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Unraveling Identity in Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*

Zohreh Ramin[1,*]; Seyyed Mohammad Marandi[2]

[1] PhD in English Language and Literature, University of Tehran, Iran.
[2] Associate Professor, English Language and Literature, University of Tehran, Iran.
* Corresponding author.

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Abstract

The present paper aims to focus on the relationship between narrative and human identity and the process of identity construction in McEwen's *Enduring Love*. This study aims to show how the process of identity construction reveals to be one that is both relational and strongly dependent upon expression. The novel begins with the major character's narration of a balloon incident, which has served as the starting point for the fragmentation and dispersion of the protagonist, Joe, whom looking back at the incident, is now trying to put the fragments together to reconstruct his shattered identity. In this procedure, not only are we presented with Joe's narrative but also that of Clarissa, Joe's wife and Jed Perry, whom believes there is a special love between himself and Joe which Joe is denying. Each character has his/her own narrative to consider as a means of exercising power and neither is willing to accept the other's' narrative.

Key words: Narrative; Identity construction; Reconstruction; Fragmented self

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> "A narration is a gnosis, a retelling by one who knows. It is also a diagnosis, an act of identifying or interpreting by a discriminating reading of signs." (J.Hillis Miller)

INTRODUCTION

Traditional scholarship believed literary texts had "textual realities"; a concept discarded by contemporary approaches which have redefined traditional notions of narratives and narratology and have developed new procedures in confronting narratives. When narratology emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, it employed a particularly structuralist approach in dealing with fictional literature. The scholars of this trend were in search of a kind of Saussurean *langue* in generating a system from which all narratives would be drawn, ignoring each narrative as a *Parole* in itself. They sought to reveal a universal code, based on Noam Chomsky's "universal grammar" (James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, 2007, p.2).

Contemporary studies of narratives, emerging form poststructuralist notions of multiplicity and diversity have come to reject such universalizing and confining notions of narratives. They have rejected "grand narratives" in favor of "local narratives." Furthermore, the consequence of breaking form the structuralist notion of narratology has been the blurring of distinctions between fictional and non-fictional stories, so that they are not merely binary oppositions but only instances of endless possibilities;" while aspects of narrative can be suggested, narrative cannot be reduced or generalized through an act of definition"(Wolfreys, 2004, p.163). But why is narrative so important? How is it related to identity?

Narrative is an expressive embodiment of our experience. It serves as a form of our understanding of the world and ultimately ourselves. A central question relevant in this context is how we construct what we call our lives. This construction of self and the world is carried out and explored through narrative.

Questions such as how we give meaning to our lives and how we construct ourselves in time as coherent beings have deep roots in Western philosophy and literature. Contemporary scholarship in diverging fields now strive

to supply multifarious answers to these questions, and have consequently provided versatile perspectives to the understanding of human identity.

The present paper aims to focus on the relationship between narrative and human identity in Ian McEwen's *Enduring Love*. Along with his contemporary, Martin Amis, Ian McEwan is considered to have made a formative contribution to the "landscape and tempo of fiction writing during the past three decades (Bradford, 2007, p.18). However, despite his reputation for the macabre, McEwan is considered more as a serious, than a postmodernist author (Childs, 2005, p.160).

Enduring Love (1977) is a novel in which McEwan deals less with the actions of an event than with the consequences of one, and its impact upon the life of the novel's major character, Joe Rose. Joe's struggle to reconstruct his identity through narrating it to the reader reveals to be a fertile ground for the consideration of the close tie between narrative and identity, reflecting one of Paul Ricour's major theses regarding the close affinity between narrative and identity; "the concept of narrative identity offers a solution to the aporias of personal identity."(Wood, 1991, p.195).

The novel begins with the major character's narration of a balloon incident, which has served as the starting point for the crisis in Joe's perception of his own identity, whom looking back at the incident, is now trying to put the fragments together to reconstruct his shattered identity. In this procedure, not only are we presented with Joe's narrative but also that of Clarissa, Joe's wife and Jed Perry, who believes there is a profound religious relationship between him and Joe, which has been forged during the balloon incident, and which Joe is denying.

Each character has his/her own narrative to consider and neither is willing to give up in the face of the other's' narrative. The present study will attempt to follow the procedure involved in self-construction and the ultimate result of such narrative construction of identities.

