Romantic and Victorian Periods

The ideology of the ancestor before the 18th century, according to Christian theological doctrine, was the fall of man as discussed before. It is called original sin or ancestral sin. According to this belief man is born sinful. This means that even as

new born babies, children are sinful humans. This religious idea of original sin started to lose its validity with John Locke's idea of tabula rasa. In other words, the authority of religion diminished but a blank page has been created in a child's mind which is ready to be imposed by the adult ideology. His book called **Some Thoughts Concerning Education** (1693) includes the innovative inspiration that suggests that an infant's mind was a blank slate. Children learn everything through experience and they should be led by parents from an early age. The aim of this education is to teach virtue, rationality and reason to make them adults as soon as possible (Locke and Quick, 1913). Rousseau, by opposing or developing Locke's theory, goes one step further. He suggests that the situation of childhood is different from that of adulthood. Children are innately good; they have individual potential. Therefore, they should be left free. He, in other words, favours natural education.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Romantics, for the first time, constructed childhood as a desirable state in their poetry. It was a desirable state that adults missed or lost, therefore idealised. They assumed that childhood was a divinely pure, "intuitive, in-tune-with-nature, imaginative stage of life, of whose spirit adults felt the loss and sought to capture in literature" (Gavin, 2012: 8). Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth and Blake, wrote poems which dealt with the idea of the innocence of childhood and also the idea of adults' moving away from childhood's innocence. Wordsworth, by saying "The Child is Father of the man" in his poem "My Heart Leaps up When I Behold" indicates that the child is perceived as the teacher of the adult. Unlike Rousseau's idea that childhood is a stage which people pass to reach adulthood, for Wordsworth "it is a condition" as Robert Pattison, in his book **The Child Figure in English Literature** (2008), reveals "which for the vast majority of men is irretrievably lost as soon as completed" (58). Wordsworth in the **Prelude** wrote:

Such, verily, is the first
poetic spirit of our human life,
By uniform control of after years,
in most, abated or suppressed. (Wordsworth 2, 260-263)

In the Victorian period (1837-1901), the child was seen obedient to the adults. Christopher Hibbert in his book **Daily Life in Victorian England** (1975) states that

to many Victorians perhaps to most growing up was, however, a far from painless process, since unquestioning submission to their elders and betters was required of all children from their earliest years. ‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord!’ was an injunction as unviolable as ‘Wives, obey your husbands!’ So was that other often-repeated command: ‘Children should be seen, not heard’ (41).

Besides, this submission of children to adults or this dominance of adult power over children “continues in some children’s literature, and the rise of evangelicalism produced many moral and didactic portrayals of, and for, children” (Gavin, 2012: 8) in the Victorian period. As proof of this Gavin shows rational and religious “resistance to fantasy in children’s text” (9).

Nevertheless, the Romantic idea of childhood also influenced the Victorian period. Dickens, for instance, promoted the importance of fantasy for children. Stephen Carroll’s **Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland** (1865) too gave rise to the golden age of British children’s literature. By distinguishing **children’s literature** from **children in literature**, and focusing on childhood in Victorian texts written for adults, Gavin states that childhood is not a condition looked for, desired or **inspirational** but “[a] vulnerable often painful, powerless state, victims of adult power, emotional or physical brutalities, social neglect, illness and early death” (9). While the child had a symbolic value and less realistic functions in Romantic literature, in Victorian fiction the child was humanised. The characters such as Carroll’s Alice, Brontë’s Jane Eyre, and Dickens’s David Copperfield, Oliver Twist, Pip, and Little Nell, are more distinct characters. Dickens has been said to be the pre-eminent writer of childhood in the Victorian period for he portrayed the “humanizing of child characters, focused on children as victims” (9). Yet this does not mean that the children of Victorian literature, especially Dickensian children, were always portrayed as victims. They may become writers as David Copperfield who has a

happy life with his wife Agnes at the end or they are not necessarily innocent or exploited by the adults: they can act like villains to cope with difficulties. Romantics' worship for the divine inside the child or inspiring origins has turned out a shadowy underside. As Pifer asserts "the cult of sacred childhood has turned satanic, supplanting angelic children with demonic ones who serve the powers of darkness" (Pifer, 2000: 15).

The Victorian period is also significant as the child characters started to be portrayed as not only lonely or victimised but also pictured as they take the "power into their own hands through criminal action, most notably in Dickens *Oliver Twist*" (Gavin, 2012: 10). These depictions also indicate that the child characters intrude into the adults' life more closely, yet this transition or intermingling occurs by sacrificing the "innocence" of the children. The child images who commit crimes like adults suggest that "they were not inherently innocent" (10) any more.

Childhood in the Edwardian, Modern and Contemporary Periods

In the 20th century, literary children were depicted in various ways such as: "ideal, victimised, a model for adults, threatened, happy, lost, and sought after and old beyond its years" (Gavin, 2012: 11). On the other hand, the religious effect started to diminish from the lives of the children. In this sense, twentieth and twenty-first-century literature portray the children as important "not because they are heaven sent or set for heaven, but in and of themselves" (11). Freud's theories reasoned children's innocence to remain "a common trope" but more importantly the children's innocence is also "fissured by darker psychological and sexualised portrayals of children" (11).

In Edwardian literature, the term childhood has its own idiosyncratic realm. It is unapproachable by adults; it is neo-romantically linked with nature and imagination, idealised, longed for, blissful and lost. The difference of Edwardian literature comes from its depiction of childhood not as figures of the lonely child of Victorian

interiors or the solitary child of Romantic poetry but from the aspect of companionship among the children themselves. Edwardian children played games in pleasant gardens. Here, children are rarely depicted as growing up; in contrast, they are mostly detained in everlasting childhood. The best example for this condition is **Peter Pan**. It is in this period that the child as victim model was rejected; instead, the child had the power of virtue. As Gavin indicates: “Edwardian fiction pictures childhood as a location physically or psychologically escaped to that is marked by timelessness and “unadulterated” by civilization, adults and adulthood itself” (Gavin, 2012: 12). On the other hand, by examining Samuel Butler’s **The Way of All Flesh** (1903), H. G. Wells’s “The Door in the Wall” (1906) and E. M. Forster’s “The Celestial Omnibus” (1908), Humphires points out that early 20th century fiction “portrays childhood as dissent against the adult” (12). The enchanted garden of children confronts the father’s house of Victorian parental and patriarchal authority (12).

The garden, as a gift of this short decade to children, does not last long. World War I (1914-18), its ruinous effects on infants, social re-arrangements, the rise of Modernism, and Freud’s influence reshape the portrayals of childhood. These influences, particularly Freud’s search for sexuality in children’s characters, destroy the myth of childhood innocence. Freud was radically re-establishing the child’s role again. “If, as James Kincaid asserts in *Child-Loving*,” says Pifer, “the Victorian image of the child had become a blank-pure “nothingness” emptied of substance by society’s insistence on original innocence –Freud was busily plowing that fallow field, sowing the seeds of a radically new conception of childhood” (Pifer, 2000: 22). He claims that

the existence of the sexual instinct in childhood has been denied... it seemed to us on the contrary that children bring germs of sexual activity with them into the world, [and] that they already enjoy sexual satisfaction when they begin to take nourishment.’ These claims were enough to damage the Romantic myth of natural innocence. ‘We found it a regrettable thing’. Instead of ‘trailing clouds of glory’ into this world from their lofty ‘home’, Freud’s children arrive carrying the ‘germs,’ or seeds, of corruption (22).

After World War II, in the period between 1945 and 1970, literary childhood “reflected nostalgia for a more secure, idealised past Britain, often symbolised by large country houses and portrayed through the perspective of an innocent child’s eye as in L. P. Hartley’s **The Go-Between** (1953)” (Gavin, 2012: 13). There are also works which reveal the fragility of a child’s innocence and of change in society. This change is perhaps best reflected in Golding’s **Lord of the Flies** (1954).

Childhood has become one of the major themes in contemporary British fiction. Contemporary British writers focus on “anti-sentimentalized childhood, and sought to represent children’s interiority, and problematized the image of the innocent child” (15). Furthermore, Dodou, in her work “Examining the Idea of Childhood” suggests that contemporary fiction defines the child as a source of adult anxiety and a threat to the societal order (Dodou, 2012: 240). Children are pictured as victimised by adult neglect and violence in works such as Shena Mackay’s **The Orchard on Fire** (1995). Meanwhile, works like Pat Barker’s **Border Crossing** (2001) and McEwan’s **Atonement**, according to Dodou, reflect childhood as morally culpable. Iain Banks’s **The Wasp Factory** (1984), McEwan’s **The Cement Garden** (1978), Doris Lessing’s **The Fifth Child** (1988) “depict violent, incomprehensible, disruptive, ‘Gothicized’ children” (15).

Nevertheless, children cannot always be extricated from the dilemma of adults’ presence or absence in fiction. Absence of adults causes neglect, victimisation or **feralization** of the child, or **abuse** of children; adult presence, on the other hand, causes restrictions on them and taints them as well. Contemporary British fiction, as Katherina Dodou states, embraces and includes innocent, sexualized, pathologized, criminalized, fetishized themes concerning children (15).

More than this since this dissertation focuses on McEwan’s three contemporary novels, it is necessary to explain socio-political influences to the writer’s themes. Contemporary fiction includes the period from the mid-1970s to the present. There has been a dramatic increase in attention to the child figure in this era. Chris Jenks and Alan Prout, in their book **Theorizing Childhood** (1998) state that the child has

shifted to the “forefront of personal, political and academic agendas” (5). Adults have started to deal intensely with the basic subjects related with children such as their wellbeing, moral values, rights, safety, social position, and institutional studies increased in Britain including the Children Act 1989, the appointment of a Minister for Children in 2003, and the establishment of a Children’s Commissioner in 2005 (Dodou, 2012: 238). Bentley sees the election of Margaret Thatcher as the leader of the Conservative Party as the main factor that comprises the era. With Thatcherism, Britain started to experience a vital transition in the politics and its influences to the social, economic and cultural climate were irreversible. Through these socio-political changes the adults’ interest is felt more intensely in children.

In literature, too, the child figure has been redefined, from biological category to sociological and psychological. Many researches indicated that “the cultural contingency of childhood as an idea and has revealed the adult designs governing the definition of childhood and children, in particular with regard to the child’s moral nature and needs” (238). McEwan, in this sense, is a writer who mostly feeds his thematic background with the political changes and its influences on his (child) characters.

Ian McEwan as a Contemporary Writer

Through anti-sentimentalization of the child character, most of the contemporary writers problematised the child characters who are mostly influenced by the hierarchy on them. Therefore, McEwan chooses his subjects on problematised governmental backgrounds. Groes, for instance, makes a statement about his novel **The Child in Time**: “McEwan seems to be provoking us into a wholesale rejection of Thatcherite ideology, and he represents Thatcherite Britain as a culture deprived of any redeeming qualities” (Groes, 2009: 38). Yet, his other two novels, **The**

Cement Garden and **Atonement** include the political criticism of McEwan. The former one includes governmental oppression on children through an orphanage threat. Since the novel does not refer to any specific date and period, its political allusion symbolises all oppressive governments in the world. The later contains political incapacity and violence through war scenes. His fictional characters are inevitably influenced by the political regimes of his/her period. This characteristic of a fictional character in fact is valid for most fictional characters of the contemporary period. We can accept McEwan's statement below as one of the features of contemporary fiction. The child characters are mostly portrayed as burden to their parents, society, neighbours, teachers and governments. McEwan has said that he is "interested in relationships not only for what they do in themselves, but how they absorb outside pressure, influence politics and, again, history" (McEwan, 1996: 48). This inevitable interaction between the "outside" and his characters, particularly his child characters, leads us to look at the consequences of this relation. As most contemporary texts exemplify, McEwan's novels, too, problematise the child characters' innocence and create villainous and violent child characters. Yet he also reasoned socio-political background as one of the basic brutal influence on the villainous and devilish act of children.

When we look at the big picture, we see that childhood became one of the major themes of the second half of the 20th century. Especially since the 1970s, childhood has become a major concern for contemporary British fiction.

In world literature too, for instance, in Shena Mackay's **The Orchard on Fire** (1995), Arundhati Roy's **The God of Small Things** (1997), and Anne Enright's **The Gathering** (2007), children are portrayed as the victims of adult neglect or sexual violence and they have been portrayed **villainous** like in Iain Bank's **The Wasp Factory** (1984).

Ian McEwan's treatment of child characters is, in many respects, typical of the period. He uses the child figures to critique his society and political hypocrisy of the governments. He uses the child characters, particularly in a parental atmosphere, as a

demonstration of the uneasiness between the children and the adults. While the family life in the nineteenth-century is sometimes depicted as a shelter from any injury, the contemporary writers like McEwan, in contrast, mostly portray the opposite atmosphere of family life where the terror is inside, between the children and the adults. In one of his interview with Gilles Menegaldo, he states the importance of the child figures to reveal the lives of the adults in a more objective and different way. He says that “adolescents were a useful presence...because they were full of adult desire and childish incapability” (Roberts, 2010: 67). He uses the child’s incapability to state the conflict and gap between the adolescents and adult perceptions. More than this, he declares that “the eye of the child gave me somewhere else to stand, a different way-a colder regard, perhaps- a way of looking at the adult world, of describing it as though one came from another planet” (68). McEwan, with this statement, also supports this dissertation’s main point which utilises children’s situation in the adult dominant world to depict how the adults constructed their world ignoring and oppressing the children but considering their social and political aims for their own benefits.

In McEwan’s texts, authority as a **steamroller** appears in different guises. His child characters, consequently, become the victims of this repression. In **The Cement Garden**, **The Child in Time** and **Atonement**, for instance, children are portrayed as characters who are under the oppression of their parents and the government. This hierarchical and societal order that is above the children functions as a force to victimise them, although the children can be harmful or cause catastrophic consequences that the adults cannot bear because of their societal order, taboos, and political views. While representing their period, McEwan’s child characters also borrow thematic characteristics from previous centuries.

In **The Cement Garden**, for instance, the child characters are used as a depiction of the destruction of the family structure where the parental authority is questioned. The children, in this sense, are vehicle to scrutinise how the unethical and unconventional or, more than this, illicit actions (burying the mother and incest relationship among themselves) which make them villainous characters, in fact, turn out to be a sort of

self-defence against the oppressive societal order of adults. In this sense, McEwan's novel absolves the unacceptable practices of the children through revealing the dominant and insistent effects of the adults over them.

The child characters in the novel seem to be **gothicized** because of their family's neglect and harsh treatment. Eventually, they stand alone after the death of their father and mother. To survive and separate from the government and society which have already abandoned the family in a desert-like urban city, in an attempt to save the nuclear family they have incestuous relationships and transvestite desires, norms which their society cannot accept. While they may represent William Golding's devil-like child characters in **The Lord of the Flies** at a certain point, McEwan's child characters will be discussed under the dilemma of survivors and their ignorance of social values.

In his novel, McEwan changes the Edwardian garden into a cement floor, thus reversing the idea of it being a space where children are allowed to play. **The Cement Garden** (1978) ironically reminds the Edwardian notion of childhood to depict how children survive in their nuclear family and how they are abused and how they abuse each other. Besides, as through their incestuous relationship, they will be discussed as the potential characters who ignore the societal order which is implicitly imposed on the individuals by the government. Yet their reaction will be explored as a reason to prevent victimisation by adult authority.

In **The Child in Time**, published in 1987, on the other hand, "the figure of the disappearing child becomes a vehicle for McEwan's criticism of Thatcherite Britain" (Dodou, 2012: 239). In the novel, not only the writer of children's book, Stephen's lost child has the spirit of the novel ambiguously but also the other children's Victorian-like depiction indicates how they are being manipulated and victimised. The adult authority which selfishly tries to dominate the children in the text will be discussed.

The Child in Time representing contemporary fiction portrays the child characters as lost or dead and if they survive they should be obedient to authority. The novel proves that the children can be a threat to the societal order. As this threat may be because the children are rebellious, defiant and odd, it can also be because of the ideology of adults who assert superiority over them by neglecting their human needs and rights. The children are represented as instruments that function for the **order** of adult society. Unlike the romantic period, they can only exist as a symbol if they are lost; they neither have a garden to play in as in the Edwardian period, nor do they appear as individuals (a realistic function) who can fight against the imposed system as in the Victorian period. **The Child in Time**'s children are a burden for adults; hence they are exploited for the sake of the adults' social system.

Atonement (2001) is a good example to point out how the child characters are portrayed as the victims of abandonment of adults and sexual violence. Besides, the child figures are the vehicles to criticise "the political state of affairs and cultural climate" (Dodou, 2012: 39) where the children are the most victimised characters even though a child character causes a catastrophic consequence since she tells a lie or cannot tell the truth. Yet the novel also illustrates adults' neglect of children and their erroneous decisions. The novel shows offsprings to a dissolving family, misplacement and exile, marriage to the rapist, confrontation with adult experiences and government's oblique criminalisation of a child with absurd reliance on her word to send a man to prison. Besides, the novel, through the child-eye perspective, reveals how the governmental incompetence can destroy the people's lives, especially the children's.

In contemporary fiction, child characters are represented neither only as innocent as in the Romantic period and strong as in the Victorian period, nor angelic and prophetic as in Edwardian literature; rather they are represented as victimised characters who have no hope, who are lost, who cannot move under the authority of adults. Yet in the contemporary world, they are both in reality and fiction victimised owing to adult imperfection and adult misguidance who are mostly manipulated by

the socio-political policies of the governments. However, in their victimisation they reveal their imperfection and even can victimise other people. But, keeping in mind that children can also victimise other people and be as harmful as adults, the main focus of this dissertation is to represent how the adults victimise children through the authority they have in McEwan's novels. The child characters of McEwan will be discussed considering these characteristics attributed to children. Besides, this dissertation does not aim to scrutinise the concept of **authority**. But since Mendel's **authority** directly refers to the all hierachical existences of adult power on children, all mentioned adult characters, parents, governments, politicians, teachers and their enforcements will be considered as **authority** on children in this dissertation.

1. Chapter I

The Cement Garden: Unbearable unity of the siblings

McEwan's first novel, for some critics, seems one of the most unendurable novels in which the child characters can act maliciously. The novel with its evil-like child characters has been reviewed by many writers to point out the potential of children to behave villainously. One of them is Anne Tyler, the author of **Searching for Caleb** and **Earthly Possessions** (1978). She in her review underlines the "cruelty" of the children: "what makes the book difficult is that these children are not--we trust--real people at all. They are so consistently unpleasant, unlikable and bitter that we can't believe in them (even hardened criminals, after all, have some good points) and we certainly can't identify with them... And this is not the first book in which a pack of determined children bury their mother in secret, but it's almost certainly the first to cover, with such meticulous care, the putrefaction of her body" (92). More than this Tyler, without revealing the reasons behind the children's attitudes at the given instances, goes a step further and criticises the child characters: "nor is their reason for the burial a positive one; it's not love or loyalty that holds them together, but a hostility toward the rest of the world. Generally they're callous with one another, if not downright cruel" (92). Tom Paulin, too, in his review, specifies the dangerous potential of the child character with an oxymoron: "McEwan has a strange notion of a sort of demonic or delinquent innocence which seeks to reflect itself in the blankness of a tabula rasa. It refuses experience and yet engages in sexual games that are part childish, part adult—the between state of early adolescence is his chosen territory (Paulin, 1979: 50). Some other critics also focus on the **anarchy** of freedom after the separation of children from the adults' dominance. Pifer, the author of **Demon or Doll: Images of the Child in Contemporary Writing and Culture** (2000) for instance, asserts: "*The Cement Garden* describes the primitive anarchy that results when children are released from the constraints of society and the adults' 'civilized' order" (189). Pifer's statement may imply that whenever children are free from the adult governing, there is inevitably a chaos stimulated by the unacceptable

practices of the child characters in the society. There is definitely a chaos after the release from the dominant adult world however it seems that the critics' understanding of the notion that freedom is equal to anarchy and villainous treatments is questionable. The criticisms which conclude the actions of the children as villainous or demonic lack seeing the interaction between the suppressive authority of adults and the child characters. Although the novel questions the idealised representations of the child, it also utilises the child characters not merely to depict them as villainous but more particularly to underline the oppressive and authoritarian impositions of the adults over the children. In one of his interviews, McEwan declares that his novel's subject would include the suffering of children rather than intoxication from the absence of the adult. He says:

what was so attractively subversive and feasible about Golding was his apparent assumption that in a child-dominated world things went wrong in a most horrible and interesting way...The novel brought realism to my fantasy life... and years later, when I came to write a novel myself, I could not resist the momentum of my childhood fantasies nor the power of Golding's model...I had no doubt that my children too would suffer from, rather than exalt in, their freedom (Slay, 1996: 37).

Unlike an experimental and humorous aspect of the incest relationship between the siblings in his early short story "Homemade", in the novel the villainous-like attitudes of children arise from the perspectives of adults, limited by their political and social values. The child characters are used for a depiction of the destruction of the family structure where the parental authority is questioned. The children, in this sense, are vehicle to scrutinise how the unethical and unconventional or, more than this, illicit actions (burying the mother and incest relationship among themselves) which make them **villainous** characters, in fact, turn out to be a sort of self-defence against the oppressive societal order of adults. In this sense, McEwan absolves the unacceptable practices of the children through revealing the dominant and insistent effects of the adults over the children. McEwan's child characters are also mediums to criticise the parental and governmental authority over them. And McEwan points out Mendel's suggestion: they belong neither to their parent nor the government but

they belong to themselves (Mendel, 1992: 161). Mendel, here aims to underline the individuality of children. His statement is just the opposite of the child characters in McEwan's novels where they mostly are under the oppression of their parents and government as authority on them.

In this chapter, I will discuss, how the child characters in **The Cement Garden** (1978) unite, get close under the oppression of their parents and the ghost government. Yet we cannot mention any specific governmental period for this novel because McEwan here avoids giving specific dates. The phrases of the time are always general: "in the early summer of my fourteenth year"(McEwan, 1978: 13), "during the following year" (25), "three days later" (59). The theme of timelessness is also approved at the end of the novel in reply of Julie to Derek's question about their incest relationship: "ages and ages" (150) takes the novel into a timeless atmosphere where the authority of adults is unchangeable and it goes on since human existence. The references to time in this sense is universal. This domination of the parent and the government, in Mendel's term, represent the "authorities" (24) over the children who are defeated under these dominant powers of adults. This chapter, in this sense, will reveal how the oppressive social construction of adults can cause children to create self-defence mechanism among them to protect their existence through actions which are perceived as villainous, demonic and unethical by some critics. They are so close to each other that they have an incestuous relationship, a violation of the incest taboo that society cannot tolerate. Critics see McEwan's novel **The Cement Garden** "with a mixture of fascination and slight horror" (Malcolm, 2002: 1); it is "in many ways a shocking book" writes Robert Towers in the **New York Review of Books** "morbid, full of repellent imagery—and irresistibly readable" (Malcolm, 2002: 1). And some of them saw the book as "unsavory" (46). It is about the survival of the four siblings in their home after the death of their parents. Some critics such as Dodou associate the novel with gothic elements. Gothic fiction in the 18th century, as Fred Botting states in his book **Gothic** (1996), included "tortuous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images and life-threatening pursuits" (2). While monsters, demons, corpses, evil aristocrats,

skeletons, monks, nuns were popular in this genre in the 18th century; in the 19th century scientists, fathers, husbands, madmen, criminals are added to this categorization of the gothic (2). Gothic landscapes are naturally “desolate, alienating and full of menace” but in the 18th century the landscape specifically turned out to be “wild and mountainous locations” (2). Later the castle and forest are included and in the modern era the setting gradually became much more domestic and narrow. As Botting says “the castle gradually gave way to the old house: as both building and family decline, it became the site where fears and anxieties returned in the present” (3). More than this, he points to the source of anxieties changed: “political revolution, industrialization, urbanization, shifts in sexual and domestic organization, and scientific discovery” (3).

The Cement Garden, at a certain point, becomes a modern text which includes domestic issues and family problems. But before expanding the subject it is necessary to see the plot shortly. The story starts with the adolescent Jack’s narrating his **unloved** and unlovable father’s death while he is trying to concrete over the family garden. Jack continues to describe his mother’s slow end from an unspecified disease. On her death, Jack, his brother and his two sisters fear that they will be parted as the government, the ultimate authority to decide what to do about the orphans, will take them to the orphanage. Therefore, they decide to bury their mother’s body in a metal trunk filled with cement in the cellar. Finding themselves released from a tyrannical father’s oppressive attitudes and a careless mother’s passivity, they start to behave in a free way, far away from any parental and social authority. Jack wastes his time mostly sleeping and masturbating, his younger sister Sue deals with her diary. She and her elder sister Julie dress up in girl’s clothes the younger brother Tom who wants to be a girl as he realised that if he becomes a girl, he will not be kicked by the boys at school any more. Meanwhile, they do not care about the house which is gradually filling with decaying refuse. Beside, as the ill-made concrete in the basement starts to crack, the odour of the mother’s corpse fills the house. Jack’s narration about the incestuous attempts between himself and Julie reaches its peak point- the novel’s climax- when Julie’s boyfriend, Derek watches

Julie and Jack have sexual intercourse. Eventually, the orphaned siblings are taken into custody by the government.

1.1 Precursors of *The Cement Garden*

In contemporary fiction children are seen as a threat to the societal order. The child is the “source of adult anxiety” says Dodou (Dodou, 2012: 240). Contemporary fiction questions the image of the innocent child. Doris Lessing’s ***The Fifth Child*** (1988) is accepted as one of the most remarkable cases of **Gothicizing** the child. Yet, interestingly, the child is also indicated as a victim suppressed by adults. In Lessing’s novel the adults strive to control the main child character but since he is “incomprehensible” to adults, they cannot accomplish it (240). McEwan’s ***The Cement Garden*** as Dodou asserts “treats the child in a comparable manner by attaching to childhood a sense of unease” (240). The novel questions children’s morality and the idealization of children. Like the boys in William Golding’s ***Lord of the Flies*** (1954), the children first experience a sense of exalted freedom after the deaths of their parents but soon after this exultation is replaced by an “increasing restlessness as they question sexual, gender, and moral norms” (240). In this sense, Malcolm underlines the frightening aspect of McEwan’s novel in terms of failing of usual standards: “The utter lack of any moral norms or expression of traditional morality in the text differentiates McEwan’s novel from Golding’s. The everyday, domestic setting of the later novel also distances it from the earlier one with its exotic, desert island location, perhaps making McEwan’s text all the more frightening in its depiction of the collapse of traditional rules and order” (Malcolm, 2002: 52).

When the children are far away from adult authority, their attitudes under the circumstances may differ. While Golding’s children run wild, frightening and kill each other, they, in fact, imitate the adults’ mistakes to survive. McEwan’s children, on the other hand, get close. Peter Childs comments on these two novels as follows:

“McEwan does not suggest that if adults are removed, children revert to any kind of savage state but they will adapt, and adapt to, the role models that the removed adults provided for them” (Childs, 2006: 34). Nevertheless, Childs’s argument is not completely valid since the children do not necessarily take the adults as their role models. What is interesting for McEwan’s characters is that they experience an incestuous relationship. McEwan points to the incestuous relationship between the siblings as forces that keep them together under a difficult situation. The children’s solidarity, in McEwan’s novel, does not appear through the adults’ being “role models” but through their need of unity. In McEwan’s words:

I didn’t want a situation in which, because the parents have died, the children just assumed roles which are identical to those of the parents. I had an idea that in the nuclear family the kind of forces that are being suppressed- the oedipal, incestuous forces-are also paradoxically the very forces which keep the family together. So if you remove the controls, you have a ripe anarchy in which the oedipal and the incestuous are the definitive emotions. From Jack’s point of view Julie becomes something he aspires to sexuality, even though she is his sister and also, in the circumstances, acting as mother to his younger brother and to some extent to Jack himself. I suppose I’m suggesting a situation in which the oedipal and incestuous are identical (McEwan, 2010: 17).

McEwan’s self-criticism has a post-Freudian aspect which focuses on incestuous and oedipal circumstances. Inevitably, incestuous relationship between the siblings is among the predominant issues of the plot in the novel. The novel “seeks to unsettle assumptions about the moral nature of children in post-Freudian terms by portraying the protagonists as egotistical, abusive, and incestuous” (Gavin, 2012: 219). Yet, in doing so although the novel questions the idealised representation of the child, this chapter suggests their incestuous and violent interactions are the results of their exploitation by authoritative adults. To be precise, the presence or absence of adults both cause their victimisation by oppression of adults. In Dodou’s words: “both the presence and absence of adults cause problems for child characters. Absence causes neglect, victimisation, or feralization of the child, while presence causes restrictions

on childhood freedom, excessive adult dependence on the child, or abuse of children” (Dodou, 2012: 15). Here, the aim is not to absolve the children and to show their innocence, pure creatures but to depict how they have the capacity to provide a defence mechanism against adults’ pressure.

After the deaths of their parents, the situation of the four children evokes earlier Romantic and Edwardian visions of childhood in which their lives are separated from the adult world. The setting in an isolated British suburbia reinforces the presence of gothic elements. The house has a mystic atmosphere with its dark cellar creating a gothic setting which echoes Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher”. The other gothic elements too deepen the impression of a gothic atmosphere. For instance, the men who bring the cement to the garden are “covered in a fine, pale dust which gave their faces a ghostly look” (McEwan, 1994: 13). In addition, Jack has a nightmare in which he sees a box with a small, captive, stinking creature inside it (23); moreover, while he torments Julie in their play he uses his father’s “enormous” gardening gloves (36-37). All these instances allude to gothic elements which have been supplied by adults. The desire of the father to cover the garden with cement at a certain point symbolises the deconstruction of the playground of the children and turns the garden into a wasteland. The first imposition of the adults on the children starts with creating a sense of an uncanny place even in their house. The father accomplishes to create such a place by “surrounding the house, front and back” (16). When he is asked the father explains the reason: “it will keep the muck off your mother’s clean floors” (17). It is an attitude that diminishes a natural environment for the children. Besides, the father’s reason is hypocritical since the mother does not approve his idea. But he ignores her when she says “that was quite unnecessary” (16). However, this does not mean that all the gothic elements are created by the adults. The gothic atmosphere of the novel strengthens when the children bury their mother in the trunk filled with cement in the basement and after a few weeks the smell of her decayed body floats through the house (Malcolm, 2002: 130). But above all, the oppression of the father and the parents (in a way) are abandoning them in the house and even keeping their children far away from society

and the outside world, thus this oppression employs the main entities of a gothic atmosphere. The children, in this sense, are characters in a gothic atmosphere created by adults.