DISCUSSION

Stories are everywhere, we use stories to tell our lives, and in turn, stories shape our lives. Narratives prove to be a supremely appropriate means for the exploration of the self, or the construction of selves in cultural contexts of time and space. Most scholars of narrative believe that human identity is bound to the notion of narrative and narrativity, to the point that human identity could not exist without narrative construction. Bennet and Royle (1991) have proposed five areas of concern for the study of narrative:

> Stories are everywhere,
> We tell stories and stories tell us; stories are everywhere and we are in stories
> Telling of a story is bound up with power, property and domination
> Stories are multiple; there is always more than one story
> Stories are self-reflexive; tell us something about stories themselves.(p.41)

What they wish to prove is how stories are a significant part of our lives, not only do we tell them, but they tell us. However, they continue to emphasize that this does not mean that everything around us involves stories (science, history, biology…). They are not all fictive, in fact; many different aspects of life are bound up with narrative. In the novel considered in this paper, Joe, the narrator, is extremely bound up with this notion for not only does he narrate his story of the balloon incident and its consequences but also it is through the very story he narrates that we find the reason why he is narrating it; to reconstruct his shattered identity. He is mainly obsessed with the way we have come to internalize things in the world. He is aware that we come to construct things in the world according to the narratives we are already familiar with:

> "Joe takes a deep breath and turns from the window to exhale. He makes a deliberate show of calming himself, of starting again from a reasonable premise, of being a reasonable man refusing to be driven to extremes. He speaks in a quiet, breathy tone, exaggeratedly slow. Where do we learn such tricks? Are they inscribed, along with the rest of our emotional repertoire? Or do we get them from the movies? (McEwan, 1997, p.87)

Not only do narratives construct us, but we construct narratives. But are they always true? "I fixed my twelve pages with a paper clip and balanced their weight in my hand. What I had written wasn't true. It wasn't written in pursuit of truth, it wasn't science. It was journalism, magazine journalism, whose ultimate standard was readability" (p.50). Joe attempts to construct his own narrative of the balloon incident but his narrative does not match that of Clarissa's. In fact from her point of view, Parry may be a construct of Joe's imagination gone to its extremes. Although she stands for passion, when it comes to believing Joe, she wants to have evidence "you were so intense about him as soon as you met him. It's like you invented him" (p.86).

McEwan introduces the clashing perspectives of Clarissa and Jed, each representing a different mode of thinking from Joe's. Until the end of the novel, the reader is still unsure whose perspective should be trusted. McEwan diversifies perspectives which deal with the same event. He appears to be thus reflecting contemporary narrative theorist's obsession with identity as " relational, meaning that it is not to be found inside a person but that it inheres in the relations between a person and others" (Currie, 1998, p.17), highlighting the great import of introducing the clashing perspectives of Clarissa and Jed with the way Joe evaluates matters. To construct Joe's identity, there must be different identities which will ultimately give meaning to Joe's notion of himself.

Even more relevant is the second major grounds upon

which contemporary narrative theorists rely upon when it comes to matters of identity. Since it is believed that identity is not within us, so it is of vital importance that we "tell "our stories:

> …identity is not within us because it exists only as narrative. By this I mean two things: that the only way to explain who we are is to tell our own story, to select key events which characterize us and organize them according to the formal principles of narrative- to externalize ourselves as if talking of someone else, and for the purpose of self-representation; (Currie, 1998, p.17)

Therefore it becomes of grave importance that Joe narrates his story of the past, as a means to externalize himself, with the aim of justifying his right decision in the incident.

The simplest form of narrative is one with a beginning, middle, and end. In novels, temporal ordering of events is important in the course of the narrative; "narrative is characterized by its representation of a series of events or actions which are connected in time. " (Bennet and Royle, 1995, p.42). The order of telling narratives usually involves the chronological order of the happening of events but the narrative also involves distortions in the usual chronological sequence of events. In this sense, narrative and time are closely related. Since narrative has been heavily influenced by deconstruction, the area most fertile for deconstructing narrative is the linear progression of events. Whereas narrative linearity would repress diversity, the deconstruction of the chronological order of events opens space for the production and outburst of diversity and multiplicity.

According to Brooks, Narratives involve a movement from a state of "equilibrium" or stasis, to a disturbance of this point of order and stability and at the end, a return back to the primary state of stability (or at least what seems to be a temporary state of stability.), which is what has happens to Joe. The balloon incident was the point of disruption, movement away from the state of "equilibrium." From that point onwards, the narrator recalls the fragments of the incident and his attempt at putting together the bits and pieces of the story reflects his attempt at reconstructing his own identity. From then on, he wishes to reconstructed the fragments, to untie the knots to eventually come up with a unified portrait of not only himself but his wife and even Perry "Of course, I could no longer deny what I was doing. I told myself that I was acting to untie knots, bring light and understanding to this mess of the unspoken. It was a painful necessity. I would save Clarissa form herself and myself from Parry." (p.105). He is also aware how we can construct narratives and make others believe in them "What I was thinking of again as I pressed the doorbell was that stapler, and how dishonestly we can hold things together for ourselves." (p.107)

It is important to mark that narratives intend to be read, or listened to by someone else, in other words narratives involve" someone telling someone else that something happened" (Bennet and Royle, 1995, p.45). This reflects the importance of the reader/listener in the narrative. While Joe continues to narrate his story, with the opening of chapter nine, he makes a shift in point of view. What would happen if the story were told from Clarissa's view point? We find that her interpretation of the things happening to Joe are completely different from Joe's, to the point that she comes to distrust the truth of his narrative. Telling stories is bound up with exercising power. According to Chambers, storytelling is a way in which the weak can stand against the strong; a kind of "oppositional" practice (Bennet and Royle, 1995, p.46). Most often, it is the dominant ideology, which is able to tell stories. Narrative power is a means through which the weak can make themselves heard. Yet at the same time, these stories are self-reflexively about the power of stories. Joe wishes to exercise his power by constantly imposing his beliefs to what he himself believes has happened. Although a stark rationalist, at times he cannot even provide proofs for his hypothesis, which is alarming to the passionate Clarissa.

In his encounter with Logan's wife, each have their own narrative. While for Joe, it is his own cowardice which disturbs him, for Logan's wife, it is important to find the woman whom she has come to connect to her former husband, employing her own narrative:

> …That's what he would have done without her, and it's pathetic. He was showing off to a girl, Mr. Rose, and we're all suffering for it now."
>
> This was a theory, a narrative that only grief, the dementia of pain, could devise. "But you can't know this," I protested." It's so particular, so elaborate. It's just a hypothesis. You can't let yourself believe init." (p.123)

When it comes to imposing narratives, narrators will attempt to make their narratives accepted, even if the process of achieving the desired conclusion cannot be supported realistically. Lewis and Sandra Hinchman have explored how "personal narrative" studies reveal a kind of narrative inquiry that focuses on personal stories that try to resist the grand narratives, in this sense; storytelling becomes an act of resistance towards the dominant paradigm of rationality (Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001, p.5).

What is relevant to literature concerning narrative is according to Bennet and Royle; temporality, linearity and connectivity, narrative perspective, desire and power. In the novel it is not only the sequence of events happening in time that is important but what connects them; in the balloon incident, the major character delays telling the story, because he is not only obsessed with what happened but the connection between the temporal and every step of the narrative, one by one as they let go of the rope, reveals their selfishness, how they could have saved Logan from dying, and yet he was the only one who did not let go, the hero. McEwen does not wish to simply list the events

but wants the reader to grasp the narrative, by showing how they are related. He wants to reveal not only the consequence of their letting go of the rope there and then, but its reflection on Joe's entire life.

A significant method employed in the novel which disrupts the linear progression of events in narratives is the employment of "none" or "anti-narratives". Dissolution of time, space, life, identity, desire, and narrative may happen, as Jago Morrison remarks, as the linearity of the narrative is interrupted by non-narrative elements. In this novel, Joe continually disrupts the linear progression of events, especially when he comes to narrating a crucial point of his story, and thus digresses from the ending. So while he continues to move towards the ending of his narrative, he digresses form it, even mentioning it himself "I'm holding back, delaying the information." (p.2)

TIME AND NARRATIVE

In contemporary critical thinking, time has come to be of central importance in fiction, one that needs more attention and concern. Morrison writes that there occurred a certain disruption in conventional views about time with the outburst of Albert Einstein's theory of Relativity, replacing Newton's conception of a "universal, abstract, mechanistic time" (Morrison, 2003, p.26). Of course Einstein was only one among many who helped this change in view of time, seeking the "truth" of what had formerly been named as "absolute time."