1.2 Cement vs. Semen

Through the ambiguity between cement and semen, the novel depicts the struggle between adults' lifeless garden which is full of cement and the children's desire for new life and change with the symbol of semen. McEwan plays with the word **cement**. The father buys the cement to cover the garden. The father's authority embraces the house with his tyrannical treatment. He, as a typical patriarchal figure, does not need any agreement from the members of the family. He imposes his idea on them. Therefore, cement may also refer to the destruction of family unity. Truly, the siblings' relationship with the father does not show any peaceful or harmonious resolution. At the very beginning of the novel the father dies while he is plastering the cement on the garden. As he turns the garden with flowers and other plants into a dead concrete jungle he dies. While he is dying, Jack's first investigation of his semen is in sync with his father's death scene. As the cement of the father may symbolise death, Jack's semen may also refer to rebirth, regeneration, new life since he learns how to masturbate and satisfy himself many times. He also experiences how his semen is for the first time:

I passed a bucketful to my father and then, addressing myself to his shape, told him I needed to go to the toilet. He sighed and at the same time made a noise with his tongue against the roof of his mouth. Upstairs, aware of his impatience, I worked on my- self rapidly. As usual, the image before me was Julie's hand between Sue's legs. From downstairs I could hear the scrape of the shovel. My father was mixing the cement himself. Then it happened, it appeared quite suddenly on the back of my wrist, and though I knew about it from jokes and school biology books, and had been waiting for many months, hoping that I was no different from any other, now I was astonished and moved. Against the downy hairs, lying across the edge of a grey concrete stain, glistened a little patch of liquid, not milky as I had thought, but

colourless. I dabbed at it with my tongue and it tasted of nothing. I stared at it a long time, up close to look for little things with long flickering tails. As I watched, it dried to a barely visible shiny crust which cracked when I flexed my wrist. I decided not to wash it away. I remembered my father waiting and I hurried downstairs. My mother, Julie and Sue were standing about talking in the kitchen as I passed through. They did not seem to notice me. My father was lying face down on the ground, his head resting on the newly spread concrete. (18-19)

The synchronization of the father's death and his semen experiment foreshadows the change of roles. Jack metaphorically kills his father when he gives up helping him. But, his experiment with his semen, on the other hand, also indicates the necessary change and a new life to be born away from the authority of the father. The father's authority is replaced by Jack. The incest fantasies of Jack while masturbating and also incest relationships between him and his sisters are the exact symbol of the biological potential that will provide the continuation of the family.

Nevertheless, after the death of their mother, they could not create a peaceful way of living at a certain point. It is the continuation of the problematic atmosphere in another fashion. After the mother's death, their reluctant behaviours appear more clearly. They do not clean up, clean the house, or even they do not help their three-years-old brother Tom when he shits in his pants. The kitchen becomes "a place of stench and clouds of flies" (McEwan, 1994: 82), as another allusion to Golding's novel.

However, it is also noteworthy to point that Jack symbolises rebirth, renewal of life and besides as he metaphorically kills his father by not helping him, he also reflects the dark side of human being; in this sense, he has similarities with Golding's Jack and Ralph. He resembles Golding's Jack with his violent action to Tom. He cannot endure the fact that his mother dies before she notifies Julie about dividing of money in her will. Her mother, before going to the hospital, says "'Julie and you will have to be in charge.' 'You mean Julie will.' I was sullen. 'Both of you,' she said firmly. 'It's

not fair to leave it all to her.' 'You tell her then,' I said, 'that I'm in charge too.'" (50) However, the mother cannot explain what she has said to Jack about the shared task they have. Similarly, Golding's Jack tries to attain the same authority as Ralph, his antithesis. He, on the other hand, draws a parallelism with Ralph who symbolises order towards the end of the novel. In other words, he changes from Golding's Jack to Ralph. As we will see in the following pages, he will be able to realise his untidiness, and try to put everything in order in the house. As a result, McEwan's Jack is much more humanised than Golding's Jack. He indicates a process from negative attitudes to a civilised one.

As a shipwreck causes Golding's children to experience a social exclusion from the adult world, in McEwan's novel, the first imposition of the adults on the children is the social exclusion of them by means of the cement. The cement kills their natural playground: "[cement] transforms the garden, that symbolic urban surrogate for the Rousseauian schema that designates 'nature' as the child's rightful place, into a cemented and insipid wasteland" (Malcolm, 2002: 241). The change of the garden from a natural place to a cement ground also symbolises forcing children into the ruined or demolished industrial world of adults. Since the houses around their houses have been broken down due to the plan of constructing a motorway (McEwan, 1994: 22), there is no place to play outside for them. Jack and his sisters and brother are not the only children who are affected by this unskillfulness of adults, but also the other "kids from the tower blocks" (22) who come to play "near [their] house, but usually they [go] further up the road to the empty prefabs to kick the walls down and pick up what they could find" (22). This wasted and ruined environment created by adults indicates that the children are not only secluded from their natural playground but also they are relegated to a ruined chaotic urban space. The concept of play for the children is changed in such a ruined atmosphere so that they "kick the walls down" and more than this, the novel also reveals the deep indisposition between the adults and the children as "once they set fire to one [wall], and no one cared very much" (22). Therefore, we may say that adults in the novel are represented as clumsy and inadequate, besides, they cause degeneration and demoralisation to the young.

The child characters of McEwan are beyond the societal order. They destroy pre-established social and moral values. McEwan with his “lethargic and morose protagonist” portrays a version of childhood that is the opposite of the spontaneous, wondrous child exalted in the Romantic pattern of thought (Dodou, 2012: 241). Patricia Holland in her book **Picturing Childhood: The Myth of the Child in Popular Imagery** (2004) explains Christopher William’s statement that “this anti-sentimental vision of childhood is rooted in concerns voiced about the morality of children at the time of the novel’s publication in 1978. McEwan devises an unruly and seemingly amoral group of children that embodies anxieties that the permissiveness of the 1960s and 1970s had produced a ‘Savage Generation’ of ‘iron hard, unfeeling boys and girls without any sense of moral values or sexual values, without any ambition or desire to be worthwhile citizens or to be part of a decent society’” (121).

But, it is debateable whether McEwan’s child characters can be accepted in a ‘Savage Generation’. It is true that McEwan’s child characters experience an incestuous relationship which is against the moral values of their society. The novel portrays, in adults’ perspectives, represents morally corrupted children. But the novel also scrutinises the reasons of the children’s **unethical** deeds which mostly arise from lack of communication between the adults and the children and also from the need of the children to survive despite exploitative attitudes of the adults. Throughout the novel we never see that their parents have introduced the values accepted by the society. The society is itself a question in the novel. They live in an abandoned suburb. They do not even have a television in the house which is a strong proof of their distance from the outside world.

As Jack narrates their house’s location we understand that they have no connection with the outside world: “Our house had once stood in a street full of houses. Now it stood on empty land where stinging nettles were growing round torn corrugated tin. The other houses were knocked down for a motorway they had never built on”

(McEwan, 1994: 22). The destruction of the connection and communication with the society by knocking down the other houses for a motorway plan which has never been built decently proves not to praise the society's values and decisions. The **stinging nettles** which surround the house also stand for the children as a threat by the society. The setting shows that the children are restricted by the adult's constructions: the houses around them have been knocked down due to the unfinished project of a motorway. This isolation goes on through the father's "damaging" the garden which is a natural playground for the children. And the destroyed nature sets its natural prison-like walls: **stinging nettles**, an image which belongs to fairy tales where the child characters are usually in danger of an unknown outsider or confined to a space disadvantageously. As the characters in fairy tales are rushed into a place from which they cannot escape, Jack and the other siblings are metaphorically imprisoned in their own house. Dodou and some other critics assert that "besides Gothicizing the child, a way in which recent fiction has troubled childhood innocence is by foregrounding the question of what the child knows and of what she is capable" (Dodou, 2012: 241).

Nevertheless, in this novel, the gothic or the gothicised elements are not only the children but even more the adults. In the novel the house is described with gothic images reminiscent of a fairy tale: "Our house was old and large. It was built to look a little like a castle, with thick walls, squat windows and crenellations above the front door. Seen from across the road it looked like the face of someone concentrating, trying to remember" (McEwan, 1994: 23). The house with its physical appearance like "someone concentrating" and "trying to remember" stands for the theme of oblivion in the novel. The house, in this sense, may symbolise the easy forgetting of adolescence ages. Towards the end of the novel when Jack asks Sue about their incestuous games: "Don't you wish, I said slowly, 'that we still played that game?' Sue's answer "I can hardly remember anything about it" (96) is remarkable to indicate the temporariness of incestuous relationship between the siblings. The house's feature contributes to the difficulty of remembrance with its thick walls, with its image like a castle. The image gives the sense of a barrier to enter the house. The

distance between the children and the outside world is also reflected through the house metaphor. Yet, the house ironically serves to keep the children isolated from the outside. The gothic image, in this sense, does not frighten the children but, on the contrary, it protects them from the adults.

1.3 Children as Villain

As this chapter does not intend to argue for the innocence of the children, it also does not try to convict the children because of their villainous treatments. Yet keeping in mind that they have the potential to act villainously or immorally as much as an adult, I will try to show their understandable reason that is either to protect themselves from adult oppression and authority or a reaction to them. First, I will discuss their actions which can be regarded as villainous.

1.3.1 “I did not kill my father”

While commenting on Lessing’s **The Fifth Child**, Anne Mellor, in her book **Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters** (1988), underlines the helpless situation of parents at bearing a **monstrous** child (for our concern we may say a villain) in spite of their entire endeavour and she indicates **Frankenstein** as the precursor of **The Fifth Child**. She states:

Frankenstein gives concrete form to the spoken fears that each mother tries to quell as she contemplates childbearing: ‘even if I love and nurture my child,’ the prospective parent asks herself, ‘even if I provide the best education of which I am capable, I may still produce a monster and who is responsible for that?’ This question comes to haunt Lessing’s protagonist, although she hardly thinks to ask it before her fifth and final pregnancy (50).

Yet, although Lessing’s novel is generally accepted as one of the most remarkable cases of gothicising the child, the novel does barely emphasise the monstrous character. What makes the fifth child gothicised is the adult’s expectation from a

child and their perspective because in the novel the doctors do not see any difference in the fifth child compared to the other children. "... '[H]e's normal', said Harriet, grim. 'The doctor says he is'. 'He may be normal for what he is. But he is not normal for what we are'" (Lessing, 2013: 79). He is different but in the adult point of view he is the other. In this sense, we may say that Lessing's novel does not have a gothicised child but gothicised adult perspective that works when they witness anything different from their socially constructed norms. Coming back to McEwan's novel, we do not see any adult anxiety about childbearing or childcare. But we witness the events and the relationship between the adults and the children through Jack's narration.

This novel reveals child characters in a modern gothicised atmosphere and it also exposes them as characters who try to struggle and survive in a gothic world created by the adults. At a certain point, the children act against the rules and taboos of society. Besides they can be harmful to each other. At the very beginning of the novel Jack states "I did not kill my father, but I sometimes felt I had helped him on his way" (McEwan, 1994: 9). Jack consistently portrays an underdeveloped personality. He reveals his inexperience in the first sentence of the novel: his saying "I did not kill my father" is "Oedipally related as 'insignificant' in the context of the story Jack tells, except for its temporal coincidence with his first ejaculation: 'a landmark in my own physical growth' (9)" (Childs, 2006: 35). At first, his murderous thought shocks the reader, implying that the child narrator has gothic implements; yet when we understand that he is only an adolescent who tries his first ejaculation, by chance at the moment of his father's death, the immediate gothic atmosphere diminishes. The first sentence of the novel implies that Jack feels **guilty** for his father's death since he has left him. Yet he acts reluctantly at his father's death: "My father was lying face down on the ground, his head resting on the newly spread concrete. The smoothing plank was in his hand. I approached slowly, knowing I had to run for help. For several seconds I could not move away. I stared wonderingly, just as I had a few minutes before" (McEwan, 1994: 19). Even when the ambulance came to take his father away, he does not lament but acts as if

everything is normal: “I went back outside after the ambulance had left to look at our path. I did not have a thought in my head as I picked up the plank and carefully smoothed away his impression in the soft, fresh concrete” (19). By doing that he metaphorically cleans his memory with his father. His cruelty and insensitivity imply that he has the potential to act cruelly: “Jack’s Oedipal hostility toward his father” says Malcolm, “expressed so tellingly when they are moving bags of cement (“I made sure he took as much weight as I did” (Malcolm, 2002: 18). Nevertheless, his reaction is not in vain and it is against the oppressive father.

We understand that Jack is a teenage moving into puberty. He learns how to masturbate, he explores his body, he tries to understand how his semen is and he also tries to hide his childishness by putting aside the comics he holds when he thinks that a masculine authority would notice his childishness. When the men come to deliver the ordered cement he pretends to be like an adult:

In the early summer of my fourteenth year a lorry pulled up outside our house. I was sitting on the front step rereading a comic. The driver and another man came towards me. They were covered in a fine, pale dust which gave their faces a ghostly look. They were both whistling shrilly completely different tunes. I stood up and held the comic out of sight. I wished I had been reading the racing page of my father's paper, or the football results (McEwan, 1994: 9).

Giving the background of the society which is interested in football and racing that is presumably accepted as a masculine interest in a patriarchal society, he needs to present himself like an adult. This kind of thought of Jack is consistent with his age. This transition period stimulates the incestuous relationship. While evaluating the incest relationship between the siblings, we should keep in mind that these siblings are growing up, and especially Jack is in his juvenile crisis. Above all, the novel has “psychological tensions, conflicts, longings, and rejections” (Malcolm, 2002: 52). For instance, when Jack feels sorry about how he behaved toward his mother, he comes back home, closely observes her through the kitchen window, but runs away

when his mother calls him. The enthusiasm of Jack, the narrator, his “affection for, and rejection of his mother are memorably expressed” (52).

The novel follows the pattern of the children’s development process. In Malcolm’s words: “the novel moves toward a climactic moment of initiation which is so much part of the pattern of such psychological texts, charting as they often do the passage from adolescence to maturity” (52). Indeed, the novel is full of indications of the siblings’ childish episodes: Jack is naked and he is with Tom who is naked as well in the latter’s cot. The scene according to Malcolm seems “much more a kind of regression” (52). When Julie sees them and says “‘two bare babies!’ The moment of initiation seems an ironic reversal of generic expectations” (52). Their childish, juvenile attitudes intermingle with their sexual desires. According to Ward, as Byrnes states in his book **The Work of Ian McEwan: A Psychodynamic Approach**, “brother-sister incest can be quite acceptable 'giving rise, as it does, to memories of sibling genital exploration and childhood sex play. These kinds of experiences are usually not damaging” (Byrnes, 1999: 5). Their incest relationship, therefore, is not a perverted practice; in contrast, they try to explore an unknown world of sexuality which they have not been taught by their parents.

1.3.2 Burying the mother

The Cement Garden indicates the potential of people who cannot behave morally but they are different from the normally accepted standards. The children are not evil or immoral; they simply seem indifferent to the rules and norms of their wider society and of most readers’ culture. Such people, the reader is left to conclude, would be capable of anything under the available circumstances (Malcolm, 2002: 65). After the death of the mother, the siblings do not know what to do. They are abandoned in their own house.

On one level, **The Cement Garden** is a psychological study of adolescence. It includes parental relationships, stresses between the parents and siblings and among siblings (52). This psychological intrigue reaches its peak when the siblings decide to bury their mother's body in the cellar in a metal trunk filled with concrete. Before this decision they think of the consequences and realise that if they tell this to someone, they will be seized by the government. When Sue asks "don't you think we ought to tell someone?" (McEwan, 1994: 58), Jack's reply is remarkable. He wants to protect themselves from the oppression of the government:

Julie looked up briefly and looked away. I said 'If we tell someone...' and waited. Sue said, 'We have to tell someone so there can be a funeral.' I glanced at Julie. She was gazing past our garden fence, across the empty land to the tower blocks. 'If we tell them,' I began again, 'they'll come and put us into **care**, into an **orphanage** or something. They might try and get Tom **adopted**.' I paused. Sue was horrified. 'They can't do that,' she said. 'The house will stand empty,' I went on, 'people will break in, there'll be nothing left.' 'But if we don't tell anyone,' said Sue and gestured vaguely towards the house, 'what do we do then?' I looked at Julie again and said louder, "Those kids will come in and smash everything up.' Julie tossed her pebbles across the fence. She said, 'We can't leave her in the bedroom or she'll start to smell.' Sue was almost shouting (58).

It is the moment when they want to establish their own family. Through the novel they do not witness any advantages from outside. Because of the parent's neglect of communication they cannot find an opportunity to interact with the people except at the school. Their abandoned life is narrated such as;

No one ever came to visit us. Neither my mother nor my father when he was alive had any real friends outside the family. They were both only children, and all my grand- parents were dead. My mother had distant relatives in Ireland whom she had not seen since she was a child. Tom had a couple of friends he sometimes played with in the street, but we never let him bring them into the house. There was not even a milkman in our road

now. As far as I could remember, the last people to visit the house had been the ambulance men who took my father away.
(23)

This isolated way of life is not at first their wish. It is a heritage from their parents. Their inexperience of the outside world creates fear of the outside. As they are far away from the societal order and moral values of society, and moreover as they witness that their father was trying to turn the live garden into lifeless cement, expecting them to realise that burying their mother in the basement is not human-like is in vain because they haven't been taught in this way. In this sense, unlike Lessing's novel in which the fifth child is perceived as **monstrous** since he is out of the standards of the society, in McEwan's novel, Jack and the other siblings see the government and society as a 'monstrous' entity which can be a potential danger for them. It is the fearful society which even does not supply milk (primary drink for children) to the children since there is no milkman on their way.

Some critics state that the ultimate motif of decay comes when the mother's corpse smells and covers the whole house. Yet, for our concern, the house also stands for a grave for the children. And the house decays day by day: "The ultimate motif of decay" according to Malcolm, "comes when the mother's corpse begins to rot in the ill-made tomb" (Malcolm, 2002: 57). Malcolm indicates various evidences such as "Jack notices a smell about his own person" (McEwan, 1994: 121). Besides, Jack sees a "convoluted, yellowish-grey surface" (131). The world of **The Cement Garden** is one of unremitting decay (Malcolm, 2002: 57). Nevertheless, the motif of decay for our concern starts with the neighbours' abandoning the district due to a motorway plan. This decaying motif strengthens with the mother's corpse. However, it is also remarkable to designate that the semen motif stands against the decaying motif, which the former one symbolises renewal, life and new beginning. Yet, at the end of the novel, as they are caught and sent to an orphanage, they ultimately fail to achieve this renewal.

The children are abandoned in the dystopic garden and house so unlike Edwardian gardens. They are doomed. As they conceal their parentless situation, till the end of the novel none of the adults can find them. It is not difficult for them to keep the secret of the mother's death. But at the end of the novel Julie's boyfriend Derek tries to understand what lies in the basement. Nevertheless, it is the incest he witnesses rather than the mother's corpse that really shocks him.

1.3.3 Solidarity in their Solitude

Solidarity is their only solution to survive in their solitude. When they are left by the adults, their morally unacceptable attitudes should be taken into account with considering that their main purpose is solidarity. Since they are children, expecting them to be just like adults is not fair. In contrast, they can exceed the boundaries of the adult made taboos and can tend to morally radical decisions such as transvestism to keep their existence that will be discussed in the following pages.

Therefore, when the children are alone after the death of the parents, they again remind the children of **Lord of the Flies**. But McEwan's child characters differ from Golding's, since though they can be merciless to each other, they never exceed the limit and the quarrelling or squabbling between them never ends with murdering each other. Although they agree upon not to tell about their parents' deaths to anyone, they do not always live together peacefully. They can treat each other violently and ignorantly. Tom the youngest one (3 or 4 years old) is the one who intensely experiences this harmful attitude by his sisters and brother. We see this extremely violent attitude when Tom shits. His sisters and brother do not help him. More than this, they torture him, Julie ties him:

He did a shit in his pants and a rare, sharp smell drifted upstairs and interrupted our fight. Julie and Sue sided. They said I should deal with it because I was the same sex as Tom. I appealed uneasily to the very nature of things and said that,

as girls, it was obviously their duty to do something. Nothing was resolved, and our wild battle continued. Soon Tom began to wail. We broke off again. We picked Tom up, carried him to his bedroom and put him in his large brass cot. Julie fetched his harness and tied him down. By now his screams were deafening and his face was a bright pink. We raised the side of the cot and hurried out of the room, anxious to be away from the smell and the screams. Once Tom's bedroom door was shut we could hardly hear a thing, and we carried on our games quite undisturbed. It was no more than a few hours, but this time seemed to occupy a whole stretch of my childhood. Half an hour before our parents were due back, giggling at the peril we were in, we started to clear up our mess. Between us we cleaned Tom up. (McEwan, 1994: 70-71)

Nevertheless, although they can be harmful to each other at home, they protect each other from outside effects. Jack who locks Tom in his room takes the revenge for his brother when he hears that Tom has been kicked at school. Yet this time Jack's violence is directed to an unknown boy at school. Instead of choosing the way of negotiation he threatens the boy who has kicked Tom:

'That one,' he said at last and pointed in the direction of a small wooden shed. It was a scrawny-looking kid, a couple of years older than Tom, red-headed and freckled. The meanest sort, I thought. I crossed the playground at great speed and seized him by his lapel with my right hand and, with the other gripped round his throat, banged him hard against the shed and pinned him there. His face shook and seemed to bulge. I wanted to laugh out loud, so wild was my elation. 'You lay a finger on my brother,' I hissed, 'and I'll rip your legs off.' Then I let him go (45).

Jack threatens the boy who has kicked his brother. But Jack, his brother and sisters are not the only children who have the potential to behave violently. The other children at school show potential brutality as well:

It was Sue who brought Tom home from school that afternoon. His shirt was hanging in shreds off his back and one of his shoes was gone. One side of his face was swollen

and red, and a corner of his mouth was torn. Both his knees were grazed and dried blood ran in streaks down his shin. His left hand was swollen and tender, as though it had been trodden on. As soon as he got in the house Tom began a strange animal howl and made for the stairs. (45)

What is significant here is that McEwan does not mention any adult, any teacher or a responsible person in the school scenes. The adults do not exist in the school atmosphere where the children need them most. McEwan, by portraying the school as an abandoned place by adults, also indicates how far the adults respond to the needs of children. Since the children cannot find any aid from any adult they try to cure Tom's injury themselves. This damage for the siblings seems not a big deal. They perceive this event as a 'game' among them:

'Don't let Mum see him like that,' Julie shouted. We were on him like a pack of hounds on to a wounded rabbit. We carried him into the downstairs bathroom and shut the door. With all four of us in there we did not have much space and in the hollow acoustics of this room Tom's cries were deafening. Julie, Sue and I pressed around him kissing and caressing him as we undressed him. Sue was almost crying too. (45)

The **kissings** and **caressings** are the methods that could relieve Tom's pain. Yet Tom cannot overcome this violent beating and more radically decides to be a girl. He states that if he were a girl, he would not be beaten that much:

'He told me not to tell anyone.' 'You'd better not then,' Julie said, but Sue went on, 'He came into my room and said, "What's it like being a girl?" and I said, "It's nice, why?" And he said he was tired of being a boy and he wanted to be a girl now. And I said, "But you can't be a girl if you're a boy," and he said, "Yes I can. If I want to, I can." So then I said, "Why do you want to be a girl?" And he said, "Because you don't get hit when you're a girl." And I told him you do sometimes, but he said, "No you don't, no you don't." So then I said, "How can you be a girl when everyone knows you're a boy?" and he said, "I'll wear a dress and make my hair like yours and go in the girls' entrance." So I said he couldn't do that, and he said yes he could, and then he said he wanted to anyway, he wants...' (46).

Tom's reaction indicates the limitless imaginative capacity of a child under violent oppression. Tom's experiments and his transvestism are the escape of a child from a violent world. He exceeds moral values which he has not experienced before: "He works out the advantages of being a girl rather than a boy... 'Because you don't get hit when you're a girl'" (54) and goes further by persuading his sisters to dress him as a girl (86–87). Thereafter he slips in and out of two gender roles, happily wearing girls' clothes at times and playing with one of his friends in them (96). The scene in which Sue and Julie first dress Tom up as a girl reveals Jack's own unease in the highly polarised male-female world: "How easy it was to become someone else," he thinks. "I crossed my arms and hugged myself . . . I was excited and scared" (86). Julie clearly notices this: "Here's another one," she says, "who's tired of being a grumpy boy" (86). As the Edwardian notion is gone, as their natural garden is bereaved by adults, they focus on treatments which are against the taboos of the society. In other words, they try to find their own solutions to the problems they face.

Jack's torturous treatments go on while he is making jokes to Tom's friend through slandering that Tom's friend's mother died as their mother died. It is childish but a harmful revenge on a boy which satisfies him:

'He says,' said Tom's friend derisively, squinting up at me, 'he says, he says his mum's just died and it's not true.' 'It is true,' I told him. 'She's my mum too, and she's just died.' 'Ner-ner, told ya, ner-ner,' Tom sneered and plunged his wrists deep into the sand. His friend thought for a moment. 'Well, my mum's not dead.' 'Don't care,' said Tom, working away at his tunnel. 'My mum's not dead,' the boy repeated to me. 'So what?' I said. 'Because she isn't,' the boy yelled. 'She isn't.' I composed my face and knelt down by them in the sand. I placed my hand sympathetically on the shoulder of Tom's friend. 'I'll tell you something,' I said quietly. 'I've just come from your house. Your dad told me. Your mum's dead. She came out looking for you and a car ran her over.' 'Ner-ner, your mum's dead,' (59).

Jack's grim attitude towards a child about the death of his mother, in fact, dulcorates Tom's grief. But on the other hand, it frightens an innocent child. Jack's apathetic capacity reveals how a boy can cause an innocent boy to grieve. But above all, in their solidarity Jack particularly helps Tom to face the reality. With his harmful declaration, he tries to relieve Tom's distress. Although they portray potentially harmful attitudes to each other, they, in fact, try to accomplish solidarity where literally and figuratively they are left by the adults in a period when they need them most. Besides, the reason for their violent actions to each other is an imitation of their father's violent treatment of them. Father with his oppressive personality stands as a role model for the siblings which will be discussed later.

1.3.4 Sue's diary

For the reader, the only opportunity to see the events from a point of view other than Jack's is through Sue's diary. Via her diary it is revealed how a violent and neglected figure Jack has become:

'August the ninth... You've been dead nineteen days. No one mentioned you today.' She paused and her eyes ran down several lines. 'Jack was in a horrible mood. He hurt Tom on the stairs for making a noise. He made a great scratch across his head and there was quite a lot of blood. At lunch we mixed together two tins of soup. Jack did not talk to anyone. Julie talked about her bloke who is called Derek. She said she might bring him home one time and did we mind. I said no. Jack pretended he didn't hear and went upstairs.' Sue found another page and went on reading with more expression, 'He has not changed his clothes since you died. He does not wash his hands or anything and he smells horrible. We hate it when he touches a loaf of bread. You can't say anything to him in case he hits you. He's always about to hit someone, but Julie knows how to deal with him...' Sue paused, and seemed about to go on, but changed her mind and snapped the book shut (98).

Tom is exposed to the most horrible violence by his brother. Jack has a double role toward his brother Tom. Outside, he has the role of a protector against the children who attack Tom, in their domestic life he is the only villain who can easily hurt his brother more severely than he is beaten outside. In addition, his exasperated and freewheeling way of life causes him to live like a zombie. Since he does not change his clothes and does not take showers, he is like a dead body which decays. After the vanishing of the oppressive authority of their parent, Jack finds an opportunity to treat others as he wishes. This parentless situation creates a trauma which leads them not only to violence but also to oblivion.

The parentless siblings, who either experience a full exaltation for they are not exploited by the adults or grief as possibly they may need their parents, are in fact in a situation full of **oblivion**. Jack describes their house as looking “like the face of someone concentrating, trying to remember” (28). Not only for the description of the house but also the things they did are hardly remembered. Towards the end of the novel he states that “it was not at all clear to me now why we had put her in the trunk in the first place” (98). Not only Jack but also Sue says that she hardly remembers “the game of sexual exploration she played with Jack and Julie (106–7). They cannot agree upon when it has rained since their mother died (122). At the end of the novel Julie declares that she cannot “remember how it used to be when Mum was alive” (149). It is an adolescence period for them, a transition period with lack of their consciousness, a latent mood experienced unconsciously. At the end of the novel, Jack and Julie have incest relationship and Julie’s boyfriend sees them. Julie’s last sentence reminds the oblivion theme of the novel. “‘There!’ she said, ‘wasn’t that a lovely sleep’” (138). Unawareness or forgetfulness or rejecting what they experience indicates the power of instinct that they cannot rule inside. The violence and incest relationship are not acceptable for the adults but these taboos they experience are not under the control of them because they are adolescents who haven’t accomplished their development yet. If we evaluated burying their mother in a cellar and incest relationships while expecting them as conscious as an adult about evaluating the moral values, the comment would be scornful and they would be assumed as one of

the most brutal and violent beings in the world. Yet, for the siblings' concern, they even do not have an opportunity to realise the moral values of the society since they are abandoned by the society and because of their authoritative and repressive parent.

At this point, it is significant to note that there is a close relationship between the trauma the children face and the social environment. Richard J. McNally, Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, who is an expert on anxiety disorders, discusses trauma and remembering cases in his book **Remembering trauma** (2003). He states that:

How victims remember trauma is the most divisive issue facing psychology today. Some experts believe that rape, combat, and other horrific experiences are engraved on the mind, never to be forgotten. Others believe that the mind protects itself by banishing traumatic memories from awareness, making it difficult for many people to remember their worst experiences until many years later (1).

What the siblings experience matches with McNally's second statement. That is, the siblings forget the traumatic memories. Jack's forgetting the key point of the novel, that is the reason for burying their mother in the basement, is highly recognizable excuse for the children. Yet, as McNally's mentioned theory employs, this forgetting the traumatic experiences is self-defence to survive. More than this, in her book **Trauma and recovery** (1992), Judith Lewis Herman, who is a psychiatrist, researcher, teacher, and author, whose special focus is on the understanding and treatment of incest and traumatic stress, points out the significance and importance of social context especially supported by political movements to help the "disempowered". In her words:

To hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance. For the individual victim, this social context is created by relationships with friends, lovers and family. For the larger society, the social context is created by political movements that give voice to the disempowered. The systematic study of psychological

trauma therefore depends on the support of a political movement (9).

As the narrative of the novel is lack of this social unity, McEwan's siblings are destined to experience this trauma. The more they forget, the more they postpone. Time heals them as it passes. Oblivion as a psychological reaction would help them to recover of this trauma. "The study of trauma in sexual and domestic life" as Herman asserts "becomes legitimate only in a context that challenges the subordination of women and children" (9). What is vital for McEwan's characters is that they draw a parallelism with the statement of Herman: "in the absence of strong political movements for human rights, the active process of bearing witness inevitably gives way to the active process of forgetting" (9). Jack and the other siblings are not supported by the social context; in contrast they are in threat by the non-existing governmental institution. After the absence of their parent, the siblings have to cope with their isolated life and collected traumatic memories in their mind. Since there is not a close and direct relationship with the outside, their instinctive forgetting of the traumatic memories leads them to an incestuous unity which can not be approved by the society. Yet, since they ignore this moral evaluation, their unity continues to keep them together. Nevertheless, this unity is destructed when an intruder, Derek, Julie's boyfriend witnesses their incestuous relationship. Although I will discuss Derek's case in the following pages, it is essential to note here that Derek, being a symbol of the society's consciousness, is a character who sees the parentless situation of the siblings and wants to be a father figure for them. Since he is the informer of their incestuous relationship to the police, Derek also represents the father figure who puts an end to the unity of the siblings. In other words, the siblings' exaltation and life without a tyrant father have been ended by intrusion of a father figure again. The novel in this sense ends as it indicates the impossibility of rebelling children against the societal order created by the adults.