According to these new voices then, time was neither absolute nor meaningful independently, but became meaningful only once it took form in the formation of the self. Conversely, the self has meaning only once it is recognized in the context of time (same thing with narrative and stories; we tell stories, stories tell us).

However, the two opposing views of absolute and relative time exist side by side. On one hand there is a critique of an absolute, universal time and on the other, there is the imposition of such abstract and absolute model of time on the lives of ordinary people. So in fictive works, the author's investigation of the subject's desire and imagination is always opposed to the rigidity and inflexibility of industrial time. Writers mainly oppose this dominant and overpowering aspect of time. Because of this, we see many disruptions in time and conventional linearity of events in narratives and fiction; this is a result of a revolt and rejection, an attempt to break the rigidity and stiffness of time when it becomes engaged with highly flexible and multifaceted elements such as imagination and desire. Questioning of time and inserting alternative spaces in contemporary texts opens possibilities for re-imagination and resistance, which would not be possible via realist narration.

In the present novel, McEwen distorts the linear progression of events specifically at crucial points to present the reader with multiple perspectives. Not only are we told the story from Joe's point of view, but Clarissa and even Jed Perry join in and each present their own narrative. So the novel rejects projecting a grand narrative, which is inflexible and rigid. In fact, we are presented with multiple narratives to provide diversity, or even little narratives. So the narrative technique of breaking up the grand narrative into little narrative is in harmony with the multiple identity constructions, unique to Joe, Clarissa, and even Perry. Although Joe's narrative is the most powerful one, since most chapters are focused on his narrative than the others, only when Clarissa and Parry are given an opportunity to express their narratives are they able to exercise their power over Joe. And to keep your power over others, you need to make them believe your narrative, which is what obsesses Joe "if you lived in a group, like humans have always done, persuading others of your own needs and interests would be fundamental to your well-being." (p.104)

McEwen deliberately disrupts the linear progression of time because he wishes to critique the notion of absolute time, in favor of the *Relativity Theory*. This happens in the novel when we do not have a linear progression of events but disruption of happenings, as our expectations are continually disrupted with the opening of chapters in a position we need first to decode, and then to follow. As readers, when a chapter opens, and this happens mostly with the chapters in the second half of the book, we need to decode the time of the narration, what, and specifically when the actions being narrated refer to, generating the effect of metafictional play.

Time is thus crucial in narrative. It is necessary to narrative, just as narrative makes use of it; only to employ time would be merely listing events whereas narrative provides causality and links events in time; "The logical or causal connections between one event and another constitute fundamental aspects of every narrative." (Bennet and Royle, 1995, p.43) The beginning-middle-end process of narratives emphasizes teleological progression. According to Peter Brooks, narratives direct the reader's desires towards the end, at times employing digressions through suspense. Paradoxically, according to Bennet and Royle, we have a progression towards and a digression from the ending of the story.

Contemporary fiction rejects conservative relationship between time and narrative. Borges not only calls former notions of rationality and universality into question but also offers a new possibility from which to view social time. He implies that one must accept not merely one but simultaneously all alternatives in fiction, to try to grasp as much as possible. In the present novel, we understand the story does not have merely one narrator; it is not the same for all the people involved in the incident and we must accept all views, neither is to be given superiority over the other.

Paul Ricoeur, in his book, *Time and Narrative*, notes that narrative is necessary to affirm our temporality (Morrison, 2003, p.37). So we need to concretize time through narrative and conversely, narrative becomes meaningful when it gains temporal existence. Ricoeur believes time should not be taken as linear but rather multiple. The job of narrative is thus to mediate and reflect these multiple levels consciously, at the same time creating a sense of comforting continuity. According to Ricoeur, the role of narrative is a conservative one, "to rehearse the coherence of conventional time" (p.34). Aspects such as description, digression, suspension, aporia, and self-reflection are most compelling, elements McEwen makes much use of in the course of his novel in which he continuously disrupts the natural linear progression of events by digressing towards mostly physical and scientific descriptions of objects and events.

NARRATIVE AND IDENTITY; SELF-MAKING AND WORLD-MAKING

The notions of narrative and identity cover two broad areas of intellectual thinking; psychology and literature. According to Brockmeier and Carabaugh (2001, p.2), both fields have been dealing with the same subjects; while psychology has been investigating human mind and nature, literature and criticism has been exploring the same aspect of human behavior. Although dealing with the same subject, however, their concepts of human nature are different. While literature has been likened to a wilderness, psychology has been viewed as a garden. While literature is fascinated by irregularities and wild nature, psychology is concerned with tools and instruments to put this wilderness in order. The focus on narrative proves to be extremely productive in reflecting the construction of identity and traditional psychological notions of identity can be enriched once they are incorporated with narrative and language. Narrative is now treated as the means through which social and cultural life comes into being.

Jerome Bruner in his essay" Self-making and world-making" is interested in how individuals construct a picture of their own lives, the process by which people construct "a self" and "a life." To explore how this notion of self is constructed, Bruner compares different notions of the self; how a nineteenth century notion of "self" differs from a contemporary notion of the concept. Many nineteenth century writers, he finds, viewed the self as an "essential" concept, therefore absolutely representable. However, contemporary notions of the self have come to reject that a life, can be portrayed absolutely in a written text.

Bruner claims that when narrating a story, the narrator needs to recall himself/herself from the "there and then" to the "here and now". The narrator must bring together and fuse these distinct parts to come up with one person. This, he remarks, requires what he terms as "a theory of growth" or "transformation" (p.28). He thus makes a distinction between the narrator as he existed in the narrative in the past and the narrator as he is presenting his narrative in the present. This method of narrating, he claims, requires a prescription, one that changes and transforms the ignorant subject into the wise narrator. However, Bruner believes, such prescriptions or stories about growth and self-construction that one constructs from innocence to experience are not verifiable in the usual sense. This may even lead to a point which makes it difficult to imagine the past in the actual form that it existed:

> As though walking through a police reconstruction, I picked up the path Clarissa and I had taken, and follow it to the path where we had sheltered from the wind. It seemed like a half remembered place from childhood. We were so happy in our reunion, so easy with each other, and now I could not quite imagine a route back into that innocence (p.127).

One best way to prove this, Bruner believes, is to check them against our memories-, which is certainly fallible. Another method would be to check them against "family recollections." In McEwen's novel, the narrator makes a clear distinction between "there and then" and "here and now." In his case, he needs to make a harmony between the two in order to come to terms with a unified personality, to reconstruct his identity through narrating what has happened to him earlier and what is happening to him now. It is for this reason that he attempts to reconstruct the past, not only in the form of narrative but also going back to the scene of the incident and rehearsing what he and the others did, not only for the sake of John Logan's' wife, but for himself. This return to the past, as Bruner remarks, involves gaining significant details, formerly left ignored. To reach this point, Bruner introduces the concept of "Turning Points" in narratives. "Turning points" in narratives are a crucial aspect Bruner attends to in his essay. He believes a turning point represents a break with conventionalities; a point when one is able to free himself/herself from the bondages imposed by external factors, and gain individuality, to make one's life something more than just another "folk psychological cannonicality." (Brockemier and Carbaugh, 2001, p.32) It is at this point when the narrator's consciousness and the protagonist's consciousness become one. These turning points reveal a shift towards "narratorial consciousness"(p.33) Self –making, as he terms it, is a result of these turning points in life. Although the self appears to be the most private feature of individuals, it is in fact as Bruner argues a cultural construct.

When Joe returns to reconstruct the scene of the incident, he attempts at reconstructing his identity, an important turning point, so that it might help him put the fragments into place and thus restore his relationship with

Clarissa:

> I began to return across the field towards my car. It was a simple idea really, but a man who had a theory about pathological love and who had given his name to it, like a bridegroom at the altar, must surely reveal, even if unwittingly, the nature of love itself. For there to be pathology there had to be a lurking concept of health… Sickness and health. In other words, what could I learn about Parry that would restore me to Clarissa? (p.128)

But not every aspect of his story can be relied upon, as we see reflected in Clarissa's doubts and the inspector's engagement in the details of the incidents in the restaurant, revealing to be different to reality or even Clarissa's viewpoint of what had happened.