1.4 Children as Victims

Towards the end of the 20th century the idea that domesticity is the confident place for children has started to be questioned. One of the best examples of this is **The Cement Garden** (1978). However, over the eighteenth century the concept had been the opposite. As Gavin states “over the eighteenth century, the concept of the nuclear family and the idea of the home as a protective sphere governed by the mother and innately suited to the safe, moral upbringing of young children, in short the ideas we associate with domesticity, were being consolidated, as many historians and scholars have noted” (Gavin, 2012: 95). McEwan twists this idea through depicting his child characters left orphan. Besides, before their parents’ deaths, what the siblings have experienced is not a safe and peaceful life. They are abused by a tyrannical and authoritative father and could not socialise properly because of a passive mother. Consequently, the children, to be able to survive, create their own way of life which is against the taboos of adults: Jack and Julie’s incest relationship, Tom’s desire to be a girl, and of course burying the mother in the cellar. These treatments actually are for self-defence. In this part of the chapter I will show the reasons of my suggestions above but before this it is also essential to indicate the forces and oppressions of adults that lead the children to act like that.

1.4.1 Tyrant and dictator father abuses the children

Daniel Defoe’s **Robinson Crusoe** (1719), mostly accepted as the first English novel, has a disobedient child protagonist. Crusoe, while criticising himself, says that “evil Influence which carried me first away from my Father’s House, that hurried me into the wild and indigested Notion of raising my Fortune; and that imprest those Conceits so forcibly upon me, as to make me deaf to all good Advice, and to the Entreaties and even Command of my Father” (16). The disobedient child Crusoe didactically understands that what he has experienced is due to his disobedience to his father. However, in McEwan’s novel we do not see advice of adults for their children; in contrast, accusing and insulting are the dominant characteristics of the father. And since the siblings are not lucky enough as much as Crusoe they even

could not think to leave the house. In contrast, they think that outside is dangerous after the death of their parents. Therefore, they are doomed to be oppressed by their father's brutal treatments in the imprison-like house which looks like a doomed castle from a fairy tale within the area surrounded by **stinging, nettles**.

The father portrays a tyrant authority over the children. The mother is passively helpless to react and protect the children against the father. The father "was strict with Tom, always going on at him in a needling sort of way. He used Mother against Tom much as he used his pipe against her. 'Don't talk to your mother like that,' or 'Sit upstraight when your mother is talking to you.' She took all this in silence. If Father then left the room she would smile briefly at Tom or tidy his hair with her fingers" (McEwan, 1994: 13). The mother's smiling and tidying Tom's hair are passive intentions to conciliate Tom. After the father's coercion Tom still feels frightened and does not relax after the mother's frail conciliation. The father not only behaves brutally but is also uninterested in their success and happiness. Julie is a girl who has a record for the 100 and 220 yard sprint in athletics. But

father had never taken her seriously; he said it was daft in a girl, running fast, and not long before he died he refused to come to a sports meeting with us. We attacked him bitterly, even Mother joined in. He laughed at our exasperation. Perhaps he really intended to be there, but we left him alone and sulked among ourselves. On the day, because we did not ask him to come, he forgot and never saw in the last month of his life his elder daughter star of the entire field. (20)

The father's patriarchal and masculine thought about "it was daft in a girl" also indicates his patronizing world view. He not only shows his oppressive side but also his reckless attitude to his daughter's success. At the party they enjoy without any participation of the father:

My mother remembered a party we had had on Julie's tenth birthday. I remembered it too, I was eight. Julie had wept because someone had told her that there were no more

birthdays after you were ten. It had become for a while a family joke (35).

But when the father intrudes to the events, everything is messed up. Even at the birthday parties he behaves brutally and tyrannically:

He liked to have the children stand in neat lines, quietly waiting their turn at some game he had set up. Noise and chaos, children milling around without purpose, irritated him profoundly. There was never a birthday party during which he did not lose his temper with someone. At Sue's eighth birthday party he tried to send her to bed for fooling around. Mother intervened, and that was the last of the parties. Tom had never had one. By the time we reached our front gate we had fallen silent. As she fumbled in her handbag for a front-door key I wondered if she was glad that this time we would be having a party without him. (35)

Ironically enough the brutality of the father especially at the birthday parties may indicate the desire of non-existence of the siblings by the father. Besides, their violence against Tom is a repetition of their father's treatment to them. Since the father engages in violence towards even to the mother, the children also take the father as a model. This tyrant father figure is a stimulative force for them to act violently.

1.4.2 Incest as a protection

In an interview with McEwan, he points out his idea about the incest among the siblings: "in the nuclear family the kind of forces that are being suppressed- the oedipal, incestuous forces-are also paradoxically the very forces which keep the family together". Jack and Julie, in this sense, experience exactly what McEwan offers for his own novel. The relationship between them "moves inexorably from normal sibling affection to incest" (Childs, 2006: 38). Jack and Julie are always in power struggle which Julie always wins. Besides, Jack the narrator describes her as a subject of affection and admiration. The influence of her physical descriptions by Jack foreshadows the incestuous outcome. Jack gazes at her and tries to define her

appearance: “half-smiled, half-pouted, her lips softly pursed” (McEwan, 1994: 23-4). Jack’s creaming onto his sister’s back is one of the clearest innuendos, especially since we know that he spends most of his time masturbating. He describes the creaming scene with erotic images: “he kneels ‘between her open legs’ and ‘squirts pale, creamy fluid’ into his hand. While he does so, he is described as stealing a glance at his sister’s breast” (Childs, 2006: 39). The incestuous relationship is not only between Jack and Julie but also including Sue. Their games, the way they play does not allude but particularly point to incest relationship even pornographic gestures:

Together we rapidly stripped Sue of her clothes and when we were pulling down her pants our hands touched. (11) 'Vell?' We rolled Sue on to her side and then on to her belly. We stroked her back and thighs with our finger- nails. We looked into her mouth and between her legs with a torch and found the little flower made of flesh. 'Vot to you think of zis, Herr Doctor?' Julie stroked it with a moistened finger and a small tremor ran along Sue's bony spine. I watched closely. I moistened my finger and slid it over Julie's. 'Nothing serious,' she said at last, and closed the slit with her finger and thumb. 'But ve vill votch for further developments, ja?' Sue begged us to go on. Julie and I looked at each other knowingly, knowing nothing. 'It's Julie's turn,' I said. 'No,' she said as always. 'It's your turn.' Still on her back, Sue pleaded with us. I crossed the room, picked up Sue's skirt and threw it at her. 'Out of the question,' I said through an imaginary pipe. 'That's the end of it.' I locked myself in the bathroom and sat on the edge of the bath with my pants round my ankles. I thought of Julie's pale-brown fingers between Sue's legs as I brought myself to my quick, dry stab of pleasure. I remained doubled up after the spasm passed and became aware that downstairs the voices had long ago ceased. (McEwan, 1994: 13)

Their game ends here. Although it includes erotic scenes, what they try to do is playing a game but with the influence of uncontrollable libido of Jack. Strangely enough except the incestuous games among them, their relationship is always in a sort of quarrel or they mostly ignore each other. The vivid and happiest scenes are during the incestuous games they play. One of the reasons of their coming close to each other is their inevitable asocial characteristics because of the parental attitudes.

The siblings create a nuclear family through incest among them in the figures of mother and father after the death of their parents. Although for a 21st century adult perspective, this incest relationship is a taboo which cannot be accepted by adult authorities, it is this incestuous interaction between them that holds them together, makes them feel close to each other. Here my intention is not to support this incest relationship but to reveal the fact that if the siblings need solidarity against unknown governmental procedures for orphans, incest is one of the ways that helps them to interlock.

“The Western Taboo against incest is fairly universal” says the author of **Sex for Grownups: Dr. Dorree Reveals the Truth** (2010). During this research I have contacted the author; she stated that incest among the siblings sometimes helps them survive, especially under the circumstances of problematic parent experiences:

siblings have been abandonment or feel abandoned; they have turned to each other for sustenance that then becomes sexual. Perhaps without it they might have died? The Western Taboo against incest is fairly universal. However, when these children become adults and overcome whatever guilt or shame they may carry, they seem to go on to lead productive lives including healthy relationships with spouses or loving partners. Frequently talking to each other as adults about their childhood experiences, often with therapeutic help, appears to enable them to move on in appropriately well adjusted developmental ways in my presentation (Lynn on Apr 19, 2012 2:32 AM).

The games including incestuous intentions between Julie and Jack are not necessarily erotic but they can also be gothic as well. In this scene, Jack wears the huge gothic garden gloves to frighten Julie in her room: “The last time I tickled Julie I waited till Mother was at the hospital, then I slipped on a pair of huge, filthy gardening gloves, last worn by my father, and followed Julie up to her bedroom” (McEwan, 1994: 30-31). In this scene, Jack symbolically takes the role of his father by wearing the gothic gardening gloves. As he takes the representative role of authority and masculine power, they do not have an incest relationship but Jack seduces her:

She was sitting at the small desk she used for doing homework on. I stood in the doorway with my hands behind my back. 'What do you want?' she said in full disgust. We had been quarrelling downstairs. 'Come to get you,' I said simply, and spread my enormous hands towards her, fingers outstretched. The sight alone of these advancing on her made her weak. She tried to stand up, but she fell back in her chair. 'You dare,' she kept saying through her rising giggles. 'You just dare.' The big hands were still inches from her and she was writhing in her chair, squealing, 'No... no... no.' 'Yes,' I said, 'your time has come.' I dragged her by the arm on to her bed. She lay with her knees drawn up, her hands raised to protect her throat. She dared not take her eyes off the great hands which I held above her, ready to swoop down. 'Get away from me,' she whispered. It struck me as funny at the time that she addressed the gloves and not me. 'They're coming for you,' I said, and lowered my hands a few inches. 'But no one knows where they will strike first.' Feebly she tried to catch at my wrists but I slid my hands under hers and the gloves clamped firmly round her rib cage, right into the armpits. As Julie laughed and laughed, and fought for air, I laughed too, delighted with my power. Now there was an edge of panic in her thrashing about. She could not breathe in. She was trying to say 'please', but in my exhilaration I could not stop. Air still left her lungs in little birdlike clucks. One hand plucked at the coarse material of the glove (30-31).

Jack accomplishes to twist their catastrophic situation into enjoyable experiences by using grotesque-gothic entity. But to create the conflict in their games, he needs an object that is frightening. The big size of the gloves also works to create an image of a fairy tale of a child and a giant. Besides, the gloves also represent an opposite image of nature since it is **filthy**. The association of the father, garden, and **filthy** gloves stand for a threat against children. **Filthy** and **coarse materials** of glove do not refer to nature but the cement that the father has touched with the gloves. Jack, to be able to create a frightening atmosphere, uses these gloves which are the only mentioned object left from their father. Through the gloves Jack takes the gothic image of outside and the garden into the house. While they do not react to the smell of the kitchen and untidiness of the house that much, the gloves from outside symbolically frighten them.

Up until here the games between Jack and Julie seem incest giggling since Julie's first serious reaction turns out to have pleasure from the game. Then it is said that "as I moved forward to be in a better position to hold her down, I felt hot liquid spreading over my knee" (30-31). The reader expects that the "liquid" is his semen after his ejaculation. But it is not. McEwan twists the implied reader's mind by stating that the liquid is urine: "Horrified, I leapt from the bed, and shook the gloves from my hands. Julie's last laughs tailed away into tired weeping. She lay on her back, tears spilling over the trough of her cheekbones and losing themselves in her hair. The room smelled only faintly of urine" (30-31). The narrator does not reveal who pees, either Jack or Julie. If it is Jack who pees, he won't be erected and ejaculated since physically it is impossible for a boy to pee while he has been erected. And his peeing indicates that he does not intend to seduce her sister. As soon as Julie understands that he has peed, the game finishes between them; while she gets angry, Jack gets shy and leaves the room: "I picked up the gloves from the floor. Julie turns her head. 'Get out,' she said dully. 'Sorry,' I said. 'Get... out.' Tom and Sue were in the doorway watching. 'What happened?' Sue asked me as I came out. 'Nothing,' I said, and closed the door very quietly" (30-31). If it is Julie who pees, the scene again indicates that what they experience is a sort of funny game that makes Julie pee because she dies laughing. As the subject is not revealed specifically the scene also alludes to the unity without any gender difference among the siblings.

Incest relationships till the end of the novel mostly include games among them. Even so, they do not play games during an incest relationship but they have incest intentions during their games. McEwan alludes to childish impulse and problematizes any probable reason which sees Jack's sexual desire to his sister as a perverted intention by giving the name **Jack** to his protagonist. The name Jack implies the term **jack-off** which means to masturbate in slang. The term **jack-off** with its popularity of being used among the adolescents who recently experience themselves indicates the funny, game-like attitudes of the children rather than their villainous intentions. Nevertheless, at the end, Jack and Julie dare to have barely a sexual relationship on purpose and it is not included in a game. But before commenting on this change it is

also remarkable to talk about Jack's change. Throughout the novel Jack who gradually experiences his personality development is in a transition period. And through his change, incestuous intercourse turns out from games to real sex. His haggard attitudes change as well. Since he learns how to masturbate and their parents die, he abandons all the rituals of personal hygiene. He "no longer washed (his) face or hair or cut (his) nails or took baths" (21). He tells "I gave up brushing my teeth" (21). His dirtiness and incest-games belong to childish attitude. What is interesting is that Jack finds a way to change himself under the traumatic circumstance. In this sense, he portrays a powerful personality. A book as a present given by his sister gives him the stimulative force to change in a positive way.

1.4.3 A Book as a Parent

The presents that Julie and Sue give him for his birthday are elements to change him to a clean and intellectual boy:

At breakfast Julie handed me, without comment, a small leather pouch which contained a metal comb and nail scissors. Sue gave me a science fiction novel. On its cover a great, tentacled monster was engulfing a space ship and beyond the sky was black, pierced by bright stars (35).

The book Sue gives him has an important function. Because through his second reading he starts to realise the things that he hasn't realised before. The book he reads is a science fiction. And he regularly reads it. It is the first novel he reads:

Minute life-bearing spores drifting in clouds across galaxies had been touched by special rays from a dying sun and had hatched into a colossal monster who fed off X-rays and who was now terrorising regular space traffic between Earth and Mars. It was Commander Hunt's task not only to destroy this beast but to dispose of its gigantic corpse. 'To allow it to drift for ever through space,' explained one scientist to Hunt at one of their many briefings, 'would not only create a collision hazard, but who knows what other cosmic rays might do to

its rotten bulk? Who knows what other monstrous mutation might emerge from this carcass?' (36)

This book is the only thing which has the function of leading and developing Jack. Jack experiences what the Commander Hunt experiences at a certain point. For instance, like Commander Hunt, he has to **dispose** his mother's corpse. Besides, in his second reading the book has a leading function for him in which he will be realizing the tidiness of Commander Hunt's work place. In addition, he prefers to jump into this **fascinating** book instead of masturbating whenever he finds time. This science fiction is an effective case which takes Jack into the outside world. It reminds him of another way of life, another way of living and existence. In other words, it heals his selfishness. Before the book, he has been only interested in his desires and self satisfaction but with the book his tendency changes from selfishness to a more wide aspect of the world around him. Ironically the book educates him about his personality and his experiences. In this sense, the narrative of the book alludes to the educational and entertaining capacity of art through the function of this fantastic book. And ironically enough the book can reach the inside of a child that the parent fails to gain. Accordingly, we may say that the children create their own remedy without any help from adults. Sue, in this sense, represents a mentor role among the siblings. She leads Jack with her notes about him where he realises himself. Her diary is a mirror for Jack. Besides, the book she gives him has also a healing function for Jack. The siblings who are under an irreversible situation, in a way can solve their own problem. Jack explains how he is affected by the book he reads: "three weeks after Mother died I began to reread the book Sue had given me for my birthday" (82). This point of change is a rebirth for his identity:

I was surprised how much I had missed. I never noticed how particular Commander Hunt was about keeping the ship clean and tidy, especially on the really long journeys through space. Each day, the old earth day, he climbed down a stainless steel ladder and inspected the mess room. Cigarette ends, plastic cutlery, old magazines, coffee cups and spilt coffee hung untidily about the room. 'Now that we do not have gravity to keep things in their place,' Commander Hunt told the

computer technicians who were new to space travel, 'we must make an extra effort to be neat.' And during the long hours when there were no urgent decisions to be taken, Commander Hunt passed the time 'reading and rereading the masterpieces of world literature, and writing down his thoughts in a massive steel-bound journal while Cosmo, his faithful hound, dozed at his feet'. Commander Hunt's spaceship sped across the universe at onehundredth the speed of light in search of the source of energy that had transformed the spores into a monster. I wondered if he would have cared about the state of the mess room, or about world literature, if the ship had remained perfectly still, fixed in outer space. As soon as I had finished the book I took it downstairs to give to Julie or Sue. I wanted someone else to read it. (82-83)

His identifying himself with the protagonist of the book helps him to socialise as well. He wants to share his feelings with someone else. At the beginning of the novel while he prefers to be alone, now he is in need of sharing his emotions. Their enthusiasm comes back with his fresh effort. He suggests to "clean up the kitchen" (85). He finds the role model, a fictional father figure in the book that he cannot find in the relationship with his father. Jack finds the positive father figure that he needs in Commander Hunt. And they began "to sweep up the rubbish and stuff it into cardboard boxes which (they) carried out to the dustbins" (82). His change encourages his sisters as well:

Sue heard us and came down to help. We unblocked the drains, washed the walls and scrubbed the floor. While Sue and I washed the dishes, Julie went out to buy food for a meal. We finished just as she returned and we began cutting up vegetables for a large stew. Once that was simmering Julie and Sue tidied up the living room and I went outside to clean the windows. I saw my sisters, blurred by a film of water, moving all the furniture into the centre of the room and for the first time in weeks I was happy. I felt safe, as if I belonged to a powerful, secret army. We worked for over four hours, one job following another, and I was hardly aware of my existence (86).

1.4.4 “There is no such thing as society”

The siblings’ portraying a social unity is, in fact, conservative approach. McEwan twists one of the major taboos of the society that is incest and destruction of the family order. Yet, he also indicates the necessity of unification of the siblings. Through these conflict conditions of the siblings, the novel also reminds us of Thatcher’s political impact on the society. McEwan, by questioning the family unity, and on the other hand keeping the siblings unified, foreshadows the traumatic transition of social order of Thatcherite government. In one of her interviews, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher talks to **Woman's Own** magazine on the 31st of October in 1987. Although the date is 9 year later of the publication of the novel, it is still significant to mention that the Prime Minister’s speech is noteworthy to renarrate the lack of society in England. In her speech, Thatcher says:

I think we've been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem; it's the government's job to cope with it. 'I have a problem, I'll get a grant.' 'I'm homeless, the government must house me.' They're casting their problem on society. And, you know, **there is no such thing as society**. There are individual men and women, and there are families. **And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first**. It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour. People have got the entitlements too much in mind, without the obligations. There's no such thing as entitlement, unless someone has first met an obligation. (“Margaret Thatcher”) (emphasis mine)

Referencing to Thatcher’s narrative, we may say that McEwan goes in parallelism with her idea. Yet they differ at when the children are taken by the police to be sent to an orphanage which represents the government. In McEwan’s novel, the motto “there is no such thing as society” does not work at a certain point. In other words, the children’s unity (nuclear family) is a society in itself. And the society of the siblings through the novel accomplishes to survive. More than this, they progress in a positive way through their tidying up, and getting clean.

Sue's present book and its influence on Jack have an important function that helps them to transfer from a pessimist, depressive to an optimistic and enthusiastic way of living. Their energy bursts again. This change among them is highly remarkable because it also shows that the children can change from villain-like beings to positive and constructive personality without any contribution of adults. Unlike Golding's children who at least need to be rescued by adults (in fact, their evacuation from the island does not mean rescue for them since they are taken into a battleship where their lives are still in risk with the adults) to prevent their cruelty to each other, McEwan's children themselves have the power to create a positive change in their lives. They have the ability to see what is not good. And above all they can make an impression of each others in positive manners. Through the help of the book Jack daydreams not his sisters in an incestuous desire but "instead, this time about Commander Hunt" (86). Jack gradually overcomes his juvenile crisis, he "cut[s] [his] fingernails and combed [his] lank brown hair" (87).

Before overcoming his juvenile crisis with the help of the book, on the other hand, Jack essentially does not portray a full sexual desire to his sister even though he is stimulated. At the moment of a sexual occasion, for instance, he panics and does not know what to do and acts funnily. The birthday party (where the mother is terribly sick but alive) is still significant to point out that they try to entertain each other and when they ask Julie to do something:

Without a word Julie launched herself into the space cleared for Tom's cartwheels and suddenly her body was upside down, supported only by her hands, taut and lean and perfectly still. Her skirt fell down over her head. Her knickers showed a brilliant white against the pale brown skin of her legs and I could see how the material bunched in little pleats around the elastic that clung to her flat, muscular belly. A few black hairs curled out from the white crotch. Her legs, which were together at first, now moved slowly apart like giant arms. Julie brought her legs together again and dropping them to the floor, stood up. In a confused, wild moment I

found myself on my feet singing 'Greensleeves' in a trembling, passionate tenor (37).

This scene indicates that Jack is stimulated by his sister's erotic position and he immediately starts singing "Greensleeves", a song which his sisters have already wanted him to sing but he has refused. To sing the song "Greensleeves" is also significant since it tells about a love relationship. There is a strong belief that "Greensleeves was composed by Henry VIII for his lover and future queen consort Anne Boleyn. Boleyn allegedly rejected King Henry's attempts to seduce her in the song; the rejection comes with the line "cast me off discourteously" (Weir, 2002: 131). The other probable interpretation of the lyrics is that "Lady Green Sleeves was a promiscuous young woman and perhaps a prostitute" (Brown and McBride, 2005: 101). The other interpretation is that "at the time, the word 'green' had sexual connotations, most notably in the phrase 'a green gown', a reference to the way that grass stains might be seen on a woman's dress if she had engaged in sexual intercourse out of doors" (Randolph, 1992: 47).

In any way, my aim is not to declare that Jack sees his sister as a prostitute but it may refer to Julie's rejection of his insisting game with garden gloves through the lines "Alas, my love, you do me wrong/To cast me off discourteously./For I have loved you well and long,/Delighting in your company" ("Greensleeves"). Besides neither Jack and Julie nor the mother and the other siblings complain about the scene that Julie opens her legs and shows her panty. The interaction between the siblings is still in a game-like manner. They have an uncontrollable impulse since they are exploited through an asocial mother and a tyrant father. They are clasped to each other. And one of the ways that hold them together is their incest relationship.

The siblings' interaction with the public is prevented by the father and mother. The urban desolation is created in various ways: the father changes the garden into a cement prison through its walls where the children cannot possibly find a room to

play; the mother, on the other hand, is not interested in encouraging them to communicate with the outside world. Even they do not have a television in their home which is a way of people to communicate with and learn about the public. Therefore, they are not interested in learning about the society they are in. In contrast, when their mother dies, they give up going to the school as well. Besides under such circumstances it is difficult for them to know about the moral values and taboos of their society. Through the novel, the only advice is the mother's warning Jack not to masturbate that much. Though she wishes the father has given the advice, she thinks that it is her time to talk to Jack:

'Growing up is difficult, but if you carry on the way you are, you're going to do yourself a lot of damage, damage to your growing body.' 'Damage...' I echoed. 'Yes, look at yourself,' she said in a softer voice. 'You can't get up in the mornings, you're tired all day, you're moody, you don't wash yourself or change your clothes, you're rude to your sisters and to me. And we both know why that is. Every time...' She trailed away, and rather than look at me stared down at her hands in her lap. 'Every time... you do that, it takes two pints of blood to replace it.' She looked at me defiantly. 'Blood,' I whispered. She leaned forward and kissed me lightly on the cheek. 'You don't mind me saying this to you, do you?' 'No, no,' I said. She stood up. 'One day, when you're twenty-one, you'll turn round and thank me for telling you what I've been telling you' (McEwan, 1994: 29).

As she warns Jack not to masturbate by explaining biologically, she also reminds him about the domestic rules. Her statement “these are things your father would have been telling you” (29) once more underlines how limited and uncompanionable relationship the father has with Jack. Since there is no intention of the mother and the father to introduce their children with the society, it is expected that the siblings can experience life through their own capacity. As Malcolm states, “It is noticeable that Jack and his brothers and sisters scarcely feel that their actions are reprehensible. The world of *The Cement Garden* is one in which traditional norms seem not to apply” (Malcolm, 2002: 149). Under the circumstances, their evaluation of **immorality** or **abnormality** would be far-fetched. When Jack, for instance, checks his mother's

tomb, he suspects “about the immorality and abnormality of his actions that is striking” (149). They clean the kitchen on one occasion; Jack cleans up his room after a fashion. But these “partial restorations of order” as Malcolm states “are not motivated by any sense of rules or norms, but rather by a desire for unity in the first case and simply for change in the latter (149).

The rules, taboos and norms of the society which are critical on these subjects such as nakedness, infantile regression, incest, transvestism are not seen “as deviant acts by the participants themselves” (149). Their absence gives them the feeling of liberation or something that is perfectly normal and natural in itself (149). Jack states that “the impossibility of knowing or feeling anything for certain gave me a great urge to masturbate,” (McEwan, 1994: 98) and he does not feel any moral disparity. They do not get ashamed of lying naked together and even Jack declares that “I felt weightless, tumbling through space with no sense of up or down” (135). Here, we see that Jack does not only take the moral lesson from the book, he also tries to feel the universe in an empathy with Commander Hunt whose space ship, instead of travelling through the universe at speed, “had remained perfectly still, fixed in outer space” (55). When Julie’s friend Derek sees Jack and Julie having sex, he asks how long their incestuous relationship has been going on. Julie answers this question in a timeless manner: “Ages . . . ages and ages” (150). The suggestion of timelessness actually and metaphorically applies to a **universally disacknowledged truth** that the adults could not bravely talk about or ignore. Julie’s answer can be an allegoric answer as well, since it possibly refers to all the children in the world who are inevitably faced with incestuous relationship due to their oppressed, difficult situation by the adults, and just for the sake of keeping the unification among themselves.

Derek, Julie’s boyfriend, is the symbol of the society as he witnesses Julie and Jack’s incestuous relationship at the end. Yet before he witnesses this scene, he wants to dominate the children as an outsider. He wants to take the father role for them as Julie speaks to Jack: “He wants to be one of the family, you know, big smart daddy.

He's getting on my nerves," Julie tells Jack (134). Derek directly reveals his idea: "what you four need is taking care of" (134) but ironically he is portrayed as neither like an adult nor like an adolescent. He has his own car. He plays snooker. But as Julie reveals the irony "Derek comes from a background in which he is utterly subject to his mother" (134). Julie talks about Derek's childishness: "He lives with his mum, in this tiny house... she calls him Doodle and makes him wash his hands before tea" (134). Derek is the only person, who learns that the siblings are living without a parent, and therefore representing the society's commonsense, he thinks that the siblings need an authority, a parent-like figure. Derek's aim at intruding into the family of the siblings follows a parallel pattern with Julie and Jack's intercourse at the end of the novel. This synchronic scene means that the more an authority tries to rule and dominate the siblings, the more they clasp to each other. For Julie and Jack's concern unity is through their incestuous relationship. At the end of the novel, therefore, it is revealed that their intercourse is not due to perverse admiration but rather to hold their unity and family together against the oppressive adults and their authority. Besides, Julie and Jack go on their incestuous relationship while Derek is watching them near the door. This situation indicates that they either ignore or are not influenced by the society's taboos. But Derek is in shock. And he states "Why didn't you tell me?...If you'd have told me I would have cleared off, left you to it" (135). As Derek thinks in the norms of the society he belongs, he could not understand them. And normally he acts according to the taboos of it. Julie's response to Derek's question is "Typical!... That's typical" (136). Her answer can be read as a criticism of the society. What is typical is not only Derek's reaction but also the taboos or moral values of his society which force him to act as he does.

At the end of the novel, they share the same fate as Golding's children. As the adults at last find the children on the island, in McEwan's novel, through Derek's report, the police reveals the mother from the cellar. An authority responds to the incident. McEwan draws an invasion scene while their house is being busted by the police:

It was the sound of two or three cars pulling up outside, the slam of doors and the hurried footsteps of several people coming up our front path that woke Tom. Through a chink in the curtain a revolving blue light made a spinning pattern on the wall. Tom sat up and stared at it, blinking. We crowded round the cot and Julie bent down and kissed him. 'There!' she said, 'wasn't that a lovely sleep.' (138)

With the blue light's spinning pattern on the wall, their house has been invaded by the government. They wake up from their "lovely sleep" which has been far away from the adult oppression. They are, in the end, caught and integrated into the adult dominant world. McEwan does not conclude a happy ending for his child characters, instead he indicates any possibility of freedom for the children.

Besides, McEwan's child characters experience a very extraordinary situation: they witness their parents' deaths in the house. These highly intense scenes create trauma in them so that they behave hysterically when they understand their mother has died in her room:

Sue and I followed Julie upstairs, and while we were standing behind her on the landing waiting for her to open the door, I thought of Sue and myself as a married couple about to be shown into a sinister hotel room. I belched, Sue giggled and Julie made a shushing noise... While Sue and I watched from the foot of the bed, Julie took hold of the sheet and tried to draw it over Mother's head. Because she was sitting up the sheet would not reach. Julie pulled harder, the sheet came loose and she was able to cover the head. Mother's feet appeared, they stuck out from underneath the blanket, bluish-white with a space between each toe. Sue and I giggled again (54-55).

The mother's slow and silent death metaphorically shows that the mother is non-entity. After the collapse of patriarchal authority with the death of the father, she also cannot even accomplish to organise her children when, for instance, she intends to notify that Julie and Jack are responsible for the budget but she dies before she informs Julie about Jack's right at the budget as well.

Their giggling when they see the dead body of the mother in the bed, actually can be interpreted as defence mechanism against unbearable situation for children. The implied reader expects them to be sad, crying at least silently but they do the opposite.

The desire of surviving in the house without revealing their parent's death is actually stimulated by their mother. The mother counsels them that the family should stay together at all costs: "Julie and you will have to be in charge...Both of you...It's not fair to leave it all to he?" (47). This advice of the mother creates an "artificial generation gap" (Malcolm, 2002: 91) between the elder (Julie and Jack) and the younger (Tom and Sue) siblings. But since the mother's advice lacks acknowledging "their budding sexuality" (91), they are not introduced and led as required. Their "budding sexuality" is then reflected as a positive experience to complete their parental roles. As Jack Slay, the author of the book **Ian McEwan**, states "incest in this novel is nothing more than a need to share, a need to love" (Slay, 1996: 46). Their incestuous act can be seen as an attempt to keep their parents alive and they also join against the outsider, Derek, who carries "the burden of negative transference from the father" (91). Therefore, their incestuous relationship does not have a destructive function but constitutive impact on the family model.

1.5 Conclusion

To conclude, in McEwan's **The Cement Garden**, the children who are not basically *gothicised* but who struggle to exist in a gothic-like environment which is created by adults are either exploited by their father's oppressive and insulting treatments or have to be faced with the destiny imposed by their passive mother. Their incestuous intentions and burying their mother in cement in the cellar are to protect their unity against the disruptive society and government. Their actions, which seem against the taboos of the adults, keep them together in their abandoned house.

As we tried to read **The Cement Garden** as an account of self-protection of childhood against any of the institutions which would probably be tyrant-like their father, it can also be “read as a depiction of imposition of traditional values that marked British political life in the 1980s” says Malcolm: “*The Cement Garden* aims for, and achieves, a timelessness, but it is also a text very much for its own time, a kind of mini twisted ‘Condition-of-England’ novel” (Malcolm, 2002: 150). McEwan, in this novel, by portraying an adult figure that destroys the (Edwardian) garden, and putting the child characters into an inescapable domestic life, examines their sociopsychological attitudes. By doing so, it is revealed that the orphan siblings have the capacity to survive in any circumstances, although their way of life, incestuous relationship and burying the dead mother in the cellar are strictly unacceptable for the adults’ moral values and taboos. Yet, since the adult exploitation has the ultimate authority and power in its own hands, they, in the end, fail to make their nuclear family survive. It indicates that the children are still the victims of adult authority.