Bruner also suggests "culturally canonical accounts" of growing up, which imposes certain limitations. Although such recollections of life stories do involve real-life activities, it is the requirement of narrative as a genre to provide a more metaphorical dimension to mere factual events. According to Bruner, narrative accounts must have at least two characteristics. First, it is important that narratives focus on individuals and their intentions, their desires and beliefs. Second, they must recount how these intentional and inner desires lead to certain actions and activities. Such narrative accounts must offer the sequential events of a life. The present novel deals with the intentions of Joe, his inner beliefs and desires, but the second part forms the basis for his reconstruction of the self. In order to account for his intentions and inner desires, leading to certain actions and activities, he must first be able to put them in the right place, or at least try to do so. To reach this end, the narrator will make use of any evidence he deems as relevant to his desired narrative and this reflects the power of narrating. Joe explicitly reveals this point when he presents the reader with his view about Jed Perry's way of thinking and beliefs:

> The pattern of his love was not shaped by external influences, even if they originated from me. His was a world determined from the inside, driven by private necessity, and this way it could remain intact. Nothing could prove him wrong; nothing was needed to prove him right. If I had written him a letter declaring passionate love, it would have made no difference. He crouched in a cell of his own devising, teasing out meanings, imbuing nonexistent exchanges with their drama of hope or disappointment, always scrutinizing the physical world, its random placements and chaotic noise and colours, for the correlatives of his current emotional state- and always finding satisfaction. He illuminated the world with his feelings, and the world confirmed him at every turn his feelings took. (p.143)

Bruner's study reveals that although autobiography/ narrative is about the past, it simultaneously reveals the present. Narrative comprises two aspects. The first is what happened (the balloon incident), making use of flashbacks, flash forwards, digressions, etc but the second important aspect is what is so important about telling, what is desired to be revealed. It is this second aspect which links the past aspect of narrative with the present; that Joe blames himself for Logan's death, and that his relationship with Clarissa deteriorates. Bruner consequently states the inaccuracy of claiming the self as something restricted to ones own subjectivity. Rather, it is a cultural construct, and hence just as diverse and versatile. This is how he comes to reject former essentialist notions of the self. Joe begins the narrative with the following sentence: "The beginning is simple to mark" (p.1). So from the very beginning, he marks that his narrative, although has a simple beginning, lead to a more complicated and sophisticated story which he still cannot solve. Although the story is about the past, it reveals the internal conflict of Joe. For him, it is vital that he finds the link between what has happened and how it has influenced his present status, which involves not only his view of his own identity but his relationship with Clarissa. Not everything is worth telling. It makes a great difference what the narrator chooses to include as being worth telling, and what might seem significant from someone else's point of view, which is somehow related to the events. In McEwen's novel for example, it is not worth telling Clarissa what the speaker says on the phone, the first time he calls him but to Clarissa, this not telling reveals to be of such grave importance when she later finds out what was said, that it begins to form her way of evaluating what happens to the narrator later and even its effect on their relationship. This is related to the power and authority ascribed to narratives by Bennet and Royle, as the power to choose to tell what is worth and not worth telling.

Bruner remarks that the "why tell" aspect of narrative imposes the fact that it must be about something exceptional, something different. In the novel, the protagonist is primarily obsessed with the guilt of letting go of the rope, and he starts out with this sense of guilt, although delaying and digressing form the main point as much as he can, but somehow tries to find justification, to come to peace with himself with the incident. But this is not all. It is the mysterious love of Jed Perry that he cannot understand and account for, and perhaps this is the exceptional aspect of his narration.

Bruner describes two main functions for autobiographies, applicable to narratives. First, the aim is the desire to present oneself to others. This aspect is for Bruner a "cultural conforming" aspect, more or less similar to all and hence involves no sense of individuality. Joe's attempt at self-construction at this point appears to be a desire to present himself to Clarisa and Jed, and perhaps to the reader, which was also the point marked out by Currie as the "narrative" aspect of identity which needs to be externalized, for the purpose of self-representation.

To ascribe individuality, exceptionality is required and for this reason, there is a need to focus on what is exceptional for the narrator. This exceptionality imposes a narrative that runs counter to our ordinary expectations.