2. Chapter II

The Child in Time: Endeavour of Adults in Exploitation of the Children

As the influence of Freud in literary and intellectual culture has faded, we have returned to the idea that childhood is a form of innocence, that children are not consumed by hidden sexual impulses or possessed by the polymorphous perverse. They come into the world not responsible for it, and they are sometimes acted upon by people with terrible intent. This frightens us. The literary imagination is bound to go into dark corners to explore this fear. For most people, the loss of a child is the worst thing that can happen... The lost child is the ghost that haunts us (Groes, 2009: 124).

McEwan's third novel's title **The Child in Time** (1987) is an allusion to the song "Child in Time" by the English rock group Deep Purple. It is a protest song against the Vietnam War and the singer's elegy whose child is shot in a market ("Child in Time"), the site of child loss in McEwan's narrative. The song is about a child who is led by the narrator to see life's goodness and badness. And the child is figured as a desperate character in between the bullets:

Sweet child in time
You'll see the line
The line that's drawn between
Good and bad

See the blind man
Shooting at the world
Bullets flying
Ohh taking toll

If you've been bad
Oh Lord I bet you have
And you've not been hit
Oh by flying lead

You'd better close your eyes
Ooohhhh bow your head
Wait for the ricochet. (“Child in
Time”)

The child could survive if the bullets didn't ricochet and hit him/her. He/she is a character whose destiny depends on chance in a violent world created by adults. McEwan, similar to the song's theme, portrays the children in the middle of a struggle of adults in a severe world.

In this novel, Ian McEwan, unlike the other two novels (**The Cement Garden** and **Atonement**) rarely depicts the villainous side of children who hardly exist in the text: through almost non-existence of child figures in the text (a lost girl, death of a beggar girl), the novel preserves the innocence of child images against the adults' oppression. McEwan uses the child image as a vehicle to criticise Thatcherite policy. Therefore, this chapter will particularly focus on the victimisation of children by adults. Besides, the child characters' early vanishing and death metaphorically preserve their innocence in the grim adult world. The children in **The Child in Time** are represented as a tool that is essential for the system and ideology of adults. In other words, they take the role of victimised people under adult authority. McEwan, talking about how he started this novel, says that he did not have a “clear route map” (Malcolm, 2002: 150). Instead, the novel is a collection of “little scraps, pieces, ideas and enthusiasms” (11). But the driving force, he says, is a book titled **Dream Babies: Childcare from Locke to Spock** written by Christina Hardyment. It's a detailed history of childcare manuals. The book indicates the differences of childcare manuals from decade to decade, how the suggestions and advice have changed because of sociological and political influences. McEwan thinks that “the childcare manuals are an extraordinarily accurate way into the spirit of an age” (11). Yet one of the main themes in **The Child in Time** is the 80s' governmental influence on fictitious childcare manuals which we see at the beginning of each chapter. In this chapter of the dissertation, the aim is not only to investigate the childcare manual of the period

to reveal the ideological impetus but discuss how the children are portrayed as victims of adults who are the victims of their childhood. The children will be investigated under the authority of adults and the adults will be depicted as people who are under the control of their “inescapable” childhood.

Since the political theme is predominant in the novel, most critics such as David Malcolm referred to the novel’s national life and political ideology: “The interest in history and in the connected area of public, national life is very marked in **The Child in Time**, which is, in many ways, a head-on engagement with the dominant political ideology of 1980s Britain and a denunciation of what Conservative Party politics have brought (and might yet bring) to the country” (Malcolm, 2002: 8). Truly, they also feature the novel as a political novel, a novel of socio-political criticism. The Prime Minister (whose name and sex is never mentioned but considering the period it is believed that she is Margaret Thatcher) has a role in most of the chapters. The main character, Stephen, also has a connection with the government. He is one of the members of the committee belonging to the government. His personal life is integrated with the policy of the government. The basic issues of socio-political criticism of the text make it a **dystopia**. Even at the beginning of the novel, the setting is the breakdown of public transportation in London. The reader also encounters licensed beggars (which will be discussed in detail by focusing on child beggars in the streets). Not only the transportation and beggars but also the armed police with their “oil and leather smell, [...] polished gun holsters” (McEwan, 1997: 17) compromises the dystopic vision of Thatcherite Britain. McEwan, in one of his interviews, explains this dystopic atmosphere of the novel by specifically referring to the other social and political aspects in it:

Education is “a dingy, shrunken profession; **schools were up for sale to private investors**, the leaving age was soon to be lowered” (26). Ambulance companies are private businesses (194). (The force of these changes may be lost on U.S. readers; however, they are meant in 1987 to be shocking deviations from British empirical reality, although, as was suggested above, logical developments of current

Government policies.) The southern English countryside has been turned into a vast conifer plantation so that Britain may be self-sufficient in wood (115, 119), and the Government has sponsored an inane all-day television channel “specializing in game and chat shows, commercials and phone-ins” (143). **Only one newspaper does not support a Government that has clearly been in power for very many years** (211). The national malaise is also an international one. Cold war tensions come to a boil during an **Olympic Games**, and the world is threatened with **nuclear destruction** (34–35). That the state of Britain in the novel is a malaise is indicated strongly through characters’ responses to it. Both Stephen and his father pass negative judgment on the aspects of the country set out above. Mr. Stephen sums up a journey across London. “The filth on the streets, the dirty messages on the walls, **the poverty, son**, it’s all changed in ten years” (Malcolm, 2002: 96-98) (emphasis mine).

In this sense, the novel implies the degeneration of educational system by the government. Mendel underlines the cooperation between the education system and the authority of adults. According to him, education institutions have been developed by adult authority because the children are educated as prototypes who would provide the social needs of the society (Mendel, 1992: 87). The children are affected by this “national malaise” (Malcolm, 2002: 98) that results in the child characters being manipulated by adults, especially by those who have connection with the government such as Stephen himself. The socio-political situation of Britain is represented as a totalitarian regime. This repressive power also exploits the children. The child beggars, and disability or reluctance of the associations to find the lost girl approve this consequence.

The Child in Time is not only a dystopia but also a mixture of genres: “psychological fiction, political-social criticism, tutorial on the mysteries of modern physics, and novel with supernatural elements” (100). But why did McEwan need to mix these genres in his novel? Or what are the functions of the genres? Malcolm answers this question by saying that they represent “common feature of British fiction in the 1980s and early 1990s” (100). This mixture, he continues, “serves to

create a vision of a rich and varied world” through which the characters would be “psychological-emotional, political, and intellectual beings” (100). Although there is a common consensus among the critics on the themes of the 1980s and 1990s, they are not all. Childhood as a theme had and has a very important role in these genres mentioned above. Childhood as catalyzer functions in portraying the psychological, political and sociological conditions of the periods in McEwan’s **Cement Garden**, **The Child in Time** and **Atonement**.

The figure of the lost child is central to this episodic novel **The Child in Time**. McEwan uses the child who has disappeared as medium for his criticism of Thatcherite Britain. But, in the novel, most adults are ineffective and although they cannot even find a lost child they still retain their authority over the children. Furthermore, they use this authority to shape their sociological and/or political wishes. For instance, Kate, the lost girl, can metaphorically stand for her father’s creativity. That is to say, she, as a lost female, figuratively can be read as an inspiration to male authority. The father finds an opportunity to turn to his writing career only after his daughter is lost. In this sense, Kate also stands for the stimulative force of adults, particularly on her father. Her loss dominates the adults’ lives, occupies their minds, shatters the family, both paralyses and tantalises them. Nevertheless, the children in the novel still lack power. They may ruin the adults’ lives but the adults destroy them. This chapter deals with not purification of the children but how the authority of adults can turn into a destructive force on children.

The Child in Time starts with the main character Stephen Lewis’s (a best-selling author of novels for children) trying to recover from the loss of his three-year-old daughter. Early, we learn that Stephen has lost his daughter Kate while he is shopping in a supermarket. The loss of the daughter causes the breakup of Stephen’s marriage with his musician wife Julie. After two years, Stephen becomes a member of a British government subcommittee, where the members are supposed to prepare a childcare manual. However, the committee’s intention is worthless because the manual has already been written by Stephen’s friend Charles Darke who is a

youngish, aspiring Conservative politician. Darke himself turns into his childhood and chooses to escape from the pressures of his life with his physicist wife Thelma by attempting to become a ten-year-old boy. Later Darke effectively commits suicide, and Stephen and Julie are reunited. They have a new baby.

2.1 The loss of Kate and the spirit of the novel

The Child in Time is a narrative of pain and loss. The lost/kidnapped child, Kate, reflects the spirit of the novel: painful, melancholic and depressive. Here McEwan seems to have taken Katy of Susan Coolidge's **What Katy Did** (1872) who suffers for her tarning to her aunt and transferred her pain to the adults in his novel. In this inspiring novel Katy does not get lost but is bedridden and suffers terrible pain and bitterness since she falls down from the swing which her aunt did not want her to swing. While depression, pain are experienced by Katy in Coolidge's novel, in McEwan's novel the adults experience these feelings. It is Katy's responsibility that she does not listen to her aunt's advice and warning and consequently she becomes an invalid, but, in McEwan's novel, it is the adults', particularly Lewis's pain that embodies the spirit of the novel with the third person omniscient narrator's focalisation. Therefore, we may say that McEwan mainly questions the adults rather than the children. In the 19th century, it is the moral values and educational perspectives of adults that usually embody the subject or they are implied. The 20th century texts question the **perfectness** of adult thoughts and values. Yet McEwan's novel still points the uncontrollable impulse of children. We do not know whether Kate is kidnapped or not but the novel reflects the weakness of a child compared to that of an adult: Kate can be kidnapped with a candy or she could not challenge or consider how to act rightfully against the kidnapper's intention. Or perhaps she herself leaves the market. Even so, both these possibilities imply the children's lack of consideration. She could exist in the market with her father but outside without any protection of an adult she could not. Nevertheless, the novel mainly discusses the adult inability and insufficiency of educating and taking care of children. Kate is not

kidnapped only because of her impulse and mistakes but also because of her father's irresponsibility and inattentiveness. So, in the former novel the child is at the centre but it reflects the adults' rightfulness, in the latter novel although the child does not exist, the adults' weakness and inability are disclosed.

Painful, melancholy and depressive moods make the adults pathetic and awkward in finding Kate or looking for alternatives. Kate's parents and the government's effort to find Kate remain unsolved. They try to recover this loss in different ways. Stephen and Julie respond differently to their daughter's loss. When Stephen tells her that he has lost Kate, she reacts passively. Perhaps shocked by this pain and loss she "stayed home. [...] When he left in the morning she was sitting in the armchair in the bedroom, facing the cold fireplace. That was where he found her when he came back at night and turned on the lights" (McEwan, 1997: 20). The cold fireplace, representing the womb in the psychoanalytical approach (Freud, par.18), here symbolizes the lack of a child. It can also be interpreted as a reaction of Julie to criticize Stephen who has been unable to look after their daughter. The coldness of the fireplace, in this sense, indicates the decrease or decay of libido/sex energy of Julie who does not share it with an untalented husband. As the fireplace alludes to the hearth, which is traditionally a metaphor of home and the household, it also signals the dissolution of their marriage. Stephen, on the other hand, "knocked on doors and spoke to mothers who were first puzzled then hostile. He visited child minders. He walked up and down the shopping streets with his photographs displayed. He loitered by the supermarket, and by the entrance until his search area was three miles across. He anaesthetised himself with activity" (20). He also reports the event to the police. Kate's photos are everywhere: on billboards, bus shelters...etc. Besides his effort, he is also angry with Julie- interpreting her passivity as "a feminine self-destructiveness, a wilful defeatism" (20). But what he does is to publicise his daughter. It is a treatment that can be interpreted as a violation of his daughter's privacy. As he cannot look after her, he also presents his daughter to the community which cannot or does not have a function in finding her. In fact, his criticism of Julie about "defeatism" is also current for all the adults in the novel. He

could neither find Kate nor could Julie comes out of her shell and begin searching. Worse than this, as an indication of the government's irresponsibility or insufficiency, "the police had lost interest in the case after a week" (20). As a reason, the police said that "riots in a northern suburb [...] were stretching their resources" (20). The society in the text, therefore, has been presented as composed of adults who are incapable of organization and have no competence in problem solving, and the police's declaration also indicates that there are social problems, chaos and revolts in the country.

Peter Childs divides Stephen's effort into four stages of loss outlined in John Bowlby's theory of attachment and loss (Childs, 2006: 64). According to John Bowlby, there are four stages that an adult follows in the process of searching for the lost figure: they are "numbing, searching for the lost figure, disorganization and reorientation to reality" (64). Truly, Stephen follows these stages in his search. Immediately after he understands that Kate is lost, he is numbed and petrified in the market, people's "voices did not reach him, they were impediments to his field of vision" (14). Then, he begins searching with the limited support of the police. Then, he physically attends the meetings of the childcare committee, daydreams about his daughter during the meetings and rarely searches for his daughter. After her wife leaves him, he sometimes visits his publisher Darke and his physician wife Thelma. He is fully concentrated neither on the committee's work nor on his search for his lost daughter. Towards the end of the novel, he concludes the last stage of Bowlby by reuniting with Julie and having a new baby. Julie's passive reaction is mixture of accusing of Stephen and can metaphorically be read as the incapability of adults. Besides, Julie symbolically portrays an untalented characteristic who cannot choose a proper **man** as husband and a father who is expected to keep his family safe. Her silence and later her leaving Stephen can be the message that **nothing can be done**. Although it seems that she is more powerful than Stephen in terms of accepting the **truth** her acceptance does not solve the problem either. Her manner indicates that adults cannot manage to overcome the problem.

Since the adults in the text generally acknowledge that “the lost child was everyone’s property” (McEwan, 1997: 14), ironically it means that the lost child is in fact nobody’s property. She is lost in time and space. The adults expect other adults to do something. The societal order, all that are involved in the loss as well as governmental institutions gradually start feeling less responsibility and come to Bowlby’s last stage: reorientation to reality.

The loss of the child not only shows the adults’ inability to get organised and after a while their neglect but also and more importantly, as adults’ childcare and their interest in children represent the spirit of the period in terms of its cultural denunciation, the loss of the child metaphorically stands for cultural loss. As Pifer says “the figure of the missing child represents a sense of cultural loss followed by stagnation, even as the child emerges as a key to renewed cultural prosperity” (Pifer, 2000: 192). Adults are directed to the other experiences instead of trying to regain the loss, or to solve the problems they face. Julie and Stephen, for instance, instead of continuing to looking for Kate, at the end, seem satisfied when they have a new baby. This new baby covers their inadequate sides that are looking after a child. They selfishly want to try again. It is refreshment for them. Kate is replaced with the new one. Since there is no reference to their capability of looking after a baby, this new baby can also be interpreted as a victimisation of a baby for the sake of adults’ satisfaction. They may easily exploit the new one as well since there is no reference to their recovering and awareness of their mistakes.

The Government pretends to be interested in childcare but they use the educational system for their ideological benefits. Charles Darke, (his name’s associations will be discussed referring to Charles Dickens below) the real writer of the childcare manual, does not reveal the fact that he has written the book. Instead, he isolates himself and commits suicide.

Truly, on the level of plot, the children are abducted, die or are figuratively imprisoned in schools. The plot, in that sense, serves as the adult’s voice which is

everywhere and suppresses the children's voices. By taking out the children, McEwan, according to Dodou, "stresses that adult interpretations of children's needs and abilities hold precedence over children's voices" (Dodou, 2012: 244). By silencing children, contemporary fiction highlights the victimisation of children in adult fiction.

McEwan scrutinises "institutional representation of children: both political definitions of the child and the adult spokespersonship of children's need" (Dodou, 2012: 244). In that sense, **The Child in Time** focuses on the welfare of children in 1980s England considering the government's influence on the childcare manual that the Thatcher government instigated in 1984. In this way, the novel emphasises the authority of adults on children as a burden; the children are the victims of this power. The novel reveals how Thatcherism constructed the idea of childhood.

2.2 The absurdity in the adults' jobs

The adults, in the novel, are portrayed as characters who dwell on the care of children but their jobs about the children are mainly for the purpose of their benefits either in political or social dynamics. As the adults think that they, being adults, have rights on and ideas about rearing children, they have also attained various jobs which are about the developments of children, childcare, fiction for children and so on. But job-choosing can be arbitrary or by chance as in the case of Stephen. Stephen is a writer of children's books but his being a writer of children's books deserves to be analysed to point out how the authority of a publishing house can rule this crucial employment.

The novel includes characters and institutions who and which cannot do their duties as they have to. The Police cannot find Kate; the government does not or cannot solve accommodation and hunger problems of the beggars but instead, identifies them by giving them beggar licences. The government in this sense normalises the

problematic issue: Giving the licences to the beggars means that they are under the control of the government.

Similarly, Stephen's being a writer is also not in due form. His becoming "famous among school children" hinges upon an inadvertent error. It is because of "a clerical error, a moment's inattention in the operation of the internal post at Gott's which had brought a parcel of typescript on to the wrong desk. That Stephen no longer mentioned this error-it was many years old now-was partly due to the royalty cheques and advances which had flowed from Gott's and his many foreign publishers ever since, and partly to the acceptance of fate..." (McEwan, 1997: 24). The novel, in this sense, reflects the deficiency of adults in business. Stephen goes beyond his limits and he does not tell the truth about the mistake. Like Darke's silence, he too selfishly looks after his own interest. Therefore, he is a part of problem rather than a solution in adult societal order. Instead, he "no longer mentioned this error..." (24). His intention has been first to be a teacher. When he "had kept alive a vague ambition to be a teacher in a State school, he saw himself, tall and craggy by the blackboard, before him a silent, respectful class intimidated by his tendency to sudden sarcasm, leaning forwards to catch his every word" (25). He is disinclined by his own imagery. He expects an obedient group of children in his selfish and arrogant dream. But what disturbs him seems not to be the sheepish circumstance of the children but his subconscious self-centeredness and his own ugly image. He has known that he is not the man of face to face relationship with the children which forshadow the following miscommunication with his daughter in the market and with the beggar girl in the street. He tends to despise the youth and exert hegemony over them. In any way, he still dominates the children via his participation in the committee where he does not need directly contact with children but can oppress and rule them through the books. Hence, he has found a job "as a filing clerk in a news-cutting agency and set about writing a novel" named **Hashish** (26). Yet his writing efforts turn out to be a fallacy after realizing that "the opening chapter stubbornly refused to end" (26). Like his first unfinished novel, he also cannot accomplish to bring his daughter back and he loses her. He has problems not only

with humans but also with objects. As he replaces **Hashish** with **Lemonade**, the couple replaces Kate with the new born baby. They give up the struggle. Transition from **unruly hashish** to **mild** domestic **lemonade** might be an analogy for the possibility that Kate has been a naughty, active, and clever child requiring much concern and that Stephen needs a well-behaved, milder kid to lead easily.

The name of the unwritten novel has various implications: **Hashish**; a seed which has a connection with mystery. It is a drug which takes the person far away from the reality and strains of responsibility. It distracts the mind, creates inattentiveness and causes loss of consciousness. In this sense, the uncompleted novel is in harmony with the spirit of McEwan's novel concerning adult malfunction and Stephen's incompetence at caring for his daughter. Kate disappears like a drug dream and like his unfinished novel **Hashish**. Later, he changes his subject and his writing turns out to have "a life of its own [...], a novel based on a summer holiday he had spent in his eleventh year with two girl cousins" (26). He gives the title **Lemonade** to his novel which he finishes in three months. Besides, the former radical and darer title against societal order does not correspond with Stephen's official personality which is more obedient to hierarchial order. More than this, this radical change also indicates his capricious potential: he cannot not cope with unruly and marjinal aspects of art and himself. Instead he chooces an ordinary and regular way. This sordid change underlines his dilemma and problematic personality. His fragmented and chaotic personality also signals the impossiblity of his growing a child in a healthy way. He neither creates a crisis in the market when the officers and the market's manager could not do anything to find Kate nor challenges the government about the committee. His writing **Lemonade** rather than **Hashish** also shows his childish aspect since the name Lemonade can be associated with innocence as it is regarded a juice proper especially for children. It is also a title which can be interpreted as an indication of a strifless life. He does not have the "power" of an adult who can cope with looking after a child. Stephen is the child in time who cannot carry the responsibility of his daughter. Besides, this change from **Hashish** to **Lemonade** demonstrates political inclination as his novel which is for children is accepted by a

publishing house owned by Charles Darke, later a politician, who will be Stephen's friend. The interest is not in difficulties, loss, pain, struggle of the world that can be included in **Hashish** but in a soft drink which avoids meddling and remains a harmless subject in **Lemonade**. Claire Colebrook comments on this event:

Stephen's debut novel, initially intended as a novel of coming-to-adulthood and transgression entitled *Hashish*, stalls in its first part and remains a children's book, called *Lemonade*. [...] The success of Stephen's book demonstrates a mode of political infantilism, a refusal to face a world of contingency, loss, otherness and destruction. Second, set in conservative Britain *The Child in Time* presents the politician's concern with childhood-demonstrated in the government report on child development-as ultimately libidinal and infantilizing (Colebrook, 2009: 54-55).

Once Stephen has started his arbitrary writing career, he is bound to the market economy of the Thatcher government. His book **Lemonade** is sold "a quarter of a million copies in hardback, and eventually several million around the world" (McEwan, 1997: 32). After his economic recovery, he "gave up his job, bought a fast car and a cavernous, high-ceilinged flat in South London" (32). Nevertheless his second book is not a voluntarily written book for children but an obligatory one because "a tax bill that two years later made it a virtual necessity to publish his second novel as a children's book too" (32). As a result **publish or perish** system of economy causes a strained and less qualified books for the children. This event is also significant because it shows how a financial system is superior to the qualified education system. Stephen does not write for the children's education but to protect himself from capitalist financial system.

2.3 Childcare Committee

The novel reflects how politics, press and money relations go hand in hand. The implicit Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher does not focus on social welfare of the

state but of the individual. Although there is not a direct reference to Thatcher, as the period is mentioned we understand that the childcare manual is written in the Thatcher period. The novel, in this sense, also reveals the trilogy of secret interaction between press, politicians and writers. Stephen's publisher Charles Darke is also a politician and he works for the government. He writes Childcare Manual for the government's sake.

The authoritarian power of adults (Mendel's categorization: god, government, parents, teachers, even a passerby) prevents children to defend themselves against the authority of adults (Mendel, 1992: 24). In spite of the fact that even the loss of a child does harm adults' lives, destroys their (Julie and Stephen) way of living, the child can be seen as an unproblematic medium of adult power that sneakingly waits for the opportunity to create unassailable dominance over the child. The opportunities may vary depending on the socio-political and cultural variances. Although the existence of orphans in the streets may seem a problem to be solved, the government tries to manage and solve this problem by giving them licences. It is also expected that the government should deal with the lost child. All these issues are nuisance for the adults. But in the novel it is definitely the **official policy** that may regulate people's lives including the children. This indicates the hypocrisy of politics; while the government is against the concept of a **society** boosting individualism, it now tries to dominate social pattern of the people. In other words, although the children may seem heavy burden for the government and the family, they are responsible to manage all these problems. Stephen, in that sense, involved in the authoritarian right-wing government's subcommittee to prepare part of a report on childcare becomes a medium of this wheel. The purpose of the government is to propagate its conservativeness on the children, but through the novel, we understand that the committee's meetings are pointless because the Government's Report has already been written by Stephen's friend Darke who is an aspiring Conservative politician. The Government's hypocrisy and how the imposition of the authority implicitly come is also unfolded by announcing that the childcare manual has been written by the committee. The aim of the government is to present the manual as if it

has been prepared by experts and scholars in child development and education. Malcolm defines this imposition as a “severe authoritarianism” (Malcolm, 2002: 105). Dodou also suggests that the novel “holds up for view the adult claim to the definition and representation of the child” (Dodou, 2012: 244). Furthermore, not only are the **Dionysian** children represented by the adults, particularly with the childcare manual since the manual imposes a harsh education system on the children who are supposedly creatures to be under control and to be **tamed**; but also **authority** of adults predominates children’s existence. In other words, although one of the subjects of the novel is a **child**, McEwan ironically gives less place to the children or removes children from view in the novel.

In that sense, as representing one of the best examples of the contemporary literature’s perspective on children and childhood, **The Child in Time**, as Dodou asserts, “describes children in the late twentieth century as being relentlessly debated, interpreted, and instrumentalized. It depicts a society that overlooks children at the very moment when it purports to speak to their welfare and interests” (244). In addition to Dodou’s last idea the novel also indicates that the adult power and government’s authority predominate the children’s education due to an immoral and illegal approach and as a result of that victimise the children by imposing a childcare manual which is functional for the period’s political benefits.

While indicating the severe authoritarian policy of the government, McEwan also satirises the committee members’ insufficiency of proposing valuable ideas for child rearing. At the meetings, Stephen, for instance, thinks mostly about his wife and daughter, and what he is going to do with himself. Or he is puzzled over Darke’s sudden departure from political life. And the other members of the committee “divided between the theorists, who had done all their thinking long ago, or had had it done for them, and the pragmatists, who hoped to discover what it was they thought in the process of saying it” (McEwan, 1997: 5). McEwan, besides his satire, also makes a reference to the committee’s intrigue by giving a detail about the gloomy meeting room where “[Stephen] was told, night bombing raids on Germany

had been planned in 1944” (4). This implicit allusion to sharing the same room of a bombing plan designates how diabolical violence can go hand in hand with an intalented committee’s supposedly childcare manual. As Mendel reminds “authority is nothing but a deception that hides violence” (25). But, in addition, England was planning to bomb Germany as a defence since Germany was bombing England at nights as well. At this point we can also interpret the meeting room as a place where the nation is considering to protect their own public. In any way, the room in both cases has a function at making a decision against someone. In the war case, it is hostile and in the second the target is children who are symbolically considered as **hostiles** for adults.

Nevertheless, since the committee members do not know the fact that the committee is only a showpiece, the novel also depicts how the political authority can act on the sly even in the case of children. In addition, Dodou by saying that “the novel satirizes radical ideological positions, from anarchist-libertarian to reactionary, that sought to rethink the nature of childhood” (Dodou, 2012: 244), highlights the victimisation of children that appears “as a means to implement political agendas, in particular the practice of using the child as site of national transformation” (245).

2.4 The Authorized Childcare Handbook

The Childcare Handbook is one of the most important indications of the book that shows how political ideologies ruled over children to set their political order in the society. This “using the child as site of national transformation” can be seen in the passages from the childcare manual which were given at the beginning of each chapter. McEwan states that he benefitted from the book **Dream Babies: Childcare from Locke to Spock** written by Christina Hardyment while referencing the advice on the childcare manual. This fictitious manual is a parody of Children Act prepared in 1989 under the guide of Thatcher. The advice is direct, strict, and even didactic: it has the essence of a political imposition. The first piece of advice starts with a

criticism of the previous doctrine: "... and for those parents, for too many years misguided by the pallid relativism of self-appointed childcare experts ... The Authorized Childcare Handbook, HMSO" (McEwan, 1997: 1). The government does not hesitate to remind both children and parents of their daily duties. In fact, the second piece of advice is not for the children but for the parents: "Make it clear to him that the clock cannot be argued with and that when it is time to leave for school, for Daddy to go to work, for Mummy to attend to her duties, then these changes are as incontestable as the tides. The Authorized Childcare Handbook, HMSO" (24). This relentless message of the manual is to order the daily working hours of the mothers and fathers rather than educating and rearing the children. Hardyment in her book states that in childcare manuals "[...] advice on the former to the latter veers with the winds of social, philosophical and psychological change, then we can see the books we use today as temporary crutches, not eternal verities" (Hardyment, 2007: ix). In the novel, in this sense, the government is trying to organise the societal order of the families with an eye to the benefits of the nation. Contemporary fiction, as Dodou claims, assumes the child as "a threat to the societal order" (Dodou, 2012: 240). This threat, as the adults think, has been a debatable subject in history. The Thatcher government in the novel uses childcare manuals to create adolescents consistent with its own ideology. In history there is evidence which shows political movements that victimised children in their own way. Sir Francis Galton's **Inquiries into the Human Faculty** (1883), for instance, suggests that "the great hope for the improvement of the human race was 'eugenic' selection. [Galton] suggested forbidding 'inferior specimens of humanity from transmitting vices or diseases, their intellectual or physical weakness', a recommendation Hitler would adopt to terrible effect fifty years later" (Hardyment, 2007: 107). This racial and radical eugenic movement claimed that "much could be done to improve the race was a marked increase in the state interference in child-rearing" (107). Similarly, Darke, being a member of the government, prepares the childcare manuals "not according to the whim of the individual parent" but according to the doctrine of the government which believes that "the children are the property of the nation, to be brought up for the nation as is best for the nation" (108). Hardyment's suggestion corresponds with

the manual in the novel. According to the manual approved by the government, childhood is a “social construction”. But besides, the manual reveals that children should be grateful to their parents since all their privilege has been granted by them:

It was not always the case that a large minority comprising the weakest members of society wore special clothes, were freed from the routines of work and of many constraints on their behaviour and were able to devote much of their time to play. It should be remembered that childhood is not a natural occurrence. There was a time when children were treated like small adults. Childhood is an invention, a social construct, made possible by society as it increased in sophistication and resource. Above all, childhood is a privilege. No child as it grows older should be allowed to forget that its parents, as embodiments of society, are the ones who grant this privilege, and do so at their own expense. The Authorized Childcare Handbook, HMSO (McEwan, 1997: 99).

According to the manual, since childhood is a given promise to the children by the adults, in return, the government wants children to respect their parents as a consequence of this compromise. Moreover, the manual recklessly uses the term **authority** and talks about the function of children in economic system, and suggests that parents behave accordingly:

Those who find it naturally hard to wield **authority** over their children should seriously consider the systematic use of treats and rewards. The promise of chocolate in return for, say, good bedtime behaviour is, on balance, worth the minor damage to teeth which will in any case soon replace themselves. In the past, too much has been demanded of parents who have been exhorted to inculcate altruism in their children at all costs. Incentives, after all, form the basis of **our economic structure** and necessarily shape our morality; there is no reason on earth why a well-behaved child should not have an ulterior motive. The Authorized Childcare Handbook, HMSO (133) (emphasis mine)

The government, as being one of the most important and powerful authority in colonizing the children as Mendel states, considers children as potential customers to be manipulated according to the economic benefits of the nation. Through passages

that McEwan quotes from the manual, we see that the government decidedly exploits “children [who] are at heart selfish” (170). So the government’s insistent and selfish policy expands through the applications which are also against Christian doctrines that are based on sharing.

Nevertheless, ironically enough, in the novel we do not see lots of children; they do not exist except for Kate and the beggar girl. Ironically again, Kate gets lost, and the beggar girl dies in the street. Consequently, thinking about Kate’s fate which would be like the beggar girls is not a far-fetched prediction which is worse than death. By not allowing the existence of children in the novel, McEwan also invalidates the government’s imposition at a certain level. Not only do we not see the application of the didactic messages of the manual on a child, but we also witness the government’s reluctance to find Kate and to prevent the beggar girl’s death.

When news of the government’s endeavour to prepare a childcare manual spread, public opinion is divided into two: a group supports the government and another for example the Opposition is against it. McEwan states: “news of a childcare handbook secretly commissioned by the Prime Minister’s office broke in a single column on the second page of the only newspaper which did not actively support the Government” (197). At first people read the Opposition’s criticisms of the childcare manual:

‘gross and indecent cynicism’ and ‘a disgusting charade’ and ‘this vile betrayal of parents, Parliament and principles’” (197). But “mid-week other papers were running the story ... the reviews the following morning were at least favourable, and otherwise exstatic: ... ‘Sit down, shut up and listen!’ Another said: ‘Kids, get in line! In the quality press it was masterful and authoritative’. It marked ‘the demise of confusion and moral turpitude in childcare writing’, and, in the paper which had first carried the story, ‘with its honest quest for certainties it encapsulates the spirit of the age’. However it had come about, ‘The Book’ was exemplary and should be made widely available (198).

The news in the press shows that the only newspaper which is against the government has been smothered by the press which supports the government or if possible by the government. The lack of balance of power also indicates totalitarianism of the government. The societal order which is under the control of the government can be shaped and manipulated even if the case is children. As Pifer says “a society in which the child becomes a primary object of study is keenly interested in controlling, repressing, and even eradicating children” (195).

Nevertheless, when Stephen gets the opportunity to read the first copy of the childcare manual written by Darke before it was published, we witness its full violent and oppressive preaching. “The spirit of the age” in fact is not in newspapers’ headlines but in the book itself. The messages even include beating the children:

'Childcare writers of the post-war era sentimentally ignored the fact that children are at heart selfish, and reasonably so, for they are programmed for survival.' He flipped through the book backwards and read a few chapter headings - 'The Disciplined Mind', 'Adolescence Overcome', 'Security in Obedience', 'Boys and Girls - vive la difference', 'A Sound Smack Saves Nine'. In this last chapter he read, 'Those who argue dogmatically against all forms of corporal punishment find themselves urging a variety of psychological reprisals against the child - withdrawal of approval or privileges, the humiliation of an early bedtime and so on. There is no evidence to suggest that these more protracted forms of punishment, which can waste a good deal of a busy parent's time, cause less long term damage than a swift clip across the ear or a few smart slaps to the backside. Common sense suggests the contrary. Raise your hand once and show you mean business! It is likely you will never have to raise it again' (177).

The childcare manual written by Darke for the government indicates that the manuals are written for socio-political benefits. His name’s similarity to Charles Dickens is also a remarkable irony in the novel. McEwan replaces Dickens, -a writer of various novels about children, who focuses on the terrible, difficult circumstances of children and who pioneers the discussions of children in Victorian literature- with Charles

Darke who abuses his power in press, and politics against children by writing a childcare manual not for the benefits of children but for the government. Charles Dickens being one of the prominent writers of the Victorian period often exposed social ills, especially the crimes committed against children which recurred in several of his novels. Perhaps it is because of his difficult childhood, Dickens wrote of the importance of the preservation of goodness and innocence in children. Yet what Darke wrote is about patronizing caring methods which are detailed in chapter The Authorized Childcare Handbook, (HMSO). Dickens condemns the corruption of children. But Charles Darke portrays an opposite particular situation in that he writes not for the benefits of children or not to indicate the difficulties that the children are in but for political benefits of adults. That's why ironically enough, as if he is regretful of what he has done, he returns to his childhood; he behaves like a child and commits suicide in the end. McEwan creates the Dickensian child but in his novel the children are abandoned by the adults. Although the adults deal with them, this interest is not for the children's advantage but for the adults benefit.

McEwan not only implies a reference to Dickens but also to Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963), one of intellectual writers of the 20th century. His major contributions are in literary criticism and children's literature. His most important books are **The Chronicles of Narnia, Out of the Silent Planet, The Four Loves, The Screwtape Letters, and Mere Christianity**. McEwan twists the success of Staples Lewis in his character Stephen Lewis's career. Stephen Lewis is a lost character in the press world. Throughout the novel he is the only character who always fails: he changes his book from **Hashish** to **Lemonade**, he causes lost of his daughter, he is functionless in the committee. The title of the novel, in this sense, also refers to Stephen Lewis as the child in time who is lost and an uncanny personality.

2.5 The Beggar Girl's Death: Romantic and Dickensian Childhood

The Child in Time also illustrates the victimisation of children by portraying the child beggars. Through the “licensed beggars” (McEwan, 1997: 2) in the streets, the novel presents a Victorian atmosphere in which the children are figured as outsiders. In fact, there is not clear or single definition about the nature of children in the Victorian period. Some critics thought children had better qualities than adults. Some critics, for instance, claim that the children of Victorian fiction are portrayed “idealistically as superior to adults, as angels on earth sent by heaven to be models of innocence and purity, untouched by the fall into adulthood” (Gavin, 2012: 116). Other critics figured children “as primitive pre-humans who needed to be moulded through education and experience into beings acceptable to, and accepting of, society’s norms of gender and class expectations” (116). The constructions of the child in such opposite tensions between **superior to adults** and **primitive pre-humans** helped to create “richly imagined fantastic texts, on the one hand, and starkly observed realistic texts, on the other.” (116) According to Naomi Wood who wrote the article “Angelic, Atavistic, Human: The Child of the Victorian Period” in Gavin’s book, for instance, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), is a good “synthesis of these idealizing and realistic constructions” since probably she is “imaginative yet mundane, attuned to the world of wonder yet convincingly real. (116) This synthesis of idealizing and realistic constructions can be seen in **The Child in Time** as well yet in a more complex way since McEwan juxtaposed this innocent aspect and primitive condition of a child in one character. We can see these oppositional elements in the beggar girl.

McEwan, by intermingling these two different figures of Victorian fiction in one individual, establishes one of contemporary fiction’s elements that is indeterminacy of the child’s innocence or primitiveness. The beggar girl “[n]ot a five-year-old but a skinny prepubescent walks slowly and somnambulantly” (McEwan, 1997: 3) to Stephen. After looking at the money Stephen gave, she says “fuck you, mister” (3). Her miserable innocence loses meaning with her swearing and she becomes almost

like an assailer. Stephen becomes aggressive to this beggar girl after hearing the swearing and he “put his hand on the hard, narrow shoulder and gripped. ‘What was that you said?’”(3) This is the only scene where we see a child’s swearing. The beggar girl loses her innocence and treats as if she is pretending an adult. When she shows Stephen the regulation black bowl given by the government to the beggars he hesitates: “He felt the usual ambivalence. To give money ensured the success of the Government programme. Not to give involved some determined facing away from private distress” (3). His hesitation is not about helping the girl. His anxiety comes from the fact that he is not sure whether his action is supporting the government or that he will feel **guilty** if he does not give money. His selfishness is a symbol of common connivance in the novel since almost everybody and all institutions think of him/herself or itself. Moreover, Mendel’s idea that even the **passerby** finds the right to abuse children becomes accurate with Stephen’s physical violence to the girl. Besides, in McEwan’s novel the beggar girl is not so powerful when compared to the young thieves in **Oliver Twist**. In Dickens’s novel, the children are educated to thief by Fagin. At a certain point they can manage to cope with life like Oliver Twist when caught by the adults and accused of stealing a man’s handkerchief. Because in Dickens’s novel as there are adults who violently attack and chase after the children, there are also others who are generous and helpful to the orphans. In other words, children are not doomed in Dickens’s novel but in McEwan’s novel they are ignored as “the office workers parted and converged about [the girl]” (3) while they are going to their working place.

Even the death scene of the beggar girl shows how the adults are impotent in face of her death. When Stephen sees her: her “face, though unmistakeable, was transformed. The mocking liveliness was gone. The skin was pock-marked and coarsened, pudgily slack around features which had edged closer together for safety. Her arms were crossed over her chest.” Stephen “touched her hand. It was as cold as surrounding air. He touched her face and the eyes continued to stare, their indifference confirmed in absolute terms” (213). When he realises she is dead he just goes on with his life because he “knew that if he reported the matter he would not be

leaving London that night” (213). The novel, as one of the representations of contemporary fiction, exposes that in late 20th century fiction, adults can even disregard a child who is to die as they can be incapable of finding a lost child. They think that founding a childcare committee, giving licence to child beggars are part of a solution, yet, indeed, as they can be insufficient, they can also be inhuman towards them. Moreover, the old beggar’s pornographic joke reveals how the adult world can easily exploit a young girl’s body as a medium for their sense of humour: when Stephen approaches the beggar girl (perhaps dead or almost dying) the old beggar near her says “oi, oi. Fancy that, do ya? She is not interested” (213).

Disappearing and passing away of the children, shortly their non-existence in the novel can be read as a corruption of the world of the adult and that of the child. Besides, Kate’s disappearance and the death of the beggar girl can also represent preserving the children’s innocence from the corrupted adult world. Some of the Victorian writers thought that “since childhood is a transitory state to adulthood, the pure child’s death was often celebrated as it preserved the child’s innocence and inspired adults with thoughts of heaven and an afterlife where that innocence could be preserved” (Gavin 116). In that sense, the death of the beggar girl can be read as keeping the innocence of the child from the society which has an authority. Community without children has lost their innocence and becomes tools under the socio-political order. The adults who passed “the transitory state to adulthood” as McEwan states in fact, “were only ex-children shuffling to work” (2).

In fact, the innocence of a child is a term borrowed from Romantic writers. At the beginning of the 19th century Romantic writers used the idea of innocence which, according to Rousseau, was the child’s essential quality. This natural innocence is destroyed by social institutions such as (in Mendel’s hierarchy) god, government, parents, teachers, even a passerby. William Blake in his **Songs of Innocence** (1789) and **Songs of Experience** (1794) combined the idea of childhood as absolute innocence with the innate evil in mankind. These are the states of the human soul that should complement each other in order to attain intellectual maturity

(Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2008: 183). Moreover, the poem “The Chimney Sweeper”, for instance, which criticises the dark background of child labour (four or five-year-old boys were sold to clean chimneys due to their small size) which was popular in the late 18th and 19th century, at first reflects the innocence of the child in **Innocence** and the adults’ inattentiveness in **Experience**. The poem in the first part is opened with the child speaker’s mother’s death and his being sold by his father to clean chimneys. The poem is told by a child persona and it has a happy ending where an angel comes and rescues the children. The angel takes them to Paradise. Even if we criticise the poem in an objective way that is to say the children die, this death is a rescue from the parents who make them work in chimneys and exploit them:

And by came an angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun. (Blake, 1991: 19)

But in the **Experience** poem, told by an adult speaker, there is no hope. The child is ignored by his parents. They abandon him in the snow while they are going to church:

And because I am happy and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and his priest and king,
Who make up a heaven of our misery. (40)

The adults’ interaction with the children is associated with the institutional authority of the period. That is to say, “God, his priest and king” and consequently the parents represent the exploitative powers on -in Jenks’s term- Dionysian children. Nevertheless, while in Blake’s poem the children are the instruments of the authorities and considered essential to make the labour system work, McEwan’s novel shows us that the children are impediments to the societal order. This is the reason why there is not any effort to protect the beggar girl before she dies. Moreover, searching for Kate is no solution either. While the institutions made by adults fail to recover the children’s terrible death and loss, the childcare manual which has been prepared not pedagogically but pragmatically and ideologically,

reveals how these domineering authorities have great power over the children in contemporary fiction. Uncertainty over whether Kate dies or not surrounds the novel and creates a dark atmosphere and becomes a burden and disgrace on the adults. Thus, the clumsiness of Stephen at finding his daughter also highlights one of the problems of the century. Stephen cannot be active as much as American writer Tony Morrison's Sethe. As Pifer says "In *Beloved*, the children of slaves are born in inhuman conditions. Sethe, a slave mother, believes that she can protect her offspring only by killing them. Stephen's inability to protect his daughter from an anonymous kidnapper also exposes, albeit in a very different key, problematic elements in British social order, at century's end" (Pifer, 2000: 189). The adults' confidence, as in Mr. Brownlow who is the first benefactor of Oliver and who later adopts him in **Oliver Twist** or Sethe's very direful but courageous decision to kill her offspring in **Beloved**, protects the children from the oppressive authority in a way. But in **The Child in Time** the adults are not involved in children's lives in an active way: the children either silently die or are kidnapped. Yet this does not mean that the adults' intercourse with the children is less, in contrast it constructs an implicit oppression and manipulation on the children due to institutional hierarchy through political methods that are included in the childcare manual.

2.6 Private School and representation of students

The government's policy which seems to care about the children, in fact, does not show its own colonizing attitudes at a school where Stephen thinks that he sees Kate. Although there are few references to a school which is sold off to private bidders, it is a good opportunity to witness the situation of the students in a private school. Towards the end of the novel, Stephen thinks that he has seen Kate in a school garden. Unlike an Edwardian garden in which the children would joyfully play, the students in the school garden are playing with the rope that "snagged and there was a moan of good-natured disappointment" (McEwan, 1997: 154). Then, "an argument had broken among the children" (154). When Stephen gets out of the car and

immediately runs into the garden “the playground [where he thinks that he saw Kate] was deserted” (156). The children in an adult’s world, in a sense, appear and disappear at the blink of an eye. The students in the school garden, as Kate and the beggar girl disappear and die respectively, vanish from sight. Moreover, the children in the novel are portrayed as little humans who try to survive in an adult’s world. **The school buildings** are also indicative of this minimization with its “Victorian type high windows and steeply pitched roofs at many angles” (156). 5 or 6-year-old students in that building with **high window** draws the images of minority. They are the people who can be “confined in classrooms” and from these buildings come not so much a sound as “an emanation of children” (156). Their transience in the novel also reveals that under the adult’s authority children cannot exist permanently. Besides, the students have to struggle with the oppression of teachers. To be able to maintain order, a teacher can easily be repressive as she “called threateningly without looking up from her book, ‘Someone has the fidgets.’” (159) We only understand that the school is a private school by a note near one of the doors of the school that is “‘School Fees and Enquiries’” (157). The information about the “fee” is in the same place with the department of enquiries which shows that the priority of the education system is firstly to take the fees from the students. To keep the students in order while they are going somewhere as a group we hear “from out of sight a man called furiously, ‘Walk, I said walk!’” (160) As Stephen cannot convince the school management that the girl he has seen is his daughter, he leaves the school. However, through this school scene we see a disciplined educational system. The harsh and strict treatment to the students in the school is in parallel with the childcare manual’s oppressive and domineering manner.

2.7 Child in Adult, a romantic perspective

The novel reveals the agony of adults when they lose their children and also their attitudes in order to overcome the loss. They are in a way the victims of their own childhood. Just as the social institutions are incapable of finding the lost girl, the

family is incapable of finding her. Yet what only remains is the pain of Stephen and Julie. While Stephen is in a mood of melancholy, his wife retreats. Nevertheless, this self-interest of the adults finds an opportunity of replacing a new born baby with the lost one. Their melancholic mood turns into a happy new life. In that sense, the novel is a complex text. “A particular child is lost; children in general grow up and represent the transience and loss that bedevil our lives in time” says Malcolm and goes on implying the loss, “but the figure of the child also suggests that unhappy circumstances can be altered, that the world (or at any rate British society) can be redeemed, that loss is real but not necessarily permanent” (Malcolm, 2002: 108). It is true that **birth** can be the symbol of hopes, not giving up, new life, beginning, overcoming. But, if this new life and hope are replacing the loss of a baby, this hope and new life is also the indication of how adults can draw a blank on the lost one. Since there is no reference to evaluation of Julie’s and Stephen’s mistakes, an implication of a change, of precaution or a lesson, we see their inability to rear, take care of the child. The new baby does not solve the problem or alleviate loss. Malcolm states that “Julie and Stephen have another child who provides a moment of hope at the novel’s end. All the novel’s relativistic motifs suggest a salutary caution, a corrective to any easy sentimentality (the birth of a child equals new hope). Charles Darke has tried to reverse time and has lived an absurd fiction. Stephen and Julie, however, have not reversed time, but challenged it by creating a new life to replace the lost one” (108-109).

McEwan structurally divides the novel into 9 chapters. That is why Reynolds interprets these nine chapters as time for pregnancy and says that: “the novel more or less unfolds within the gestation period of a pregnancy: The child is conceived in Chapter Three and the novel then is framed by that sense of impending arrival” (Reynolds, 2002: 13). Ironically enough, in the novel, we see adults who are, at least, capable of producing a childcare manual for children. But for which children? All the social institutions (government, private school, childcare committee) obsessively focus on child rearing for the children who do not exist. One is lost, the other dies, the manual as a text is for abstract children. Adults are all around to rule the non-

existent children. In this sense, since the ignorance and incapability of adults in looking after children predominates the novel, the new born (there is no gender explanation) can unfold a Swiftian satire: adults **can** consume children.

After Charles Darke, the real writer of the childcare manual for adults has written the manual, he and his wife go far away from the city and live in a village. Here Darke literally experiences his childishness. He is imprisoned in his childhood. He behaves childishly and climbs his tree every day. At the end we learn that he commits suicide. In McEwan's words the "ex-children" (Stephen and Darke) return to or re-experience their childhood. Charles Darke, after producing a guide for childcare which is "oppressively authoritarian" (Childs, 2006: 63) experiences a childish retreatment, "an infantile irresponsibility" (63). Stephen, on the other hand, sees his mother's and father's youths before their marriage. The novel, in this sense, not only reveals the arbitrary inducement to children but also includes the child or the lost child in adults. Therefore, the novel is also concerned with the child within the adult as a burden. Even more, the novel refers to the idea of "true maturity" of Nietzsche when Stephen "recalls Kate he fondly remembers 'her lessons in celebrating the specific', and asks himself: 'Wasn't that Nietzsche's idea of true maturity, to attain the seriousness of a child at play?'" (65). Dickens's *David Copperfield* is a good example of a man who never loses the child in himself. But in **Great Expectations**, we see that Pip gradually jumps into adults' way of life. **Great Expectations** "is a book about growing up" but as Pattison states **David Copperfield** "is a story about never growing up" (Pattison, 2008: 122). David's first person narration goes on even though he grows up. He keeps the perspective of childhood through the story. Nevertheless, Stephen, an ex-child, has lost the child within himself. But Darke fully tries to experience his own childhood by climbing a tree and behaving like a boy so that he renounces his adulthood. Stephen is stuck in adulthood but he can also see himself as an unborn in his mother's womb. The scene is a good example of magic realism. Or he can find himself in a "railway engine" while he is going to his wife. "It is" says Julie "your boyhood dream" (McEwan, 1997: 236). He jumps into the past and meets his parents in the countryside, a place where he has never been, he

experiences here an eerie sense of *deja vu*. He comes across an old tavern and he feels “the day he now inhabited was not the day he had woken into [...] he was in another time” (57). Here, he sees a young couple through the tavern window. When the young woman looks outside and directly into his eyes, he realises that she is his mother. He is shocked after this incident and uncertain how he has seen his parents in a time before he exists. What he experiences is as his mother says “timelessness of memory” (166). His mother explains the courtship between her and his father and the discussion when she has learnt that she is pregnant. In the tavern his father wants an abortion but his mother refuses it while she looks at Stephen’s eyes. The mother explains the scene:

‘I can see it now as clearly as I can see you. There was a face at the window, the face of a child, sort of floating there. It was staring into the pub. It had a kind of pleading look, and it was so white, white as an aspirin. It was staring right at me. Thinking about it over the years, I realise it was probably the landlord's boy, or some kid off one of the local farms. But as far as I was concerned then, I was convinced, I just knew that I was looking at my own child. If you like, I was looking at you’ (175).

With this scene, actually, the child in time is Stephen himself. The child “was not an abstraction [...]. It was ... a complete self, begging for its existence, and it was inside her, unfolding intricately, living off the pulse of her own blood.” (175) The scene is a romantic view of innocence. Stephen’s childhood looking at his mother wants his family to spare his life: “It wasn’t a pregnancy they should be discussing; it was a person” (175). So Stephen himself takes the role of childhood and he does not beg for money like the beggar girl but begs for his life. The novel points to the fact that the child within the adult needs to live. In this sense, the novel can be read as a criticism of adulthood which destroys the child within and worse the ex-children or in other words the adult people who killed their childishness not only wish for their childhood values but also violently become an instrument to exploit the children in the society. Darke’s return to his childhood, in this sense, can be read as an apology of what he has caused when he writes the political and authoritarian childcare

manual. Stephen, on the other hand, returns to his childhood where he waits his life to be forgiven due to his guiltiness of Kate's loss.

2.8 Turkey's situation in the novel

The novel not only shows how the children are manipulated in England but also in Turkey, Afghanistan and the North-West. But the emphasis of an orientalist aspect is only referring to Turkey. It is said that "Stephen had returned to London with amoebic dysentery after hashish befuddled tour of Turkey, Afghanistan and the North-West" (26). Besides its heady and mystic atmosphere, Turkey is also represented as a country of disregarding children. While Stephen's intention to write his novel is being narrated, it is told that "a nicely brought-up girl sentenced to a lifetime in a Turkish jail, mystic pretentiousness, drug-enhanced sex, amoebic dysentery." (26) Yet it is strange that while there is not a single positive adjective for children in London, even for the dying beggar girl; McEwan is subjectively using "a nicely brought up girl" to highlight how Turkey is unjust at treating children. With this additional reference, the novel portrays a universal authority of adults on children. In other words, the children of the world are the victims of unfair behaviour and force of adults.

2.9. Conclusion

The Child in Time, represents contemporary fiction and portrays child characters as lost, dead and or if they survive they should be obedient to authority (through childcare manual). Although children, too, have the potential to be harmful, dangerous or villain, this novel implies that the children can be a threat to the societal order but this threat is not because the children are rebellious, defiant and odd, it is because the ideology of adults want a superiority over them by neglecting their human needs and rights. The children are represented as mediums that are functional for the **order** of adult society. Unlike the romantic period, they can only exist as a

symbol if they are lost; neither do they have a garden to play as in the Edwardian period, nor do they in a realistic function appear as an individual who can fight against the imposed system as in the Victorian period. **The Child in Time**'s kids are a burden for adults who pitilessly victimise the children for their own benefits.

3. Chapter III

Atonement: The Force of Adults and the Children's Reactions

An immediate and unexpected event which changes life is a typical McEwanasque attitude in his fictions. Julie Ellam, in her remarkable book **Ian McEwan's Atonement** (2009), states this priority by saying "the exploration of the consequences that ensue after one life-changing event is a common feature in McEwan's work and this has been memorably evoked in **Enduring Love**, for example, when the freak accident involving the hot-air balloon leads to an entanglement between the survivors. In **Atonement**, Briony's accusation and decision to stay firm to it are at the centre as Part One leads the readers with deliberation to the time she commits her crime" (Ellam, 2009: 9-20). In **Black Dogs**, too, one of the main character's life changes when two black dogs, which have been educated to rape by Gestapo, attack the protagonist: her ideological world view turns out to a mystic and spiritual life from leftist ideology and she starts believing in God. The first serious discussions and analyses of **Atonement** emerged at the very beginning of the book's published year with an account of discussions on literary imagination and the narrative techniques. According to Ellam, "a closer examination of the book's reception demonstrates that it is the technical expertise that tends to beguile the critics the most" (62). Frank Kermode, for instance, asserts that **Atonement** "strikes me as easily his finest, has a frame that is properly hinged and jointed and apt for the conduct of the 'march of action'" (Kermode, 2001: 8). Peter Kemp too is one of the critics who has been influenced by McEwan's narrative techniques. In **The Sunday Times**, he defines the book as "subtle as well as powerful, adeptly encompassing comedy as well as atrocity, *Atonement* is a richly intricate book" (62). Although the majority of responses to the novel were overwhelmingly positive, there are, of course, the negative ones. Anita Brookner, for instance, finds the book unconvincing. She states that "McEwan's novels are normally thrilling examinations of carious nasty situations. Here his suave attempts to establish morbid feelings as inspiration for a life's work and for that work to be

crowned with success are unconvincing. Atonement is in itself a morbid procedure. If it were more palliative penance could be embraced with total confidence” (Brookner, 2001: 64). Apart from discussing whether penance is certain or not, McEwan’s novel is a good example which employs the wicked aspect of art and how art can be used in a bad way in contemporary English fiction. In addition, the critics focused on the narrative devices and techniques, and interpreted about the child character Briony who portrays villainous-like attitudes through the novel. Since she causes her sister’s friend (lover) to be sent to the jail when she peevishly accuses him of raping her cousin, she becomes one of the symbols among the child characters who can deconstruct the Rousseauian idea of the child’s innocence, and who causes harm through her intentions. In this sense, as Dodou points “the main plot examines moral innocence in terms of the child’s capacity for doing harm” (Dodou, 2012: 241). Moreover, Michiko Kakutani like many other critics uses the adjective **monstrous** to underline the calamitous consequence of Briony’s lie (Kakutani). His statement also alludes to the distance of child images from an innocent and **innately good** aspect. Similarly, Daniel Mendelsohn, too, in his review “Unforgiven” for New York Books, highlights the main plot of the novel which is about a crime of a child and its effects over six decades. He writes:

If you knew for a fact that you'd ruined someone's life -- two lives, really -- how would you make amends? That's the question the stark title of Ian McEwan's beautiful and wrenching new novel refers to. **Atonement** is about a crime and its consequences over the course of six decades: In the mid-thirties, a precocious young girl with an overactive imagination helps to wrongly accuse an innocent man, and it is not until 1999 that she finds a kind of absolution. But this book, McEwan's grandest and most ambitious yet, is much more than the story of a single act of atonement. (Mendelsohn, New York Books: 2014)

Phil Baker strongly highlights the harmfulness of Briony by saying in his review that “Briony could hardly do more harm if she were a calculating psychopath” (Baker,

2001: 5). Yet he also states the success of McEwan at making Briony as a likeable character. He says “The crux of McEwan's achievement is to make Briony essentially likeable, in spite of what she does” (Baker, 2001: 6). Kate Kellaway, on the other hand, sees Briony as “the agent of destruction” (Kellaway, 2001).

All the studies reviewed so far, however, suffer from the fact that they do not look at the circumstances of all the child characters in the novel but rather pick the **guilty** Briony and swoop down on her by revealing and analysing her mistake and villainous-like action, which through the novel leads her to atone. Yet the criticisms that find Briony guilty have various reasons. Alistair Cormack states: “It is true that Briony is guilty of imposing fiction on reality and that her confusion of literature and life causes her ‘crime’” (Cormack in Groes, 2009: 78). According to Reynolds the crime arises by “the danger of an imagination that can’t quite see the boundaries of what is real what is unreal” (Reynolds and Noakes, 2002: 19). The criticisms that find Briony guilty and a villainous character also suffer from the fact that they mostly indicate her imaginative desire as the reason of her crime. Although this criticism can be accepted correct, it is not sufficient to declare the villainous act of the children in the novel. To be able to talk about the child image in the novel, we should look at all the child characters and their interaction with the adults in the novel.

McEwan, for sure, as Dodou suggests, “examines moral innocence in terms of the child’s capacity for doing harm” (Dodou, 2012: 241). Nevertheless, I will read the child characters in a more general sense that light on the oppressed situations of the children in adult dominant domestic life. Since McEwan significantly gives the title of the novel **Atonement** which alludes to Briony’s fatal act and her endeavour to absolve herself, the novel definitely deserves to be approached in such a way which reveals a child’s treacherous declaration that causes a catastrophe. One needs to ask, however, regardless of Briony’s false decision, under what circumstances all the children in the novel survive. By asking this question, my aim is not to absolve Briony and indicate her as an innocent character but nevertheless, to suggest that she

and the other child characters (her cousins Lola and the twins) are under an oppressive situation by the adults and adults' social settlement. The adults give rise to more terrible and treacherous consequences than a child does since they hold the authority which is nothing but an illusion that hides the violence (Mendel, 1992: 25). And if what Briony does is a crime, the adults inevitably take part in this crime too. Although they seem to care about the children, they are not eligible for understanding the children: the adults can neither feel Briony's childish enthusiasm for her brother's coming back to the house, nor empathise with the twins and Lola who come to the house because of a marriage problem between their father and mother. Besides, when the McEwanasque twisting events occur, such as Briony's witnessing three sexual intercourses between the adults (first one is between her sister Cecilia and Robbie, second one is the library scene where she thinks that Robbie is raping her sister Cecilia and the last one is the rape scene where Paul Marshall rapes Lola), none of the adults thinks about how Briony possibly experiences a trauma. As the story starts in summer 1935, the adults in the novel are born in about 1900. Considering the cultural background of those years, psychological knowledge and awareness were not common in the society. They were not conscious to determine a psychological problem of a child easily since they were educated in the tradition and taboos of the Victorian period. Nevertheless, instinctive protection and insight should lead the parent to support and relieve the child's pain. If the adults do not have scientific knowledge, they should at least show humanity. Their taking Briony's statement seriously is just related with class discrimination. Robbie, in this sense, is victimised not only through Briony's declaration but also with the powerful prejudice of the adults on social values. More than this, since there are implications about Briony's platonic love to Robbie, we can think that what Briony does is because of her jealousy. Yet, keeping in mind that Briony is not the only child character; the novel also indicates how a raped girl should survive with her secret and even worse, how she marries her rapist. Besides, the novel also employs how the adults fail at looking after the children who are compulsorily sent to their aunt, due to the divorcing of their parents.

In terms of narrative technique, Briony, being the narrator of the story, portrays an author's imagination, the ups and downs of an author's mind, her hesitations, her position in the society and even her fallacy at trying to atone through her writing. In this sense, Briony's guilt will also be investigated referring to an artist's imagination, her self-centredness, her position in the society, the author as a god image, her power to create and destroy.

Before elaborating my suggestion in detail, it is necessary to give a summary of the novel. The book has three major parts and a final completion from the author. The first part is about one day in 1935 at the Tallis family estate in the north of London. Briony Tallis, the thirteen-year-old girl tries to finish her play and she wishes to perform it at dinner as a present for the homecoming of her brother, Leon. She plans to make her three cousins take roles who have recently arrived to the Tallis estate for the summer because of a divorce between their parents. Before the performance of the play at dinner, Briony witnesses a close relationship between her older sister Cecilia and the son of the family charwoman Robbie Turner near the fountain. While Cecilia and Robbie discuss a topic, she thinks that Robbie forces her sister to get undress. Following the fountain scene, Robbie gives a letter to Briony and she reads it. The letter includes perverse desires of Robbie and Briony thinks to protect her sister from this sex-maniac. Besides, she also sees the couple making love in the library and she mistakes it for assault again. At the dinner, they receive a letter from the twins who are bored through the bad treatments of the adults to them. They declare that they run away from home. The dinner guests immediately start searching. Briony, who is looking for the twins, is alone. She witnesses her cousin Lola's being raped. She does not miss her opportunity to accuse Robbie, who finds the twins and bring them back, as the rapist. Consequently, Robbie is sent to the jail.

The second part of the novel takes place after five years later. There is a miraculous Dunkirk evacuation scene. Robbie is now a soldier and he and the other soldiers retreat through France during the war. Through the chapter the reader learns that he has been in prison for three years and now he is able to vindicate himself by serving

in the army. During the retreat he experiences the atrocities of war mostly by witnessing the corpses of children. Although he is severely wounded, he struggles to arrive home to Cecilia.