Bruner indicates the main objective of narrative as carrying the role of *demystifying deviation*. What narrative

ultimately does is that it locates problems, by appealing to the psychological aspect of mind and actions that emerge when they interact with other people, and links these to what is usually expected to happen. This point again overlaps with Curry's emphasis on the requirement of differentiation, as crucial to the notion of identity as "relational". In other words, McEwan introduces two characters whose perspectives are in stark contrast with that of Joe's and provides for them a space to "play" or reflect their version of the incident:

> The novel thus has three endings, each of which focuses on a different perspective, the emotional/intuitive, the clinical/scientific, and the religious/impassioned, reflecting the temperaments of biology, anthropology, and psychology, Enduring Love, like much of McEwan's writing, emerges as an exploration of, and exercise in, competing narratives and interpretations. (Childs, 2005, p.178)

However, McEwan is not utterly neutral as by the end of the novel, when the reader finally realizes the superiority of Joe's perspective over others. Even though the narrative had at some points mystified the truth regarding Jed's eccentric behavior, putting in doubt Joe's sanity, with Jed's ultimate violent action of breaking into Joe's home and taking Clarissa as hostage, and his final banishment to the psychiatric hospital, the reader is relieved of the perplexing play of perspectives as the truth is ultimately demystified. According to James Phelan "just as there is a progression of events, there is a progression of audience response to those events, a progression rooted in the twin activities of observing and judging. Thus, from the rhetorical perspective, narrativity involves the interaction of two kinds of change: that experienced by the characters and that experienced by the audience in its developing responses to the characters' changes" (Phelan, 2007, p.323). The change that occurs in Joe's life after he manages to place all the pieces of the puzzle together, not only serve to justify Joe's particular worldview, but also evoke a specific response in the reader, in assuring an empirically grounded argument. This is a requirement of the conclusion of narrative, as Paul Ricour states:

> Following a story, correlatively, is understanding the successive actions, thoughts, and feelings in question insofar as they present a certain directness. By this I mean that we are pushed ahead by this development and that we reply to its impetus with expectations concerning the outcome and the completion of the entire process. In this sense, the story's conclusion is the pole of attraction of the entire development. But a narrative conclusion can be neither deduced nor predicted. There is no story if our attention is not moved along by a thousand contingencies. This is why a story has to be followed to its conclusion. So rather than being predictable, a conclusion must be acceptable. (Ricour in Macquillan, 200, p.259).

CONCLUSION

Enduring Novel presents three different perspectives regarding a similar incident and the author provides a space in which all three collide. Joe's analysis of events takes force from his interest in science and rationalism. For him, it is the narrative which is explainable through reason and information, in other words, scientific facts which count as important. He observes everything, specially the description of individuals, form a specifically scientific view point which matches exactly his career of a science professor. Clarissa's perspective also matches her professional interest; her passion for Keats's poetry and the belief that "truth is beauty". For Clarissa, it is truth that forms the basis of her narrative about herself; the very kind we believe good literature provides and again it is very appropriate that she is not only an English professor, but one that is interested in the works of Keats and hence the very conflict which arises between Joe and Clarisa is an ancient one; " the novel is characterized as one in which the claims of science and art to explain the world have competed" (Bentley, 2005, p.132)

Jed Perry is representative of the "religious freak" as Clarissa calls him, and his religious beliefs are the shaping force of his narrative. Although the narratives of Clarissa and Jed Perry are not highlighted as much as Joe's, yet they prove vital to Joe's identity construction, reflecting narratives which differ from one another.

McEwan's major aim in the novel, it appears, has been to reflect the clash between relativity and objectivity "Joe seeks to be objective in a world of parallax and relativity" (Childs, 2005, p.177). McEwan attempts to mystify our belief and reliability on Joe's version of the story, driving the reader toward speculations on Joe's sanity. And yet by the end of the novel, McEwan appears to be favoring, through Joe, a perspective that analyses life through logic, one based on a rationality and empirically grounded argument. McEwan has put forth in this novel three different perspectives, but has structured his narrative and Joe's mode of narrating in such a way which expects, recalling Umberto Eco, his "ideal reader "(Eco in Collini, 1994) to favor Joe's mode of narrating the world and himself through the employment of a more logical, rational and empirically trusted argument.

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