In the third part, eighteen-year-old Briony is a nurse in London. She thinks that nursing is a penance for her sin. And she is still writing. When the soldiers arrive, Briony witnesses the horrors of war at first hand. She seeks out her sister Cecilia. But before this, she goes to the wedding of Lola and Paul Marshall whom she knows to be Lola's rapist. She does not stop the wedding. When she visits her sister, she sees that Robbie is still alive and living with Cecilia. She neither asks for forgiveness from her sister and her lover, anyhow they refuse it. Nevertheless, she admits her guilt and seeks advice on what she can do to make it better. The lovers give instructions to her: she would clear Robbie's name by writing a long report and confession on her mistake for her family.

The last part of the book is in London and in 1999. We understand that the author is Briony herself. She visits her old home for a birthday party. Briony reveals the fact that she has made up the part about visiting her sister and Robbie in London and declares that they died in the war.

3.1 Childhood Transgression

As contemporary fiction has a particular aim to scrutinise the idea that "the child is inherently innocent and this innocence is precious and worth protecting" (Dodou, 2012: 239), McEwan's novel, too, portrays child characters who potentially can be mean. Definitely, **Atonement** is a good example to depict a child's capacity for doing harm. However, contemporary fiction also employs children as sentimentalized people. It depicts childhood innocence under threat (239). McEwan's novel, in this sense, investigates various attitudes of children. As they can be dangerous, nevertheless, they are mostly represented under the repression of adult

authority and exploitation. The childhood innocence can easily be demolished when s/he makes a peevish declaration: The heroine of the novel, thirteen-year-old girl Briony, for instance, indicates that she has a capacity to cause an adult to be sent to prison with her false declaration to the police. Briony eyewitnesses intimate adult exchanges that she cannot fully comprehend. The budding love affair between her sister Cecilia and the charwoman's son Robbie is excessive for her to endure. Series of events lead her to think that Robbie is a **maniac** whose aim is to hurt and seduce her sister (119). Or she thinks in this way for she is jealous of her platonic love Robbie: there are various allusions to this platonic love of Briony which we will discuss in the following pages.

When her cousin Lola is found raped, she imagines Robbie to be the doer. By stressing her "severe and permanent harm to the others as well as to herself" Dodou illustrates that "the novel refuses to absolve the 'unforgivable' child" (242). The mood of the novel does not prove justification of her guilt. In Dodou's words: "the language of moral culpability foregrounds the novel's refusal to provide an exemption from responsibility to the child" (242). "'Yes, she was just a child' says Robbie and adds, 'but not every child is so purposeful and malign, so consistent over time, never wavering, never doubted'" (McEwan, 2001: 229). Dodou declares that not only Briony's accusation but also Lola's collusion with Briony in the committed crime after she is raped, prevents the easy statements about the child's vulnerability. Besides, she says "the fact that [Lola] marries her rapist, Paul Marshall seems to uphold the novel's revision of childhood innocence in terms of moral blameworthiness" (Dodou, 2012: 242). The key problem with this explanation is that it lacks evaluating that the children are under the control of the adults. The children are not induced to utter their declaration just because of their potential to harm and lie but they are primarily oppressed under the authority of adults through the text. The children struggle with the dominant figures' attitudes which stimulate them to do **wrong** or reach catastrophe. This struggle between the children and the adults can also be interpreted as between the new generation and the old generation. The children are a threat for the adult's social order. They problematise the adult's order

with their different and innovative, contemporary and humanist perspectives. However, Briony represents a typical and conservative character when she accuses a man from the lower class. Although she has a potential of an author's imagination and prescience in terms of humanism, equality, justice; she behaves conservatively. On the other hand, Cecilia has more unconventional capacity since she exceeds this class boundary and becomes Robbie's lover and supporter. At this point, the meanings of the characters' names support the reading the novel in the view of surviving of the children in the oppressive adult world. Briony means to grow, sprout and swell (Briony). The name refers to Briony's childishness and in a sense, her mentally developing period. In other words, she is not **done**, if we may say. She is unfinished and throughout the novel, she tries to complete her atonement by writing. Yet, her name also shows her deficiency. But this does not mean that she is a bad character. The name Cecilia means blind (Cecilia). Truly, Cecilia's passivity can be associated with her name. As she has not an effective role at preventing her lover Robbie's condemnation, she neither understands Briony's gazing at herself and Robbie. She does not have an active role at manipulating the events. She neither realises her sister's over sensitive reactions and her childishness nor screams out Robbie's blamelessness to the people. McEwan's using such names implicitly supports the idea that Briony is not the only **guilty** person. Besides, the name Cecilia is mostly associated with Saint Cecilia who is "the patroness of musicians" ("Saint Cecilia"). This artistic potential of the name metaphorically signals Cecilia's unconventional tendencies such as being in desire of having a relationship with a man who is interested in literature. Yet, the oxymoron in Saint Cecilia also indicates how she cannot expose her sensual and artistic impulses. She has the potential of saint-like insight but she is blind and cannot use her power under the class distinction. Her artistic capacity cannot be a solution of salvation just like her sister Briony's inability to atone in fiction. In other words, while Briony's effort to atone in an imaginary world is in vain, a character who has an artistic potential fails at seeing the *truth*.

3.2 Everybody's Guilt

The novel, being a contemporary fiction, also utilises the situation of children in an adult world. The Edwardian gardens had been endowed to the children. The gardens are the places for the children, where the adults mostly did not exist. But, in **Atonement**, the children's attitudes and treatments should be taken into consideration through always keeping in mind that they try to live and exist in a dominant adult environment. They cannot understand or perceive sexual orientation between the adults. Yet, Briony is aware of that Robbie is interested in her sister. She tries to prevent this relationship as much as an upper class adult does. Briony's thought about class discrimination is not innately given to her. The novel includes various examples which show how the adults embrace this class discrimination: the mother Mrs Tallis's intention to introduce Cecilia to a rich man Paul Marshall who is owner of a chocolate factory; their accusation of Danny Hardman, a person from lower class, without any evidence. Briony learns this malignity from the adults. Since the children have the potential to learn through their role models, adults they can imitate either good or bad habits. Yet, since there is a potential thought that is the innocence of a child is much more possible than an adult's innocence in our conscious we involuntarily and boldly underline the children's villainous actions. A child's malign attitude affects us much more than an adult's. They are born into exile in a sense. What the children experience is nothing but the ready made life by the adults. The children come to a world established, organised and ruled by adults. Firstly, they try to understand this world and then try to cope with it but this is not necessary for all children. McEwan twists this order in his novel. He portrays Briony as a child who tries to understand the world around her and on the other hand she is the creator of this world as the narrator. What she does is to collect data for her uncontrollable desire to make fiction. She mostly observes, and soon after criticises in her mind. This urgent evaluation of the events she witnesses causes her to misread the events of adults. Yet, her over sensitive thoughts about the possibility of a man's seduction come true in the novel. In this sense, the adults cannot invalidate her

obsessed prejudice, in contrast, support her when Paul Marshall rapes Lola. Her imagination becomes true in the adult world.

Her aim to atone in her writing indicates how wretched she is through the novel. Yet, we should also keep in mind that the **guilty** child Briony is being tried to be absolved by the regretful adult Briony. Briony's artistic capacity and her worshipping to her writing, which seems more real than her real life around, definitely, make her a wretched character. McEwan symbolically punishes her with vascular dementia. We should also keep in mind that the regretful, punished character is the adult Briony who is in an anachronistic illusion. McEwan, twisting the narrator function in the last chapter from the third person narrator to the unreliable first person narrator also invalidates, in a sense, the adult Briony's story. Besides, if we take her dementia into consideration, we cannot be sure which part of the story is true and which is wrong. However, what is obvious is that although Briony is the only narrator, there is one old Briony who tries to atone for the **spontaneous** child Briony. This illusion of the adult Briony could never be solved even if the uniting Cecilia and Robbie would be true in the last chapter, because the child Briony's guilt is not only accusing Robbie but also sacrificing Lola's life. She never talks about atonement for Lola. Above all, she is not the one person who misunderstands in the novel. Cecilia, too, for instance, misinterprets Robbie's removing shoes and socks. She thinks that Robbie is trying to distance her. On the other hand, Robbie misunderstands Cecilia's undressing at the pond, as if she is humiliating him. Moreover, Cecilia assumes that her brother Leon wants a hot roast for dinner. (Finney, 2004: 6) Briony observes what is happening around her and tries to give meanings to the events where she domestically feels lonely because of lack of communication between the children and the adults.

McEwan's character Briony, with the impetus of observing and writing, in this sense, misreads life around her and texts. Her misreading leads her sister Cecilia, and her lover Robbie to feel an irreversible pain that destroys their lives. As Finney asserts, Briony is shaped by **a melodramatic imagination** through the books she has read. She has difficulties to detach life from literature that shapes her life. And this

inability of detachment causes her to impose “the patterns of fiction on the facts of life” (79). At the very beginning of the novel, her enthusiasm about the preparation of performing her play for her brother is an example to indicate this inaccurate imposition. In the same manner, the novel starts with a remarkable allusion to Jane Austen’s novel **Northanger Abbey**:

Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English: that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?” They had reached the end of the gallery; and with tears of shame she ran off to her own room. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (McEwan, 2001: i)

Here Morland can be associated not only with Briony but also with the other prior characters such as Don Quixote. Reading a text or life is not necessarily a positive activity. In other words, it does not always lead the reader to increase his or her intellectual capacity. Sometimes, in contrast, it may lead a reader into an unexpected obsession, neurotic consequences or addictive results. Don Quixote, as a reader, is a foremost example among the characters in fictional history. Quixote who is in his mid 50’s obsessively reads the books of chivalry. His reading turns him out to be mad. Gradually, he cannot differentiate the differences between the real life and fiction. He believes that what he reads is all **true**. So long as his obsessiveness dominates him, he tries to involve the people around him into his adventures. This causes not only Quixote’s life to change but also the people around him. Jane Austen’s **Northanger Abbey** too portrays the same pathological incidences of the main character Catherine Morland. She is obsessed with Gothic novels. She passionately reads Ann Radcliffe's Gothic novel **The Mysteries of Udolpho**. And

when she is invited to Northanger Abbey, she thinks the Abbey as a gothic place and she fears the mysteries or unknown things there. General Tilney with his strict and punctual personality is enough for Catherine to imagine him as a bad guy even as a murderer of his wife. Coming back to Briony, she is not only portrayed as a reader but also particularly as a writer. And technically at the end of the novel we see that the narrator is herself. **Atonement** is a novel about storytelling. In an interview with Jonothan Noakes, Ian McEwan declares that the mood of the novel is between the imaginary world and the truth. He says that “part of the intention of *Atonement* was to look at a storytelling itself. And to examine the relationship between what is imagined and what is true” (Reynolds and Noakes, 2002: 19). In **Atonement** we see Briony as a writer who has been influenced (in McEwan’s words stalked, haunted) by Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, Rosamond Lehmann. Here, McEwan uses the word truth in the sense of metafiction. What is truth for McEwan? McEwan responds to this question by saying:

[...] As [Briony] says, when the novel will finally be published, which can only be after she’s dead, she herself will become a character, and no one will be much interested in whether she is real or not, she will only exist within the frame of the novel. So I wanted to play, but play seriously, with something rooted in the emotional rather than the intellectual. I wanted to play with the notion of storytelling as a form of self-justification, of how much courage is involved in telling the truth to oneself. (20)

So the truth as McEwan asserts is the truth within metafictional frame. It is the truth in McEwan’s novel and Briony’s narration. She rewrites Robbie and Cecilia’s love story again and again. At the end Briony decides to unite them so that the lovers can survive. Nevertheless, we still cannot be sure about the **truth** because all information is given to us by the unreliable first person narrator Briony who has vascular dementia.

Therefore it is her atonement. Being a writer she tries to atone through the medium of writing. At first she chooses drama as a genre. Yet, after gazing at the pond scene

where she thinks that Robbie is proposing marriage to her sister, she realises that “this was not a fairy tale, this was the real, the adult world in which frogs did not address princesses, and the only messages were the ones that people sent” (McEwan, 2001: 40). Then she realises that drama cannot “communicate consciousness” (Green, 2009: 114). Later on she declares that it was **wrong genre** and decides to write a novel. Her enthusiasm of writing of what she observes without digesting what she *sees* also brings the problem of misreading the events. She “could imagine herself hurrying down now to her bedroom, to clean block of lined paper and her marbled... She could write the scene three times over, from three points of view; her excitement was in the prospect of freedom, of being delivered from the cumbrous struggle between good and bad, heroes and villains” (40). Her last decision, the novel as a genre gives her opportunity to rewrite her story for many times. And she also foreshadows her misunderstanding at the beginning of the novel. She says that: “It wasn’t only wickedness and scheming that made people unhappy, it was confusion and misunderstanding; above all, it was the failure to grasp the simple truth that other people are as real as you” (40). Revealing the insignificance of trying to search for atonement in fiction, McEwan here shows that the adult Briony’s aim is pointless and also implies the absurdity of considering art as real. In this sense, the adult Briony fails at not realizing what the child Briony has already noticed that “other people are as real as you” (40).

One major drawback of this narrative explanation of the novel is that it only focuses on Briony as single manipulative and destructive character who makes a catastrophic mistake and tries to atone through her writings. Not only Briony but also Robbie causes to increase this deathly consequence in terms of his being a writer too as Briony is. Comparing the two, Briony is a thirteen-year-old teenager who is limited in her domestic homeland and tries to amuse her brother with her play “Trials of Arabella”. Through the play she expects him to choose the correct wife. Her didactic approach, nevertheless, cannot reach its target since they cannot perform the play. Besides, the representation of Briony as a child is very typical that the portrayal of Briony does not indicate any extraordinary un-childish attitudes. The novel reveals

that being 13 years old she can easily change her thoughts as mentioned above through her decision to change her genre. Moreover, we see that she either hesitates or fails at everything that she wants: she cannot convince her cousins to act in her play, she decides to change her genre, and she misreads the fountain scene. Another event that shows her childish attitude and imagination takes place when she takes the letter and reads it, she thinks that the letter is threatening “the order of the household” (114) and therefore, immediately after, she passionately wants to write something but she can only come up with these words: “there was an old lady who swallowed a fly” (115). “This faltering between what she would like to write and what she is able to achieve”, according to Ellam, “symbolizes her childlike struggle to order her thoughts...” (Ellam, 2009: 33). The scene is remarkable since it shows how a child fails at comprehending the adult life and codes. What is problem here is that she is faced with adult experiences without any guide of an adult. She is always alone in her witnessing: the pond scene, library scene, while she is reading the letter and the rape scene. All these scenes could be interpreted by an adult in a different and more meaningful way. Or at least, an adult could not be over sensitive and wounded mentally that much. In this sense, all these events which create traumatic consequences on Briony are the stimulative impulses for her accusation. Here my aim is not to forgive Briony but at least to reveal the possibility that she does her accusation not because she is a villainous character but because she wants to protect her sister Cecilia or either because she wants to punish her platonic lover Robbie. Her complaint is not due to her being villain but due to her excessive love for Robbie or for her sister Cecilia. Nevertheless, the second suggestion is actually weak compare to the previous one. Because there are such proofs which indicate her intention to protect. According to Briony, “Cecilia” needs help and “she ought to protect” (121). Therefore, her fear of a ravisher-like character is much more dominant than her jealous of him.

3.3 “The Trials of Arabella”

The reference to Lennox through her play “The Trials of Arabella” which is the parody of **Don Quixote** is also remarkable so that her childishness is being mocked through the referred character’s **pushover** attitudes. Before introducing Robbie’s catastrophic mistake, it is necessary to reveal the intertextual reference of the play.

Arabella alludes to Charlotte Lennox’s **The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella**. It is a novel written in 1752, a parody of Miguel de Cervantes’ **Don Quixote**. For them the daily life experiences come into being as fictitious scenes. The exact scene of this same illusion is, as D’Angelo states too, the scene when Briony tests Robbie’s love when she drops herself into the pool:

Arabella also serves as the name for a different eighteenth-century mock heroine—made famous for her dramatic misreadings of the romance genre—in Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*. Like Briony, Arabella cannot distinguish reality from fiction and continually misinterprets common interactions in her daily life as melodramatic moments lifted from the pages of her novels...In the novel’s climax, Arabella jumps into the Thames River to avoid what she interprets as a threat to her virtue in the form of “ravishers,” in a clear misreading of the scene. Only when she is near death with the resulting fever and under the care of a “pious and learned Doctor.” (D’Angelo, 2009: 91)

Jumping into the river, for Lennox’s Arabella is an escape which presumably rescues her from a supposed ravisher. But for Briony it is an experience to assess Robbie. She tests Robbie whether he will rescue her or not. After Robbie guarantees her that he would rescue her to test him, she jumps into the water. And after his rescue, she utters “I want to thank you for saving my life. I will be eternally grateful to you” (McEwan, 2001: 232). Her reply like a sentence from a fairy tale also reveals that she is a child at play: “Lines, surely, from one of her books, one she had read lately, or one she had written” (232). Here Briony imitates a character she has read or written before. As she trusts Robbie’s promise, she risks her life. What is experienced later is

just the opposite. That is to say, the adults trust Briony's accusation of Robbie, and she risks Robbie's life. This scene, on the other hand, reveals that Robbie is her platonic lover. He does not respond to her love in the same manner. For Briony, reading the obscene letter extremely astonishes her: a latent defect at pool overflows in a letter with its full obscenity.

McEwan, through intertextual references, draws Robbie's personality as well as Briony's. Robbie, in this sense, has an important function at forcing Briony to her fatal mistake and delusion. Robbie after his graduation from literature also studies faculty exam in medicine. Therefore, his room is full with the related books. After the fountain scene where Robbie hurts Cecilia, he goes back to his room to write a letter of apology. Before writing his letter, he deals with the book which is related with garden design and he thinks that Cecilia "probably would not have read this treatise on the hydraulics of Versailles by an eighteenth-century Dane who extolled in Latin the genius of Le Nôtre" (84). He concentrates on Cecilia and "with the help of a dictionary...[has] read five pages in a morning and then given up and made do with the illustrations instead. It would not be her kind of book, or anyone's really, but she had handed it to him from the library steps and somewhere on its leather surface were her fingerprints" (84). He fetishistically dreams Cecilia: "Willing himself not to, he raised the book to his nostrils and inhaled. Dust, old paper, the scent of soap on his hands, but nothing of her. How had it crept up on him, this advanced stage of fetishising the love object?" (84). He starts fantasising about Cecilia through her intellectual background: "Surely Freud had something to say about that in *Three Essays on Sexuality*. And so did Keats, Shakespeare and Petrarch, and all the rest, and it was in *The Romaunt of the Rose*. He had spent three years drily studying the symptoms, which had seemed no more than literary conventions, and now, in solitude, like some ruffed and plumed courtier come to the edge of the forest to contemplate a discarded token, he was worshipping her traces-not a handkerchief, but fingerprints!-while he languished in his lady's scorn" (84). Robbie, in his private room, thinks of and makes love with her. His intimate intercourse with her should continue as he apologises. And his words gradually turn out to be overflow and

uncontrollable. This long quotation indicates how his spontaneous desires are reflected on his letter, which later will be the major manipulative force for Briony's illusionary imputation:

He rested his hands on the keys while he confronted the urge to type her name again. 'Cee, I don't think I can blame the heat!' Now jokiness had made way for melodrama, or plaintiveness. The rhetorical questions had a clammy air; the exclamation mark was the first resort of those who shout to make themselves clearer. He forgave this punctuation only in his mother's letters where a row of five indicated a jolly good joke. He turned the drum and typed an *x*. 'Cecilia, I don't think I can blame the heat.' Now the humor was removed, and an element of self-pity had crept in. The exclamation mark would have to be reinstated. Volume was obviously not its only business. He tinkered with his draft for a further quarter of an hour, then threaded in new sheets and typed up a fair copy. The crucial lines now read: "You'd be forgiven for thinking me mad—wandering into your house barefoot, or snapping your antique vase. The truth is, I feel rather lightheaded and foolish in your presence, Cee, and I don't think I can blame the heat! Will you forgive me? Robbie." Then, after a few moments' reverie, tilted back on his chair, during which time he thought about the page at which his *Anatomy* tended to fall open these days, he dropped forward and typed before he could stop himself, "In my dreams I kiss your cunt, your sweet wet cunt. In my thoughts I make love to you all day long." There it was—ruined. The draft was ruined. He pulled the sheet clear of the typewriter, set it aside, and wrote his letter out in longhand, confident that the personal touch fitted the occasion. As he looked at his watch he remembered that before setting out he should polish his shoes. He stood up from his desk, careful not to thump his head on thereafter. (82)

Briony's childish enthusiasm and her aspiration to know everything collides with her witnessing events which are peculiar to the adults. After seeing her sister's being **seduced** in front of the fountain, she "had her first, weak intimation that for her now it could no longer be fairy-tale castles and princesses, but the strangeness of the here and now, of what passed between people, the ordinary people that she knew, and

what power one could have over the other, how easy it was to get everything wrong, completely wrong” (39).

In addition, she reads a man’s sexual desire. As these experiences create a trauma, she also thinks that “she was entering an arena of adult emotion and dissembling from which her writing was bound to benefit” (106). Briony exceeds her capacity and if we may say, she bites off more than she can chew. As Finney makes connection between Hartley’s Leo in **The Go-Between** and James’s Maisie in **What Maisie Knew** and Briony; “[she] is a child who becomes involved in an adult sexual relationship that she is ill equipped to understand” (Finney, 2006: 7).

Through performing her play she thinks that she will send a message to her brother to choose the proper girl for himself. It is the same manner that leads her to open the envelope that Robbie gives her. Though it is “savage and thoughtless curiosity” she opens it and “she reads it in the hall after Polly had let her in—and though the shock of the message vindicated her completely, this did not prevent her from feeling **guilty**. It was wrong to open people’s letters, but it was right, it was essential, for her to know everything” (11). Her effort to reach full knowledge reminds us of Christopher Marlowe’s **The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus** (1604) where Doctor Faustus sells his soul in return for knowledge. Also alluding to the biblical account of the Fall owing to the Tree of Knowledge, Briony, like Faustus, cannot successfully digest knowledge and she is crushed under the weight of knowledge which exceeds her capacity.

This statement of her is remarkable because it indicates that she, at least, needs a proof for her imaginative thoughts. She does not immediately squeal everybody about the scene near the pond. She looks for another event which could support her idea. Therefore, what she needs is **to know everything** to make a correct statement. Her intention at first is to protect her sister from a **molester**: “with the letter, something elemental, brutal, perhaps even criminal had been introduced, some

principle of darkness, and even in her excitement over the possibilities, she did not doubt that her sister was in some way threatened and would need her help” (11).

Her childish impulse to protect her sister and her brother is so enthusiastic and spontaneous that her decision can change in a sudden. And she fails at all her intention: she neither can show her play to his brother nor can keep her temper not to make a false declaration about the rape. That kind of treatment of Briony is not an unexpected consequence for an adolescent. Even her artistic tendency strenghtens this fallacy in her character.

3.4 Not only Briony’s but everybody’s guilt

In contemporary fiction, the adults’ presence or absence has different functions which can directly affect the situation and circumstances of the child characters. Since children are always portrayed as bounded to the adults, the actions they do and experiences they have cannot be evaluated without considering the contribution of adults into their story. Since they are the children in the adult world, and not just the opposite, that’s to say, we cannot mostly define the adults in children’s world; whatever the children mostly do cannot be only their guilt or crime.

What would lead Briony to commit her crime by not telling the truth is not only her childish transgression, which would easily appear in a child’s personality if s/he witnesses an **immoral** event that s/he cannot comprehend fully, but also it is stimulated through the adults’ indifference though they seem interested in each other. The adults’ hypocritical and selfish desires have a dominant function in which Briony and her cousins try to exist and survive.

The mother who “lies in bed aware of the movements in the house, but is too self-absorbed and incapable to intervene in the status quo” (Ellam, 2009: 47) eludes Briony when she wants her mother to read her play. The mother’s shallow interest in the play does not satisfy the writer Briony. Mrs Tallis reads the seven pages of “The

Trials of Arabella” “in her bedroom, at her dressing table” (McEwan, 2001: 4). The dressing table is a symbol that reveals the mother’s interest in the party. While her mother is reading her play Briony studies “her mother’s face for every trace of shifting emotion” (4). However, Emily Tallis’s response which is “obliged with looks of alarm, snickers of glee and at the end grateful smiles and wise, affirming nods” (4) do not correspond with the theme of the play. Briony’s close observation of her mother is a symbolic scene that refers to the relationship between an author and the reader. The mother being the first reader of the play does not appreciate Briony as she expects. Besides, the mother also helps Briony to experience her own ability as a writer: “At some moments chilling, at others desperately sad, the play told a tale of the heart whose message, conveyed in a rhyming prologue, was that love which did not build a foundation on good sense was doomed. The reckless passion of the heroine, Arabella, for a wicked foreign count is punished by ill fortune when she contracts cholera during an impetuous dash toward a seaside town with her intended” (3). Nevertheless, the mother’s superficial comment on the play: “stupendous” (3) is not enough to give courage to Briony, yet she keeps doing the organization for her play. More than this, we, the readers, know that Briony has an intellectual capacity to think about the accuracy of her genre. In other words, she is eligible to evaluate the sincerity of any criticism about her play. The mother’s cynical criticism, in this sense, does not signify anything to her. Besides, this distrustful criticism also indicates the distance between the mother and Briony.

The mother portrays a bored and passive character as her migraine limits her. Since the mother is mostly in her bedroom because of her migraine, she cannot interact with the people in the house and they cannot communicate with her as well: “Emily Tallis had withdrawn from the white glare of the afternoon’s heat to a cool and darkened bedroom. She was not in pain, not yet, but she was retreating before its Threat” (63). Thus, as she is stuck in her bedroom, “her migraine is the vehicle and the metaphor to explain her distance from her children” (Ellam, 2009: 47). Or when she is with them, she tries to keep the authority of the house in the absence of her husband. At the dinner party, for instance, when Briony tries to prevent Pierrot to

answer Robbie's question about the weather of England, the mother involves in and offends Briony at the dinner: Emily speaks up from her end of the table: "Briony, it was a perfectly bland remark about the weather. You'll apologize, or go now to your room...Whenever Mrs. Tallis exercised authority in the absence of her husband, the children felt obliged to protect her from seeming ineffectual" (McEwan, 2001: 127). It is ironic that here the children try to conciliate their mother and Briony replies to her: "I'm very sorry. I wish I hadn't said it" (127). The sudden punishment either to **apologize** or to go to her room among the people is shameful for a child. However, Briony overcomes this matter and she does not humiliate her mother.

Mrs. Tallis's pretentious and artificial attitudes affect Briony. Her comment on Briony's play: "stupendous" indicates her artificiality. She does not sincerely care about her daughter and more than this she tries to get rid of her daughter. Besides, she foolishly thinks about her "poor darling Briony, the softest little thing, doing her all to entertain her hard-bitten wiry cousins with the play she had written from her heart" (McEwan, 2001: 73). She considers Lola as dangerous since Briony may be influenced by her: "the incarnation of Emily's youngest sister who had been just as precocious and scheming at that age, and who had recently plotted her way out of a marriage, into what she wanted everyone to call a nervous breakdown" (73). These instances indicate that Emily Tallis is a distant character towards the children. The cousins need each other but she is not aware of it. Moreover, Briony is alone, Lola is sad and puzzled but Emily Tallis even cannot notice these problems of the children. In contrast, she sees Lola as a danger for Briony. However, Lola just portrays an opposite circumstances of her mother who can divorce or at least question her relationship. In this sense, unlike her mother, Lola is the victim of her aunt's fallacy.

Emily Tallis cannot portray an ideal mother-image for the other girls in the house either. As she has "the values associated with maintaining her position" (Ellam, 2009: 47) she tries to invalidate Cecilia's studying for a degree and she hopes Leon will bring a friend home one day for her to marry. The wishful expectation of the mother whose worldview does not keep up with her age reminds the mother Mrs.

Bennet in **Pride and Prejudice**, a novel by Jane Austen, first published in 1813. Mrs. Bennet fancies with their daughters' attendance to the parties to find a husband. Unlike Austen's suitable atmosphere to find a husband, Leon is not able to bring a suitable candidate for his sister. His friend Paul Marshall is a paedophile who rapes Lola. Before discussing Paul Marshall in detail, it is to be noted that Emily Tallis is portrayed as a superficial character in the novel. She can neither communicate with Briony in empathy nor understand Cecilia's intellectual capacity. Since Cecilia is graduated from a university, the novel indicates that she can marry after knowing the candidate through flirting. The mother's old-fashioned expectation also puts a distance between herself and her children. She also prefers to pretend to have a good marriage. Yet, the husband does not or cannot come back home. The novel does not mention a specific and detailed reason of the father's absence except for his business. However, the father's financial support for only Robbie (not for the other servants) and yet, as well as work an affair might be a cause against their timeworn married life. Though living in comfort and prestige, Emily Tallis's migraine, an ailment of strain, points to her physical and emotional dissatisfaction. Some earlier secrets of her husband might engender unconscious strain as well. Migraine, in this sense, a disease mostly appears because of boredom, may imply that the father has an illegitimate relation with Robbie's mother. If this probability is true, this indicates how the father is irresponsible. Besides, As Emily Tallis and Mr. Tallis keep the secret, they cause an unsuitable love affair between Cecilia and Robbie and the secret also shows how Cecilia and Robbie's pain is in vain. Since Emily Tallis does not reveal anything about the probable affair, her migraine is metaphor of her atonement. Instead she is pretentious. Ellam states that she is a woman who is "drawn as pragmatic in her Englishness and mediocrity as she puts up with her husband's affair while making claims of genteel propriety" (48).

Emily is obedient to the patriarchal values. Emily, in this sense, is a conservative character who cannot exceed the family norms constructed by patriarchal society. She is a victim of patriarchal values. And her oppressive circumstances directly affect the children in the novel. The conflict she creates is that while she tries to

protect the family institution, she, on the other hand, presents incapability in dealing with the children. She can neither understand Briony's childish enthusiasm which needs an adult's guidance nor can she peacefully look after her nephews. More than this, she finds her sister **guilty** of divorce but she pretends her relationship with her husband to be as usual, although her husband Jack is never with them and he spends most of his time to his work in the Whitehall ministry than to his family. Jack, as representing the government, is suggestively on a secret task given by the government for the war with Germany. Jack, in this sense, is a symbol which expands the novel's narrative to a political field. The children are the most exploited people in this socio-political aspect too. Since Jack cannot come home, Briony is almost in a parentless situation. Thus, as Jack has a function in the preparation of war, he has also a role at victimising the children in the war. The father's political position, therefore, is an incredible point that shows the children are victimised in both domestic and societal conditions. Besides, Jack's occupational situation reminds Virginia Woolf's character Richard Dalloway in her novel **Mrs. Dalloway**. Richard, like Jack, has a job in the government. He, too, works for militarist purposes: he plans to write a history about the English military family. Besides, like Jack, he is not eligible to have a close relationship with his family. All these circumstances are evidences that show the children's conditions are in the hand of the adults in domestic or social level.

The children are stuck under the adult's oppression in historical perspective, too. The novel includes various references to indicate this historical boundary over the children. One of them is the vase theme. The vase, at first hand, symbolises Cecilia's virginity, which is destroyed during the struggle between herself and Robbie. The vase also has significance in terms of heritance. The vase is a present given to Jack Tallis's brother Clem during the First World War. The vase survives even in the wartime conditions and becomes the property of the Tallis family. And Jack Tallis superstitiously believes that "if it had survived the war, the reasoning went, then it could survive the Tallises" (23). The vase's two centuries of use comes to an end with Cecilia and Robbie's struggle. As Jack Tallis's superstition comes true, the

Tallis family is destroyed in parallel with the broken vase. The children, in between the two wars are, in a sense, obliged to experience their predestination created by the adults. The father's distance to the events in the house deepens the exploitation of the children. More than this, the father absurdly associates the destruction of the family with the broken vase. However, he has one of the strongest influences on destroying the family through his support at organization of the following war.

As Eagleton shows **Atonement** “wonderfully portrays the upper-middle-class life of a 1930's country house, a world already teetering on the brink of ruin” (Eagleton 2001: 2177). In the light of Eagleton's statement, we may say that one of the remarkable reasons why the adult authority fails to reveal the fact on Lola's rape is that they still have class distinction in their mind. For them, accusing of Robbie who comes from the working class is much easier than accusing a man from the upper class like Paul Marshall. Once he is accused of harming Lola by Briony, “his guilt is unquestioned as Emily, Leon and Jack” (Ellam, 2009: 44). They prefer to believe in Briony's version of scenario. It is easy for them to “sacrifice” Robbie because of his class status. Nevertheless, Robbie and Cecilia too fall into the same mistake: they too accuse Danny Hardman who is from the working class, of being the true rapist of Lola. Danny Hardman “Like Robbie”, says Ellam Danny “becomes a scapegoat for the actions of Paul Marshall” (50). Upper class authority, in this sense, has a vital function at not being able to reveal the truth easily since “the hierarchical class system allows those in the higher reaches to be seen as blameless despite the evidence” (50). Therefore, the adults' obedience to the authoritative ideology, dominant moral values and economic benefits can be the primary forces of creating such a catastrophe.

3.5 The Children Prisoned in Domesticity

The Tallis house with its existence and atmosphere is an unusual place for a child to live. They try to exist and survive under the adult dominant house. Briony tries to act

her play; the twins want to leave the house. They all cannot succeed their aim. The house is an adult world. McEwan uses the house motif as an opposition to the children. Although the house motif in **The Cement Garden** has gothic elements, it protects the children from the adults. But in **Atonement** the twins try to escape but they are caught by an adult. And Briony utilises the house as if it is all her world: she observes everything in the house, tries to organise a play in the house, she even prepares tickets for only the people in the house. She tries to give a meaning to the life she observes in this limited domestic place. This limited situation also becomes significant with its gothic features. Its gothicised atmosphere, in context of setting, does not give a joyful atmosphere to the children: “Morning sunlight, or any light, could not conceal the ugliness of the Tallis home—barely forty years old, bright orange brick, squat, lead-paned baronial Gothic, to be condemned one day in an article by Pevsner, or one of his team, as a tragedy of wasted chances, and by a younger writer of the modern school as charmless to a fault” (McEwan, 2001: 30). The house metaphorically represents “the family’s push for respectability in that it was bought by Cecilia’s grandfather” (Ellam, 2009: 51). The novel also gives the information about how the grandfather made his fortune: he earned money “with a series of patents on padlocks, bolts, latches and hasps, having grown up over an ironmonger’s shop” (McEwan, 2001: 19). Although the grandfather “bought the family the shell of status that his descendents have taken for granted, its faults reflect the sham of the class-ridden society” (Ellam, 2009: 52).

The class bias in the novel starts with the background of the house. Here, what is significant for our concern is the objects that the grandfather sold to earn money. The way of grandfather’s earning money for the house ironically alludes to the limitedness of the house for the children. The padlocks, bolts, latches and hasps are used to lock a door. They have function to create secrecy, a limitation, a boundary. Briony never goes outside the house till her becoming nurse, the twins are caught when they intend to escape, Lola exceeds the domestic line to look for her brother and sister but she is raped. On the other hand, the adults can easily come to the house for a party; they can come to spend their summer holiday after the graduation from

the university. The grandfather's padlocks, bolts, latches and hasps indicate that domestic limitation of the children comes from historical background. The novel, in this sense, reveals the exploitation of children for ages.

Besides, the house is like an adult country where the children try to find their sense of belonging. Briony, in this sense, is portrayed as a child character that is looking for amusement and life experiences through her suspense in the adult environment. Her desire to have a secret indicates her privacy is either ignored or it does not exist:

But hidden drawers, lockable diaries and cryptographic systems could not conceal from Briony the simple truth: she had no secrets. Her wish for a harmonious, organized world denied her the reckless possibilities of wrongdoing. Mayhem and destruction were too chaotic for her tastes, and she did not have it in her to be cruel. Her effective status as an only child, as well as the relative isolation of the Tallis house, kept her, at least during the long summer holidays, from girlish intrigues with friends. Nothing in her life was sufficiently interesting or shameful to merit hiding; no one knew about the squirrel's skull beneath her bed, but no one wanted to know. None of this was particularly an affliction; or rather, it appeared so only in retrospect, once a solution had been found. (McEwan, 2001: 5)

It is her childish desire to have secrecy which signifies her artistic impulses. Yet, ironically she does not have secrecy but she tries to have one by secretly gazing at her sister and Robbie. When she first sees her sister and Robbie near the fountain through the window, her imagination does not conclude with a probable guess that everybody may know. Instead, she comments on the gestures and body positions of her sister and Robbie, as creating secrecy, a shameful occurrence, that give her the power of having a secret. So that she would be rescued from a life which was not "sufficiently interesting or shameful to merit hiding" (5).

She suffers loneliness in their estate. Her writing, in this sense, helps her to connect with the world around her and at a certain point frees her from the limited

domesticity of their house and through her writing she can communicate with the others. When she writes she has the power, authority in her fiction where nobody can manipulate. Keeping in mind that when she confuses her imagination with **the world outside** she causes catastrophic consequences, in any way her fiction frees her from the limited opportunities of the world around her: “Writing stories not only involved secrecy, it also gave her all the pleasures of miniaturization. A world could be made in five pages, and one that was more pleasing than a model farm. The childhood of a spoiled prince could be framed within half a page, a moonlit dash through sleepy villages was one rhythmically emphatic sentence, falling in love could be achieved in a single word - a *glance*” (6). So, we may say that her feeling lonely nurtures her passionate readings and creating stories. Her fictitious character Arabella shares the same loneliness with her but Arabella reaches to a wedding. The author Briony in her old ages will not be able to be free and absolved because of her guilt. It is a seven-page play which will be discussed in the following chapter.

The house with its image of limitedness stands against the children in the novel. The house with its implicit historical reference is a prison for the children. It, in this sense, represents the microcosm of the world where the adults are the dominant people. This domestic oppression and exploitation on the children will be expanded with the war scene where the children are represented as the most victimised and damaged characters.

The children cannot be active and mobile as much as the adults in the house. The children are stable in a limited household. Briony for instance does not leave the household till her adolescence. And she complains by saying “Was that really all there was in life, indoors or out? Wasn’t there somewhere else for people to go”? (76) There is no limitation for the adults in terms of coming to the house and leaving. At the beginning of the novel, Briony’s brother and his friend Paul Marshall are on the way for home. We later learn that Cecilia and Robbie recently arrive home after their graduation from the university. But Briony is narrated as if she has been always at home. Moreover, the cousins have no choice as well. They are forced to come to

the Tallis house since their mother and father are in the edge of divorce. In this sense, the house limits and oppresses the children. When they want to exceed their limits- the twins try to escape- they are caught and brought back. Or more radically they are raped. This brutally prisoned life for the children is executed by the authority of adults.

Besides, “the relative isolation of the Tallis house” (reminding the gothic house in **The Cement Garden**) is not a relaxing for the children and the house, as Emily asserts, is so big that it “could easily absorb three children” (8). The big size of the house, in fact, gives an opportunity to Paul Marshall to seduce Lola in their room without the notice of the others in the house. Emily thinks that the big size of the house is an advantage but it turns out a disadvantage for the cousins. The uneasiness of the children in the house has also been depicted through the house motif which also reminds the fairy tale **Hansel and Gretel** written by The Brothers Grimm. The ineffective father figure in the novel reminds the father’s passive character and his slovenly attitudes to the step-mother in the fairy tale, which the two cases cause the exploitation of the children. At first hand, the house motif can be associated with the witch’s chocolate house which is exciting for the children. Nevertheless, the house is not a place where the children’s expectations fit and it metaphorically consumes them. In the fairy tale, the step-mother forces the father to send the children into the woods and the children feel happy at first when they see the chocolate house. The witch, after making them fat, tries to eat them. McEwan borrows the food chocolate as a provocative object to attract the children: the easiest way to cheat the children. Paul Marshall, here has the witch figure who tries to victimise the children, while he seduces and abuses them (especially Lola) with his phallic figure, the bar of Amo chocolate. In the big picture, an adult tries to victimise the children with their favourite food in the house which is useful for the adults’ expectations.

Nevertheless, the house is not the only place where the children can be exploited. They are also in danger outside. Hansel and Gretel are lost in the wood and soon after they see the chocolate house, a place where they can be eaten and die. In the

novel, similarly, the twins' escape ends with Robbie's finding them. In other words, although Robbie's intention is to rescue them from the danger of outside, he inevitably brings them back to the same prison-like house. In the two texts, the children's adventure inevitably ends with adults' domination, restriction and even more violently with their harassing.

Not only the adults but also nature is, at a certain point, against the children. Nature (outside) has been figured out as an unsafe place for the children. Nature is a threat for them. Hansel and Gretel put pieces of bread on the road to find their home back easily but the birds eat them. Ironically enough, birds' eating the pieces of bread implies that the children are closer to and integrated with nature because, in a sense, Hansel and Gretel feed the birds. Nevertheless, since the adults do not take care of the children, and leave them alone in nature, the circumstances change against them. While the children are akin to nature, nature turns out to their disadvantage without any adult's care. Moreover, the adults use nature in their own benefit. When the defenceless children are left alone in nature, the adults get an opportunity to exploit them easily. In McEwan's novel, Paul Marshall, for instance, finds an opportunity to rape Lola outside after he practices intention on Lola in the house with chocolate bar.

Hansel and Gretel also matches with the novel in terms of the cousins' coming to the Tallis House: in both cases the children are the first victimised and evaded group in the families. In the fairy tale, the family leaves their children into the wood because of poverty. In McEwan's novel, similarly, the cousins' parent leaves their children to the Tallis House because of parental problem. Hansel and Gretel are under the threat of a witch and the cousins, in McEwan's novel, are lost and (Lola) is raped outside. In both cases, it is indicated that whenever a problem occurs in a family, the children are either forced to be left outside as in the fairy tale and or the children themselves escape from the oppression of the adults, yet they inevitably jump into another adult dominant place: outside as in McEwan's novel. In both cases, the victimised people are the children. They are represented as boredom and in Dodou's words "societal threat" to adults' world.

At the end of the novel, we learn that the Tallis House is sold and it is “Tilney Hotel” (363) now. With reference to the Tilneys, the owners of the Northanger Abbey in Jane Austen’s novel, the novel reminds the passage at the beginning, a letter from Mr. Tilney to Catherina Morland. The beginning and the end of the novel, in this sense, frame the theme of the frightening effects of the Tallis House that turns out to be a recreational place where the adults watch a short performance of Briony’s play “The Trials of Arabella”. The house which was a threat and prison for the children now becomes a place where the adults can entertain themselves. However, this change at home may also refer to the triviality of childish anxiety of Briony and her cousins, when it becomes a hotel with its significant name: Tilney. Nevertheless, although Austen’s novel narrates the unnecessariness of Morland’s fear, on the other hand, the novel also underlines the rightness of Morland in her feeling the fear of gothicised atmosphere and characters: the captain Tilney towards the end of the novel, sends Morland to her parent back when he realises that Morland is from the lower class. This oppressive and unexpected attitude of the captain Tilney goes parallel with Morland’s fear. Mr. Tilney acts as she expects. The house, in McEwan’s novel, with its new name and new commercial purpose, parodies the exaggerated anxiety of the children. Yet it also embraces a child’s true awareness of danger from an adult which they can feel but cannot name or do not know from which direction the danger arrives. Truly, from the beginning, what Briony tries to do with her didactic play is to help her brother in choosing the correct girl to marry or to protect her sister from the molestation of Robbie. In spite of her misrecognition, the novel includes a molestor around her. Her senses are exactly correct but their direction is wrong. In this sense, what makes Briony a **guilty** character is not her feeling, anxieties, fears and accusing of Robbie but being so young as not able to pick the real sly rapist Paul Marshall who can easily and figuratively camouflage among the upper middle class adults being one of them.

On the other hand the house is like a place of exile for the cousins. They are the children of divorcing parents. Lola, who is fifteen, and the nine-year-old twins, Jackson and Pierrot are “refugees from a bitter domestic civil war... Quinceys could

stay as long as they liked, provided the parents, if they ever visited simultaneously, kept their quarrels away from the Tallis household” (8). At a certain point, we may criticise the Quinceys’ crushed and embarrassed conditions, yet they get worse as they start interacting with the adults in the house. The twins’ escape is due to unendurable conditions for the children. Jackson wets the bed which indicates his uncomfortable situation or uneasiness. Though he is in a “troubled” situation and far from home, he is also obliged “by current theory to carry his sheets and pyjamas down to the laundry and wash them himself, by hand, under the supervision of Betty” (32). This torture and exploitation of Jackson by the adults and their harsh discipline are one of the stimulative forces for the twins to escape from the house. Besides, punishing a child also indicates that the adults lack pedagogic and psychological knowledge which causes highly torturous-like treatment in terms of our contemporary and humanist principles.

The adults’ incapability of choosing the correct treatment of the kids is revealed through their hypocritical and awkward oppression. The physical torture “was not represented to the boy as a punishment, the idea being to instruct his unconscious that future lapses would entail inconvenience and hard work” (32). The adults’ immoderate treatment gradually gets more difficult as the wet sheets get heavier: “he stood at the vast stone sink which rose level to his chest, suds creeping up his bare arms to soak his rolled-up shirtsleeves, the wet sheets as heavy as a dead dog and a general sense of calamity numbing his will” (32).

Besides, one of the servants, Betty’s thought of **the current theory** is a presuming punishment for the refugee twins. The “current theory” in the novel means the rules of the house: The adults’ principle to rule the children. This current theory, in this sense, domestically represents the strict authority of the adults over the children in pedagogic, social, and psychological levels.

The narration indicates the adult demand on complicity concerning the household regime: “Betty who had been instructed to be distant and firm”, “Briony came down

at intervals to check on his progress. She was forbidden to help” (32), “[Betty] personally thought the treatment too harsh, and would have administered several sharp smacks to the buttocks and washed the sheets herself...his wish was immediately granted, and Briony’s objections generously brushed aside, as though she were the one who was imposing unpleasant ordeals on a helpless little fellow.” (33) The dominant authority also exploits people like servants and children, who lack sway, in its abuse of disadvantageous people, a figuratively orphan child, Jackson in this case. Betty, a person from a lower class, underlines the strictness of the punishment in a more humanistic way. Her way of looking after the children is more sincere, more realistic and more purposive compared to the upper class people in the house. When we consider that Jackson dies earlier than Pierrot, it is revealed that Betty’s approach to Jackson is much more humanist towards a child who is much more sensitive and emotional than his brother. His death, in this sense, represents unendurable oppressions of adults to the children. The adults’ understanding of children is far-fetched expectation. Instead of concentrating on how Jackson gets damaged or hurt from that kind of punishment, the adults try to continue their “current theory” on the children. Although Betty does not approve this punishment method, she is bound to the orders of the adults. That’s why she cannot act with her freewill. McEwan, including the servants in his plot, also employs the interaction between the servants and the children. This close relationship between the child and the servant too has been a pivotal point to discuss. In her study, **Allies and Antagonists: The Ambivalent Relationship between the Servant and The Child of the House in Nineteenth-Century Literature** (1998), Esra Melikoğlu, states that servants and children “despite the class-divide between them, both suffered victimisation at the hands of their superiors” (5). Melikoğlu, in her analysis, also employs the similarities of how both servants and children are exploited by their superiors. She writes “both the servant and child are marked out for subservience to their betters in a culture bound by class and age. Both have to suffer the paternalism of their employers and (surrogate-) parents, respectively, who rule with god-like omnipotence over their lives” (9). Truly, McEwan’s novel includes references consistent with Melikoğlu’s suggestion. While the children are bound to the

oppression of their parents, on the other hand, the servants are accused of raping Lola. Briony accuses Robbie, the son of Grace (the cleaner) who represents the lower class. Besides, the other accused person, Danny, is a servant too. The trust of the Tallises in Robbie and his mother fades away after Briony's false declaration. They are so unfaithful and ungrateful that they easily disregard that Robbie is the only person who finds the twins and brings them back. Ellam summarises this event as "when the Tallies are quick to believe in Robbie's guilt, however, it is possible to see that this was always a kindness that could be revoked and the acceptance of Grace and her son is seen to have been based on whim rather than loyalty" (Ellam, 2009: 50). This suspect of the upper class indicates that the lower class is always "the other" for them: they cannot be internalised. The children are faced with the same attitudes: the adults who have the authority can easily ignore or dismiss the children in their own ideological benefits. The children are used as a vehicle by adults for the continuation of their benefits.

The novel involves financial hierarchical order which reminds feudal hierarchical system in a modern domestic world in the Tallis House. The upper class, in this sense, exploits the housekeepers as well. And this authority is nourished by owning the household. The housekeepers are objects that the upper class has. This objectification is also reflected in a sexually exploitative manner. Robbie deeply experiences this immediate exploitation of the upper class. Robbie, who is financially dependent on the Tallis family, is probably the illegitimate son of Mr. Tallis as mentioned above. Emily Tallis's keeping the probable secret is a disadvantage for Robbie since Emily Tallis easily accuses Robbie when she hears the rape scene. This blame also indicates that Robbie is still "the other" to be accused of any immoral incident. Although he is so close to the Tallis family, the family cannot digest his intimacy since he still represents the lower class. More than this, the Tallis family, on the other hand, financially supports Robbie. This economic help for his school expenses, in fact, is ammunition against Robbie. If we accept the absence of Robbie's father as a metaphor, Robbie stands for a sort of demonstration for the

Tallis family which is a good example of the oppression of upper class adults over the lower class.

This class discrimination is also highlighted through non-existence of any enforcement for Paul Marshall, the real rapist. Besides, Betty's thought to smack Jackson, to give him a lesson not to pee is one of the examples of Melikoğlu's statement that "it is easier for servants to vent their frustration on the largely helpless children, nevertheless, to victimize their offspring is also an effective way to revenge themselves upon their betters" (Melikoğlu, 1998: 17). The conflict between the victimised groups (the children and the servants) consequently indicates that the children are the most humiliated, victimised and oppressed people among them. Since the servants are adults, too, we may name the people who exploit the children are the adults in general.

Moreover, the adults without knowing what sort of oppression they create on the children can be harmful for the children's state of mind. When "the three found themselves back in the nursery which, apart from the bedrooms" they think that the room "was the only room they felt they had a right to be in" (57). Emily's reference to the greatness of the house works not only due to being physically big enough but also due to the pressure the twins and Lola feel not to act freely. The nursery room, which can metaphorically represent the subconscious of the twins and Lola, helps them to reveal their thoughts and emotions. Jackson says "I don't like it here..." As Lola tries to soothe them she "puts her arm across his shoulder and says, 'It's all right. We'll be going home soon'" (McEwan, 2001: 57). Soon after Pierrot indicates how the adults in the house are tyrannisers with a good or bad grace to the children when he "began to sob, but quietly, still mindful of being in a strange house where politeness was all" (57). The twins' endurance is so high that they can still continue to keep their politeness even under the circumstances of punishment, warnings and implicit repression. Their tormented feelings strengthen when they see that they have nowhere to go:

...Jackson was tearful too, but he was still capable of speech. "It won't be soon. You're just saying that. We can't go home anyway . . ." He paused to gather his courage. "It's a divorce!" Pierrot and Lola froze. The word had never been used in front of the children, and never uttered by them. The soft consonants suggested an unthinkable obscenity; the sibilant ending whispered the family's shame. Jackson himself looked distraught as the word left him, but no wishing could bring it back now, and for all he could tell, saying it out loud was as great a crime as the act itself, whatever that was. None of them, including Lola, quite knew. She was advancing on him, her green eyes narrowed like a cat's (57).

Although Lola tries to convince them, she cannot choose the correct manner and she becomes aggressive since she thinks that she cannot cope with the discussion in which the adult discourse is used. The word "divorce" hustles her because it is not a word that exists in the children's world:

"How *dare* you say that." "'S true," he mumbled and looked away. He knew that he was in trouble, that he deserved to be in trouble, and he was about to run for it when she seized him by an ear and put her face close to his. "If you hit me," he said quickly, "I'll tell The Parents." But he himself had made the invocation useless, a ruined totem of a lost golden age. "You will never *ever* use that word again. D'you hear me?" Full of shame, he nodded, and she let him go. The boys had been shocked out of tears, and now Pierrot, as usual eager to repair a bad situation, said brightly, "What shall we do now?" "I'm always asking myself that." (57)

Pierrot's question will lead them to act in the end. They will escape from the tyrannical oppression of the adults. But before this we see that they quarrel for a silly matter while they are in fear of Betty's smack:

"This was Jackson, about to knock on her door. In his other hand there was a gray sock. As she stepped back she noticed he was in ironed gray shorts and white shirt, but was otherwise barefoot. 'Little fellow! What's the matter?' For the moment, he could not trust himself to speak. Instead, he held up his sock and with it gestured along the corridor.

Cecilia leaned out and saw Pierrot some distance off, also barefoot, also holding a sock, and watching. 'You've got a sock each then.' The boy nodded and swallowed, and then at last he was able to say, 'Miss Betty says we'll get a smack if we don't go down now and have our tea, but there's only one pair of socks.' 'And you've been fighting over it.' Jackson shook his head emphatically" (99).

As soon as they develop empathy, they understand that in adults' perspective, it is silly to cry for lost socks: "We don't need to cry over lost socks, do we?" (100) But soon after they reveal the underlying reason of their fight: Pierrot says, "Actually, we'd prefer to go home" (100). As the twins are oppressed, they wreak their anger on Lola:

The older girl blew her nose and thought for a moment. 'I was getting ready for a bath. They came bursting in and pounced on me. They got me down on the floor . . .' At this memory she paused to fight another rising sob. 'But why would they do that?' She took a deep breath and composed herself. She stared unseeingly across the room. 'They want to go home. I said they couldn't' (118).

What is dramatic for Lola is that she has to bite off more than she can chew. Being a child, herself, while she cannot cope with the adults' harassment, and she is not aware of the intention of Paul Marshall; the twins "think" she is "the one who's keeping them here... The twins unreasonably venting their frustration on their sister" (118).

Lola, throughout the novel, hears two words which are peculiar to adult discourse. The first one is "divorce" and the second one is "cunt". Her brothers' utterance of the word "divorce" seems repressive for a child's capacity. That's why her reaction is so sensitive and tense. She rejects to accept that her parents divorce. This incident they experience also indicates that the parents even without their presence can still cause a trauma in their children. Pierrot's positive point of view, on the other hand, shows a child's hope and constructiveness. "What shall we do know?" as Pierrot asks, is a good question. Yet they do not have the eligibility to find a proper answer under the circumstances. Instead, they will escape from the house as a solution. The second

word that hustles Lola is told by Briony to her. She “told her about meeting Robbie on the bridge, and the letter, and how she had opened it, and what was in it. Rather than say the word out loud, which was unthinkable, she spelled it out for her, backward. The effect on Lola was gratifying” (119). This word which belongs to adult discourse astonishes her. Even she cannot comprehend an adult’s potential on sexual intimacy and asks “Thinking about it all the time” (119). McEwan firstly portrays the sort of trauma of the children when they hear such obscene and mature content words. Worse than this they also experience these utterances. The parents are divorced and Lola is raped by Paul Marshall.

Lola alludes to Lolita, a teen girl in the novel **Lolita** written by Vladimir Nabokov in 1955, who has a relation with an old man Humbert Humbert. Unlike Lolita, Lola does not portray a young girl who seduces and/or is not aware of the intimate intention of Paul. Paul Marshall does it on the sly. He has a chocolate factory. Chocolate ironically enough is the only product that fits to the children’s desire in the novel. Neither the garden where they have never played nor is the dinner party a place for children. All the settings, in other words, are for the adults. Chocolate, on the other hand, appeals to their pleasure. Nevertheless, they cannot realise the fact that this chocolate can be used as a phallic symbol which gives sexual pleasure to Paul Marshall while Lola is biting it:

She took it solemnly, and then for the twins, gave a serves-you-right look. They knew this was so. They could hardly plead for Amo (the name of the chocolate) now. They watched her tongue turn green as it curled around the edges of the candy casing. Paul Marshall sat back in the armchair, watching her closely over the steeple he made with his hands in front of his face. He crossed and uncrossed his legs. Then he took a deep breath. “Bite it,” he said softly. “You’ve got to bite it” (62).

In the novel, there are particularly two scenes where one gazes at the others. The first one is Briony. She gazes at her sister and Robbie in front of the fountain. She tries to give a meaning what she sees. She does not have any purposes. However, Paul

Marshall here portrays the same attitudes as Humbert Humbert does. He gazes at Lola. And more than this, he indicates that he has a plan in his mind. The sentence which refers to Lolita in Nabokov's novel, "she had absolutely nowhere else to go" (Nabokov, 1992: 144), fits also for Lola. She is a victim, for Paul Marshall, who cannot escape anywhere. In this sense, we can say that adults can destroy, seduce and tease children though the children are not aware of it. Paul Marshall's paedophilia reveals as soon as he finds an opportunity:

The tall man in a white suit standing in the doorway may have been there many minutes, long enough to have heard Jackson speak the word, and it was this thought, rather than the shock of his presence, that prevented even Lola from making a response. Did he know about their family? They could only stare and wait to find out. He came toward them and extended his hand. "Paul Marshall" (57).

Paul Marshall's giving chocolate to Lola is described in an erotic and seducing way:

He drew from his pocket a rectangular bar wrapped in greaseproof paper and measuring about four inches by one. He placed it on his lap and carefully unwrapped it and held it up for their inspection. Politely, they moved nearer. It had a smooth shell of drab green against which he clicked his fingernail. "Sugar casing, see? Milk chocolate inside. Good for any conditions, even if it melts." He held his hand higher and tightened his grip, and they could see the tremor in his fingers exaggerated by the bar (McEwan, 2001: 61).

This pornographic harassment scene, where an adult Paul Marshall is gazing at a child Lola, is just the opposite scene with the pool scene where Briony gazes at her sister and Robbie near the pool. Nevertheless, Briony's lie (she intends to protect her sister from **maniac** Robbie) leads the adults to catastrophic consequences, more than enough, what Paul Marshall does is much more calamity. While Briony's immediate reaction is without preparation, Paul Marshall organises his plan to rape her. Besides, as the novel's main narrative is constructed on her intention to atone, we never see

any excuse of Paul Marshall. In contrast, towards the end of the novel he marries Lola. Whether Briony lies or not, Lola's life has been destroyed.

The last straw for the twins is their being offended at the dinner party. Ironically enough, in spite of the fact that the adults have the most secret and devious intentions such as Paul Marshall's intention to rape Lola, Robbie's and Cecilia's having sex in the library; the twins are warned by their aunt Emily when Pierrot whispers in Jackson's ear: "No secrets at the dinner table, boys. We'd all like to hear, if you don't mind" (139). After the aunt Emily's caveat, they want to leave: "Jackson, the delegated voice, swallowed hard. His brother stared at his lap. 'We'd like to be excused, Aunt Emily. Please can we go to the lavatory?'" (139). Their anxiety and boredom are reflected by Jackson's difficulty in speaking. Emily's answer is a new preaching that tries to correct his grammar: "Of course. But it's may, not can. And there's no need to be quite so specific" (139). In their letter they write "We are going to run away because Lola and Betty are horrid to us and we want to go home. Sorry we took some frute And there was'nt a play" (142). The twins accuse Lola too. The imposed mother role of Lola is a burden to her. Yet, she cannot manage it. She sometimes becomes tense with her brothers. As she is in between, this situation creates a reciprocal repression for her.

They neither go far outside the garden, nor play in the garden and nor have freewill to visit their cousins when they wish but when it is imposed by the adults. The twins cannot endure the oppression of adults and they escape. The time they choose to escape is the dinner party which metaphorically refers to the community of adults where they can come together and the twins' abandoning of them can be read as a challenge in their microcosmic world to the adults' repression on them. Why microcosmic? Because they won't be able to escape to the distance they want. Their limited world by adults is narrated through Emily's speech: "There was no reason to worry about the twins. They were unlikely to go near the river. Surely, they would tire and come home" (148). Emily's self-confident expectation comes true, they are found and come back. Yet, she only sees "their being tired" as a reason of coming

back. Her tone and statement are certain about impossibility of any danger and threat the twins can face. However, Lola is raped in the same territory by an adult (Paul Marshall) acquaintance who belongs to their group in the estate.

At the dinner party Emily's speech about the enthusiasm of the summer season foreshadows something can happen among young people since "that hot weather encouraged loose morals among young people. Fewer layers of clothing, a thousand more places to meet. Out of doors, out of control. Your grandmother especially was uneasy when it was summer. She would dream up a thousand reasons to keep my sisters and me in the house" (127). Her statement shows us that repression is traditional and long established among the adults. It is the adults' fallacy that there would be no danger for the children in the house. However Paul Marshall starts his abusing them in the children's room. These wrong attitudes of the adults from their ancestral background misdirect them. And they think that what they do is correct. The children's exploitation, in this sense, is indicated as an unsolved problem.

This novel is in a way an inverted or perverted version of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" with its allusion to complicated intimacy between the adults. Namely, choosing the wrong person is similar with Shakespeare's play's intrigues: Puck's dropping the magical elixir on the wrong person's eyes causes people to fall in love with the unintended persons Helena, Hermia, Demetrius and Lysander. What Emily Tallis does is the same to create an intimate night between her daughter and her son's friend Paul Marshall. The same irony of Shakespeare's play appears in this novel as well: While Cecilia is in love with Robbie, Paul Marshall abuses and rapes Lola. Robbie is in love with Cecilia but he is accused of raping Lola. In this sense, Briony here substitutes for Puck who drops the magical elixir, for she misdirects everybody by accusing Robbie as the rapist of Lola and she also substitutes for another character in the love triangle between herself, Robbie and Cecilia. Nevertheless, McEwan's novel twists Shakespeare's happy ending since neither adults nor Briony could find the antidote for this mistake. They are doomed to their own destiny so long as the dystopic theme of contemporary fiction includes modern characters who

have no way but to experience their guilt deeply. McEwan here portrays a different consequence from Shakespeare's play written in the 17th century. Love is the predominant spirit in his play while the sense of atonement is dominant in McEwan's novel. What is strange here is that only Briony tries to atone throughout the novel. In fact, for our concern, the term refers to the adults as well: there is no implication of showing that Emily Tallis regrets her harsh treatment towards the twins which results with their escape and Lola's being raped. She never atones and her sister does not show up to deal with her children after the rape scene. Neither does Paul Marshall make a statement to mention his guilt; in contrast, he marries Lola as if he is trying to overlapping his rape. As a result, we may say that Briony is the only child character who tries to atone because of her guilt but the adults even do not try to do the same.

The dinner is ironic where the adults are nervous and in panic. As traditionally the dinner parties are organised to gather and communicate with each other in a harmonious and respectful way. Yet, Briony, in the dinner, twists this expectation with the letter she has. She is very close to reveal the secret of Robbie and her sister Cecilia. A child figure, Briony, is not a suitable character for the adult's dinner party. In other point of view, the adults do not have the flexibility of absorbing any child figure at the dinner: Briony disturbs Cecilia and Robbie and the twins escape during the dinner party. As Briony has already given the letter she read to her sister and witnessed Robbie's having sex in the library, Cecilia feels uneasy. When Leon asks "what do you think, Cee? Have you behaved even worse than usual today?" (127) Cecilia panics: "All eyes were on her, and the brotherly banter was relentless. "Good heavens, you're blushing. The answer must be yes." Sensing that he should step in for her, Robbie starts to say, "Actually . . ." But Cecilia speaks up: "I'm awfully hot, that's all. And the answer is yes. I behaved very badly. I persuaded Emily against her will that we should have a roast in your honour, regardless of the weather. Now you're sticking to salad while the rest of us are suffering because of you" (127). Her alarmed manner stimulates Briony to help her or protect her from the danger. In other words, Cecilia's incapability of overcoming what she has experienced with Robbie is also another stimulative force for Briony which misleads her.

3.5.1 Three Major Traumas for Briony

Throughout her quest, Briony witnesses three major **traumatic** events in her point of view in the house. The first one is at the fountain, the second one at the library and the third one the rape scene which memorably triggers her astonishment. Apart from her imaginative potential, all these three traumatic events embrace a sexual intercourse between the adults. What is significant is that she witnesses these events in particular places where all may gradually signify stages for her that she sees sexual intercourse. The fountain scene symbolises her first testimony which makes her astonished. The second library scene indicates her how a man approaches his sexual desire and how he forces his victim. The last one is the top limit for her where she witnesses a rape scene. All these three oppressive scenes give her the sense of men's exploitation.

3.5.1.1 The Fountain Scene

Briony sees her sister Cecilia and Robbie struggling over at the fountain from "one of the nursery's wide-open windows" (36). The nursery room symbolises childhood; it alludes to Briony's childish witnessing a man's oppression on her sister. As soon as she sees her sister Cecilia and Robbie near the fountain she starts to build a story related with them: "There was something rather formal about the way he stood, feet apart, head held back. A proposal of marriage. Briony would not have been surprised" (36). And she immediately associates her imagination with her previous story she has already written:

She herself had written a tale in which a humble woodcutter saved a princess from drowning and ended by marrying her. What was presented here fitted well. Robbie Turner, only son of a humble cleaning lady and of no known father, Robbie who had been subsidized by Briony's father through school

and university, had wanted to be a landscape gardener, and now wanted to take up medicine, had the boldness of ambition to ask for Cecilia's hand. It made perfect sense. Such leaps across boundaries were the stuff of daily romance (36).

Nevertheless, as she is still in the influence of the imaginary world, the conflict between the two characters comes easily: "What was less comprehensible, however, was how Robbie imperiously raised his hand now, as though issuing a command which Cecilia dared not disobey. It was extraordinary that she was unable to resist him" (38). As she thinks the man is forcing her sister, the scene turns out to be obscene: "At his insistence she was removing her clothes, and at such speed. She was out of her blouse, now she had let her skirt drop to the ground and was stepping out of it, while he looked on impatiently, hands on hips. What strange power did he have over her? Blackmail? Threats" (38).

All these speculations Briony has are not her final decisions. She still has doubts about her predictions. At least, she can conclude that the sequences of the events she perceives do not have logic as they should be in a proposal of marriage:

Briony raised two hands to her face and stepped back a little way from the window. She should shut her eyes, she thought, and spare herself the sight of her sister's shame. But that was impossible, because there were further surprises. Cecilia, mercifully still in her underwear, was climbing into the pond, was standing waist deep in the water, was pinching her nose—and then she was gone. There was only Robbie, and the clothes on the gravel, and beyond, the silent park and the distant, blue hills. The sequence was illogical—the drowning scene, followed by a rescue, should have preceded the marriage proposal. Such was Briony's last thought before she accepted that she did not understand, and that she must simply watch (38).

However, what Briony misapprehends about the scene is only that it is not a proposal of marriage. Yet she is right about an intimate flirt between Cecilia and Robbie. The reason of Cecilia's coming to the fountain with the vase is to impress Paul Marshall.

Robbie understands this aim and he is jealous of Cecilia. In this case, although Briony's sexual imagination is exaggerated, her feeling, in a sense, will come true with Cecilia and Robbie's sexual intercourses in the following scenes. What Briony sees is not true but what she feels is correct.

Figuratively, the broken "triangular" part of the vase is a reference to the two interactions among Robbie, Cecilia, Briony and Robbie, Cecilia, Paul Marshall. On the other hand, the vase is a symbol that all things traditional and smooth in the Tallis house are about to break. As Ellam states the vase "serves the symbolic purpose of signposting the family's pretensions, yet its journey to the Tallis home is almost as convoluted... It is a gift from when Uncle Clem served in the First World War and is valued for this rather than its heritage; it also acts as a connection between Robbie and Cecilia" (51). The vase is significant as it also represents the Tallis family as "noble" and constituting "truth" which are the meanings of the word "Tallis" ("Tallis"). Uncle Clem deserves this praise since the vase is given to him after his saving lives of the people in a village during the evacuation:

The story of how he had come by the vase was told in one of the last letters the young lieutenant wrote home. He was on liaison duties in the French sector and initiated a last minute evacuation of a small town west of Verdun before it was shelled. Perhaps fifty women, children and old people were saved. Later, the mayor and other officials led Uncle Clem back through the town to a half-destroyed museum. The vase was taken from a shattered glass case and presented in gratitude (McEwan, 2001: 22-23)

This detail is remarkable because it clearly indicates how the next generation is degenerated. Briony's misunderstanding and Cecilia's silence concerning an innocent young man are just the attitudes opposite to Uncle Clem's behaviour.

As the vase is broken, the family is divided. The family name "Tallis" may also refer to the children's difficult situation and uneasiness or openness to danger from adults, since the name also means "forest" ("Tallis") in its French origin. McEwan, by choosing such a significant word, symbolically puts the children into a **forest** motif

where they are mostly in danger and is used as a hazardous place for children in the fairy tales. Fairy tales, **The Little Red Riding Hood** and **Hansel and Gretel**, for instance, include child characters who are faced with the danger in the forest. Therefore, McEwan's novel, with its implications through the explained names above, again underlines the oppression of the children under the adult authority and settings. The Tallis House is, in a way, a **forest** for them where the twins want to escape from.

3.5.1.2 The Library Scene

Briony is an observer of the incident in which the vase is broken by Cecilia and Robbie. Briony, after reading the obscene letter of Robbie, becomes more focused on protecting her sister. Robbie and Cecilia's having sex in the library is also remarkable as Briony has her proof in a written text. The silence of the library where Cecilia and Robbie can have sex also symbolises Briony's mind. The library scene can also be associated with the first experiences of the two sisters: Cecilia is having her first sex experience which can also echo the broken vase, and Briony is witnessing a sexual relationship for the first time in her life. Nevertheless, since she thinks that Robbie forces her sister, her eventual witnessing a rape scene outside is enough for a thirteen-years-old girl not to shock her. The sentence written by Robbie "in my dreams I kiss your cunt, your sweet wet cunt" is the evidence of her thoughts about Robbie. Her confusion, in this sense, is stimulated by Robbie, who is also a reader and writer. While he is trying to apologise to Cecilia, he produces various letters which are different from each other. There is an intertextual reference in this scene which indicates that Robbie is under the influence of his readings: "The handwritten letter he had rested on the open copy of *Gray's Anatomy*, Splanchnology section, page 1546, the vagina. The typed page, left by him near the typewriter, was the one he had taken and folded into the envelope. No need for Freudian smart-aleckry—the explanation was simple and mechanical—the innocuous letter was lying across figure 1236, with its bold spread and rakish crown of pubic hair, while

his obscene draft was on the table, within easy reach” (94). While the obscene words are perceived by Cecilia as a sort of declaration of his love and sexual desire to her, they cause Briony to be terrorised.

What Briony experiences in one day exceeds her capacity. All these pieces of information in her mind are nourished by the adults around her. Therefore, the mistake she makes is not only solely her fault but it is also a collective crime at a certain point. She could not overcome her early facing with the adult world. This is not only because of her eagerness to learn but also because of adults who cannot hide their privacy. The new adult generation has started to use the common space of the house as their private territory or with such a function.

3.5.1.3 Rape Scene

The scene where she sees Paul Marshall is raping Lola, in other words, when she sees an adult man is forcibly and violently trying to have sex with a young girl without her acceptance, is enough to create a trauma in her. For Briony’s case what is worse is that she has seen the rape scene with knowledge of an adult man’s (Robbie) aim at raping her sister Cecilia and at last accomplishing his intention in the library. Therefore what she faces is not only one rape scene but for her consideration two. While she is looking for the twins, “she heard the helplessness in Lola’s voice ... Lola was sitting forward, with her arms crossed around her chest, hugging herself and rocking slightly. The voice was faint and distorted, as though impeded by something like a bubble, some mucus in her throat. She needed to clear her throat” (165). From now on, it is not difficult for Briony to reevaluate her knowledge and the sincerity of her thoughts about Robbie’s seducing her sister. Nevertheless, she asks Lola for her confirmation. Lola “said, vaguely, “I’m sorry, I didn’t, I’m sorry . . .” Briony whispered, “Who was it?” and before that could be answered, she added, with all the calm she was capable of, “I saw him. I *saw* him.” Meekly, Lola said, “Yes.” “It was him, wasn’t it? ... “Yes it was him”” (165). Since Lola has been told what

happened between Cecilia and Robbie and Robbie's letter by Briony, she too has a prejudice about Robbie. That's why she easily accepts Briony's coercive question to confirm.

Briony, being a child, causes all these catastrophic consequences through her misreading the events which exceed her perception. Yet, the approach of the adults to the same events is not different from Briony's. Besides, their inquisition should be more intense than Briony's but they are contented with her story and the letter. After reading the letter "several times over" Emily accuses her daughter "If you had done the right thing, young lady, with all your education, and come to me with this, then something could have been done in time and your cousin would have been spared her nightmare." (176) Without any consideration of the probable trauma that Briony may have since she witnesses these obscene and tyrannical events, the adults continue to listen to Briony's testimony: "She stepped out and turned around to demonstrate the attacker's stance and showed where she herself had stood. Emily said, "But why didn't you tell me?" The policemen looked at Briony and waited. It was a good question, but it would never have occurred to her to trouble her mother. Nothing but a migraine would have come of it" (177). If Briony is wrong at not telling what happened, to the adults, it is because of the miscommunication between them and Briony due to her mother's seclusion because of her "migraine".

This investigation scene is also significant in terms of revealing how the adults can easily make class discrimination while they are trying to find the rapist. Briony's explanation "merely confirmed the general view that had formed: Mr. Turner (Robbie) was a dangerous man" (179). However, "Cecilia's repeated suggestion that it was Danny Hardman" (179) indicates that an adult can accuse someone without any evidence. Yet the others ignore her suggestion, it "was heard in silence" (179). Cecilia's effort is "understandable, though poor form that this young woman should be covering for her friend by casting suspicion on an innocent boy" (179). The adults' attitudes, in this sense, show that if Briony did not declare her witnessing, they would directly accuse Danny. If the adults can accuse Danny, though they do

not have any evidences, would not Briony's condemnation be significant or tolerable under her circumstances? More than enough, Cecilia too contributes to Robbie's imprisonment. At first, she does not "leave her room" (179), and "refuse to come down to be interviewed" (179). Later, she describes what has happened in the library, "when she finally yielded up her own account of what happened in the library—in its way, far more shocking than Briony's" (180). Her statement displays the irreversible consequences.

Investigation of the police officer aims to be objective and he asks: "you saw him then" and Briony replies "I know it was him" (181). The answer does not satisfy the police officer and he remarks "Let's forget what you know. You're saying you saw him." Briony insists, "Yes, I saw him."/ "Just as you see me."/ "Yes."/ "You saw him with your own eyes."/"Yes. I saw him. I saw him." (181)

What is critical is that Briony, saying "I know it was him", in fact implies that she answers with her manipulative background and the adults either miss the point or just want to finish their (the police officers) job as soon as possible. Comparing the adults' urgent sentence about Robbie's guilt, with Briony's various tests to be sure about Robbie's intention; Briony portrays a more idealistic personality than the adults. Briony does not instantly accuse Robbie. For sure, she is in shock when she sees Lola is raped but Briony does not declare Robbie as the rapist just only after the rape scene. In contrast, she collects data. She waits for her decision. She evaluates her experiences. Although she thinks that her sister is in danger, she still waits till the unbearable rape scene. In other words, she behaves like Hamlet, who wants to be sure about the real murderer of his father till the end of the play. The adults, especially the police officers in the novel, act just the opposite of Briony. They decide only by relying on a child's declaration, who is in shock after witnessing the rape. The adults' quick verdict about the guilt of Robbie, therefore can be evaluated as it is much more catastrophic than Briony's long process at making a decision. The adults' quick decision here reminds us of Alexander Pope's satire **The Rape of the Lock** (1717) where the judges make sentence very quickly not to miss their lunch:

“Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,/ The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;/ The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,/ And wretches hang that jury-men may dine;” (Pope, 1989: 168). What Pope satirises in the 18th century results in catastrophic and unjust consequence in contemporary fiction.

Besides, the false decision of a child is encouraged via limiting the options into two binary oppositions by the adults. The adults stimulate Briony to commit crime through her prompt decision: whether she saw Robbie while raping or not. Peter Mathews in his article “The Impression of a deeper Darkness: Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*” discusses one of the themes of the novel: secret in terms of the binary oppositions, and multi-polar perspectives in the novel. He asserts that McEwan, being aware of this paradox, uses this theme of secrecy to be explored. The novel implies mystery through describing Briony’s “passion for secret” (Mathews, 2006). Mathews goes one step further and in a way falsifies the labelling of Briony’s guiltiness. To be able to prove his idea he starts with defining the etymology of the word “innocence”: “innocence is based on this very idea; the Latin origin of the word is a compound of the negative prefix “in” and the verb “agnoscere”, which translates as “to acknowledge, recognize” (Mathews, 2006: 150). In the light of this background he suggests that “the police investigations narrow Briony’s choice: ‘either she saw, or she did not see’ (160). But the relationship between knowledge and innocence cannot be broken down into the simple either/or of a binary relation” (150). Moreover, he underlines the uncertainty of line between secret and mystery. He says:

The structure of knowledge is less straightforward than knowing or not knowing. In Briony’s case, for example, mystery and secret are intricately interwoven: while an act of concealment (her false accusation) takes place, Briony’s true motivations for her action remain murky... Briony’s story is therefore complex in its ethical implications, for while the revelation of her secret accuses her, the mystery of her motivations simultaneously excuses her-yes, she committed a crime, but her youthful naïveté meant that she acted without “full” knowledge. Like Oedipus, she is both *guilty* and

innocent because of this asymmetry in the structure of knowledge” (150).

During her declaration to the police officers, she, being an adolescent, is forced to expose a **mystery** rather than a **secret**. However, as she grows up and becomes an adult her mystery turns into a secret which, as Mathews says, “accuses her” while the former, mystery “excuses her”. In other words, inability of revealing the **truth** in her adolescence does not make her **guilty** but her insisting on keeping the secret as she becomes an adult makes her **guilty**. In this sense, we do not accuse the child Briony but the adult Briony who is incapable to tell the truth.

3.6. Conclusion

The child image, in this novel, is represented as harmful as much as oppressed. The novel indicates that they can contribute and have potential to ruin people’s life. Nevertheless, in the big picture, the novel also exposes the adults to have given sufficient and stimulative environment to the children to do harm. As indicated above, the children are to experience and survive in a world where the oppressions, obligations, and exploitations occur by the adults. When we expand our perspective from domestic narrative to the universal implications in the novel, we again see that the world created and owned by the adults still continue to victimise the children in a more deeper sense.

In addition, the novel also employs, if we may say, a lack of parents for children to look after properly. While the mother mostly wastes her time in her room because of her migraine, the father, too, does not participate in the events and the situation in a domestic life where the children are not cared much. In this sense, the father, Jack Tallis is, in John Updike’s words “the powerful absentee Old Man, an offstage deus ex machina” (Updike, 2002: 80) who has been far away from the events in the house ironically represents a passive and clumsy male portrait especially when he hears that

Lola is raped. He cannot accomplish to arrive at the house. While he is in return way to the house “Mr. Tallis’s driver had rung from a phone box near Croydon Airport. The departmental car, made available at short notice through the kindness of the minister, had broken down in the suburbs” (McEwan, 2001: 180). The father’s inability refers to not only domestic problem but governmental as well. Since the car is not a private one but departmental it also symbolises the government, society, in general the adult authority. The novel suggestively implies that Mr. Tallis is working for the secret government preparations for the war with Germany. He, therefore, refers to himself as a “slave to the Ministry” (123). Mr. Tallis’s praising the value of the family and patriotism despite his flaw, clumsiness and grim situation in both family and governmental levels reveals how could the adults’ ideological obsession cause the victimisation of the children. Since Mr. Tallis is working for the government, he, like Paul Marshall, is supporting the war in the novel where mostly the deaths of the children are described. The father figure too has an agency in the exploitation of children.

More than this, the father represents a latent phallic symbol which is impotent as he “was asleep under a rug on the backseat and would probably have to continue by the first morning train” (180). As being an adult, he intends to come to help but he fails at his aim. The father portrays just the opposite characteristic of Briony’s fictitious character, Arabella’s father. When Arabella’s father learns that his daughter is going/escaping, he advises her:

My darling one, you are young and lovely,
But inexperienced, and though you think
The world is at your feet,
It can rise up and tread on you (27).

The irony is that in their world, a child does not get damaged and become victimised only outside but also in domestic life. It is one of the characteristics of contemporary fiction which indicates the children as victims without any need of outdoor danger, although they are also, in Dodou’s words, “morally culpable” (Dodou, 2012: 15).

The rapist Paul Marshall represents a politic and self-centred character whatever would be the consequences. He is a man who tries to make a fortune with his new chocolate bar by selling them to the soldiers. That's why he wishes for a war if "Mr. Hitler did not pipe down" (50). His surname **Marshall** implies a totalitarian and militarist discourse. **Marsh-all**, with its imperative form includes a forceful imperative. His command-like surname expands the narrative to a more communal, authoritative and dictatorial significance. The novel, in this sense, indicates that a psychopath adult character may have a function at supporting a war and besides, the novel also shows how the adults' selfish desires may cause a big catastrophe in the society. He has violence-prone desires without any consideration of humanist values. It would be wrong to expect humanist treatments from a person who wishes people to kill each other, just to earn money. What is missing in many criticisms of the novel is, in this sense, that the novel also reveals the potential of an adult to participate in the beginning of a war. Besides, he uses the bar as a means to talk to the children. That's why the chocolate bar is a phallic symbol which can reach to a range of people: from children to the soldiers at war, which is an entity that is created by males in the world. As Marshall's masculine power exploits and victimises the children even in domestic life, he has also an important role in supporting a violent world through war, where the children are the most victimised beings among people. In socio-economic level, Marshall "the true rapist, represents the new breed of capitalist entrepreneur whose amoral pursuit of profit is underlined by his making his fortune from the war. He is equally willing to rape '[p]oor vain and vulnerable Lola' (306) as he is to take advantage of the country fighting for its survival" (Finney, 2006: 90). The only happy ending is for Paul Marshall because he marries her victim and earns money through selling chocolate bars to the soldiers in the war. The novel, in this sense, implies the worse situation of a child character Lola who becomes a slave under the authority of post war capitalist rapist.

The novel also states the most victimised people of war as are the children. In the novel, while the British army is retreating, Robbie is narrated as a soldier. The

damages of the war are stated mostly reflecting the dead bodies of children and their destroyed environments:

It was a leg in a tree. A mature plane tree, only just in leaf. The leg was twenty feet up, wedged in the first forking of the trunk, bare, severed cleanly above the knee. From where they stood there was no sign of blood or torn flesh. It was a perfect leg, pale, smooth, small enough to be a child's. (McEwan, 2001: 188)

On the first night, when they were sheltering in the bike shed of a burned-out school (189).

The scraps of cloth, he was beginning to think, may have been a child's pyjamas. A boy's (190).

They were in the final stages of digging a grave. Lying facedown beyond the pile of earth was a boy of fifteen or so. A crimson stain on the back of his white shirt spread from neck to waist (221).

Soldiers and civilians were streaming away from the road in all directions. A woman brushed past him carrying a crying child, then she changed her mind and came back and stood, turning indecisively at the side of the road. Which way? The farmyard or the field? Her immobility delivered him from his own. As he pushed her by the shoulder toward the gate, the rising howl commenced (222).

McEwan reveals the fact that the children are exploited not only in their domestic lives but also in the world where the war of the adults mostly damages and victimises them. Contemporary British fiction, as represented in McEwan's novel, not only depicts children's difficult circumstances, potential to commit a crime and struggle to cope with the adults' lives but also reflect them in a more universal level. A child, as the novel indicates, can cause terrible consequences through his/her misunderstanding, yet this does not make him/her a villain under the circumstances induced by adults. Thus, s/he is still a medium and scapegoat of adults' sexual desires, authoritative enforcements and negligence. McEwan uses the child characters as vehicles which help to reveal the cruelty of adults' oppression and its

consequences in this novel. McEwan also stresses the idea that adults' forces in domesticity on the children consistently go in parallel or hand in hand with political and ideological benefits of the adults.

Conclusion

So far, this dissertation discussed that the image of the children has a function as vehicles to reveal the intimate and close relationship between themselves and adults who victimise children under the oppressive authority for their social and ideological benefits in McEwan's novels. The image of childhood is a social and cultural construction. As Pifer asserts "for novelists this image has undergone radical transformation since the nineteenth century, when Charles Dickens and his contemporary Ariès translated the Romantic idyll of natural innocence into touching versions of 'poor children' set adrift in a harsh and inhumane world" (Pifer, 2000: 1). As the child image has been changed from period to period its reflection has been altered in fiction as well.

Children in fiction have always and inevitably been narrated, described and explained without their interpretations, by adults in children's literature and in adult fiction. As mentioned above, the children are under the oppression and (in Mendel's term) **authority** of adults who exploit children for their social construction. Despite their voiceless circumstances, they are nevertheless used to represent the conditions and situations of the period of the written texts.

Characteristics of children in fiction have been nourished by historical changes. While the sinfulness of the newborns was dominant idea in the Middle Ages, this idea of original sin was deconstructed by Locke's idea of tabula rasa. Later Rousseau's search on human nature deconstructed Locke's neutral idea and Rousseau points the innocence of human being as they are born innately good. His innovative and optimistic thought had significance on pre-romantic idea. Aspiring from the innate goodness of children, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Romantics, for the first time, depicted childhood via adorable characters in their poetry. The innocence of childhood was predominant. It was a desirable state that adults missed or lost, therefore idealised. Idea of the innocence of childhood had been topics of the romantic poets who meanwhile stressed the children as labourers

who are exploited by the adults' jobs. The poets such as Blake used the child characters and sentimentalised their existence. In the Victorian period, child characters, on the other hand, eluded from innocence of romantic view and their symbolised entity; instead they appeared in an atmosphere where they have to struggle in the harsh, more realistic lives of adults. They became more humanised creatures at the cost of painful, powerless representations. They are portrayed as carrying the potential to commit crimes like their model adults; they are also represented as "the victims of adult power, emotional or physical brutalities, social neglect, illness and early death" (Gavin, 2012: 9). Edwardian literature, on the other hand, defined the term childhood in respect of its own idiosyncratic realm. Far away from the adult world, children are depicted in a neo-romantic way by giving them their nature and imagination back. They are mostly portrayed in their own playground, gardens or at least isolated from adult society. In the 20th century, however, literary children were depicted as "ideal, victimised, a model for adults, threatened, happy, lost, and sought after and old beyond its years" (11) as much as they are portrayed as harmful, violent, evil-like. On the other hand, with the diminishing of the effect of religion they are also represented as significant "not because they are heaven sent or set for heaven, but in and of themselves" (11). Through Freud's theories, it is understood that they have sexual intentions in a very early age. This sexualised image converted the idea of innocent child. It is realised that they, like adults, become more complicated, and they can act insidiously too. In contemporary British literature, the utopic aspect of the children has been questioned. The idea of innocence of children has been scrutinised. Dodou, like many other critics, depicted the child image as a "source of adult anxiety and a threat to the societal order" (240).

Besides, since McEwan examines the child characters in parental atmosphere, the dissertation inevitably deals also with the situation of the child images in the family institution. As Lionel Trilling declares in his book **Sincerity and Authenticity** (1972) "child's relation to the family" has always been fiction's province: "Traditionally the family has been a narrative institution: it was the past and it had a

tale to tell of how things began, including the child himself” (139). By the same token, a child image in the family has been portrayed in a more problematised manner. Pifer would suggest “the breakdown of family life and the child’s relation to it, which intensified during the twentieth century, has given rise to new and often devastating images of childhood in contemporary fiction” (Pifer, 2000: 2). In McEwan’s novels, the image of children suffers from the same “breakdown”. Besides, political benefits of the adults are one of the most important concepts that exploit the children. Nevertheless, this dissertation does not absolve children and does not aim to purify them or indicate their innocence under the circumstances; but, it reveals that the children who experience the same difficulties as adults’ mirror oppressiveness induced by adults when they manipulate the children for their benefits and pleasures. The children take the villainous image to cope with the adults’ lives in most cases. In this sense, they may exceed the boundaries created by adults via incest relationship and catastrophic lies. But McEwan’s novels, on the other hand, clearly underline the children’s dreadful situations in the adult-dominant world: they are ignored, neglected, forced to be beggars, raped, humiliated, abandoned, murdered, seduced, abused, oppressed, and victimised.

In this dissertation I take the advantage of McEwan’s portraying children as a vehicle to criticise the narrated period’s political regimes and parental settlements, so as to indicate how the child characters are very close to the circumstances of adults and how they are defenceless, although they are represented as villainous and harmful in some cases.

McEwan’s novels clearly disclose “the modern concept of childhood while increasing the cultural value placed on children, often worked against them restricting their spontaneity and freedom and subjecting them to greater institutional control and punishment” (Pifer, 2000: 13). This evaluation is underlined in contemporary literature where the children are scrutinised more closely within the parental institutions. “In recent years the Romantics’ worship of the child’s divine or transcendent origins” says Pifer “has revealed a shadowy underside and the cult of

sacred childhood has turned satanic, supplanting angelic children with demonic ones who serve the powers of darkness” (15). Pifer’s statement of childhood as **sacred** refers to the idealised and nostalgic image of Romantic texts. Yet according to us, as Gerald Gillespie states Romantics assumed “childhood as a period of life in which mankind is very close to the natural state (Gillespie, 2008: 184). Still agreeing on Pifer’s idea that contemporary literature has changed the perception of childhood from positive to negative image at a certain point, it is still debatable that there is not a clear cut. The conditions and the situations of children may vary in different circumstances. McEwan’s novels prove that “demonic” attitudes of the children do not arise from their instinctive pulses or they are not **innately** bad but these attitudes are mostly established as a reaction to adults’ dominant world or are implicitly supported by adults.

In **The Cement Garden** the children’s “escape from all authority and traditional moral and social standards suggest a certain interpretation of recent British history and social development” (Malcolm, 2002: 8). Meanwhile, the novel with its “mixture of fascination and slight horror” also states the condition of the children. Wolfgang Wicht refers to Jack as “ce monstre d’insensibilité (this unfeeling monster)” (quoted in Malcolm, 2002: 45). Yet, for our concern Jack is a “monster” who reminds Frankenstein’s monster: In Mary Shelley’s novel **Frankenstein** (1818), the doctor represents an adult image and the monster represents a child image created by adults. In this sense, if Jack is assumed as a monster, it is adult ideology that creates him under the circumstances. As Frankenstein’s monster has been rejected by the society since he is unlike the society and unaware of social construction of the adults, Jack and his sisters too, have been rejected and humiliated because of their incest relationship and because of their demand to live without the adult authority. Although the novel “punctures idealized representations of the child” (Dodou, 2012: 241), it also reveals the adult-centred society tries to manipulate and control the children who have potential to break the taboos and bans to protect their unity.

The Child in Time gives us an opportunity to scrutinise how a government's policy on children is established not for the benefits of children but for political party members. McEwan criticises Thatcherite Britain as "a fairly authoritarian right-wing government" which "has decided to make proper, disciplined childcare part of its official policy" (Malcolm, 2002: 88). The children, in this novel, who are almost absent have a function to reveal the clumsiness of adults from the nuclear family to the government. The adults either selfishly suffer from their inability to look after a child, and try to find a way which makes them happy or they legitimise beggar children instead of finding a more humanist solution. Besides, they manipulatively publish a sordid childcare manual for only the benefit of the government. In this novel, through Kate's being lost at the very beginning, McEwan figuratively protects the child image from the oppressive and dictator impositions yet the novel still displays the trick of adults to exploit and victimise children for their own benefits.

Atonement portrays a harmful child character, who cannot fully comprehend adults' experiences through her gazing, and who causes irreversible consequences through her not telling the truth about a traumatic rape scene she has witnessed. As the novel "refuses to absolve the 'unforgivable' child" (Dodou, 2012: 242) image it also involves how the children in a domestic life can be abused by adults. While the novel expects implied readers to focus on the guilt of a child and her endeavour to atone, it also lights on how adults' guilt (such as the rape scene) can easily stay unsolved since the domination is in the adults' hands. The **guilty** child's wrong accusation is not totally the result of her being **innately** bad and harmful but partly due to the adults' negligence, ignorance and oppressions. In the novel, while a girl causes misfortune of the lovers and sending an innocent man to the prison, the novel includes hundreds and thousands of killed children in the war. If we consider the villainous aspect of a character through her or his potential to do harm, it is the adults to accuse not the children.

Last but not least, I did not try to absolve child characters but to question the reason behind their harmful characteristics. And I focused on the question what are the

reasons that force them to act as harmful or miserable? Yet I know that there is not a clear and precise answer for this question. Instead, I dwelled on thinking the effects of parental intimacy on them. McEwan's novels, largely elaborating the child image, are good opportunities to reveal the influence of parenthood in their lives. And this thematic view in his novels let me analyse and realise that the child characters can be mean, selfish, bad just as an adult can but the reason behind this harmful treatment lies behind the fact that they are mediums which or who can be exploited by adults. Besides, as the texts I discussed reveal, in each case, they are, in the end, either dead, frustrated, consumed and captured, or integrated to the adult system: Jack and the other siblings are caught by the police officers, Kate cannot be found, the beggar girl dies, Briony is not forgiven, Lola is raped and married her rapist. My research implies that happy endings for children is far-fetched expectation or easy to destroy in contemporary fiction. My scope can also be expanded to the investigation "in the unconscious mechanisms of collective repression" and "masculinist fantasy" (Pifer, 2000: 13) that exploit children.

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-	İngilizce Öğretmenliği Formasyon	Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi	2003
Lisans	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü	Doğuş Üniversitesi	2003
Yüksek Lisans	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bilim Dalı-Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	Doğuş Üniversitesi	2006
Doktora	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bilim Dalı-Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	İstanbul Üniversitesi	2014

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ETT 203 Discourse Analysis I

ETT 205 Interpreting I

ETT 207 Translation for Dubbing & Subtitling

ETT 209 Translation for Social Sciences

ING 282 Commercial Correspondence