

**Identifying Ethics: Dysfunction as Representation of Societal Relationship in
Ian McEwan's *Sweet Tooth***

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Abstract

In the novel, *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan has employed an ethical code of conduct called, Dysfunction of Relationship. The analysis shows that he tries to convey something extraordinary to the readers. If it is not even the reader to understand such a typical thing, He himself represents a new ethical code of conduct. The character of the novel, Serena is almost a person who is tuned to such a distinct one. It is clear that the character of this type is purely representational. Understanding reality based on situation and ethics has been a new field of study in terms of Post- Theory. Intervening to such aspect of Interpretation, this research article establishes a new study in the writings of Ian McEwan. In the novel, Dysfunction is not on the 'Self' but it is on the 'Other'. The author tries to integrate the function of the Character Serena,

instead of fragmenting the self. Hence, Fragmentation makes sense only in the dysfunction of relationship.

Key words: Ian McEwan, Fragmentation, Dysfunction, Social Ethics, Self and the other

Ian McEwan, a booker prize winner and socially acclaimed writer has now been attracted by research scholars for his criticism. One of the fragile and awkward things about his novels is that they unearth a new criticism now a days on the negative aspects. The New Yorker calls him, “He is surely the only novelist who owns a tie patterned with images of a craniotome—a tool for drilling holes in the skull.” His novel, *Sweet Tooth* was published in 2012. Sooner after its publication, critics found that it is an autobiographical novel in which there is a reference of himself and his friends, Christopher Hitchens and Martin Amis. The novel sets in narrating the private life of Serena who was forced to study Mathematics, despite her will to study English at Cambridge. She falls in love with three men in the novel. The first one is her college mate, Jeremy who was found a gay. Jeremy introduced the history professor, Tony Canning. Her love for Jeremy continued until she found him as a gay. This is the first dysfunction of relationship that takes place in the novel. At this stage, it is observed that McEwan tries to pass a message of ethical code. This ethical code of conduct is very much pro-active that the heroine, Serena is centered on other characters. The entire novel focuses on Serena as an integrated ‘Self’.

It may be noted that for this reason, the other Characters of the novel are fragmented. It is obvious that writers like McEwan escalate their ideas from the available sources to prove in different perspectives. He creates a map of ideas in fore-grounding the present from the past as Serena is sharing her forty years old story. He revisits a new approach to teach ethics as it is in the case of Jeremy and Serena, dismantling male and female relationship if anything makes sense of good and bad. Indirectly, McEwan tries to teach a moral lesson to Jeremy that he lost his love

with Serena for becoming a gay of the musician. Though it's a human lose to Jeremy, the author tries to envisage that he has saved the love of Serena. Serena breaks her love with Jeremy not because he is a man of inner self but he represents society at large. Throughout the novel, Serena integrates herself with others in order to fragment them, intruding the spirit of moral ethics.

Another ethical code of conduct that engages in the novel is a broken love between the history professor, Tony canning, an elderly married man and Serena. Their love breaks when Serena leaves a piece of her cloth at Tony's house. As soon as Tony could predict, Serena spoils his married life with his wife, he breaks his love affair. This leads to Ian McEwan's moral ethics, understating fragmentation of culture is no more useful to the society. Dysfunction of relationship is stated as something highly ethical when it is against the law of society. Critics emphasize that the novels encapsulates postmodern irony but the novels violates all these aspects of criticism, revitalizing reality of the society. The Character, Tony canning is uncanonical about the loss of human relationship, trying to escape from modernity, restoring good to the society. Responses of characters that McEwan exposes, though may be his own, it all coded on one aspect of living a life of others. As a matter of fact, Tony's response on breaking her love, addresses to rethink history of familial relationships of the 1970s. When Serena is offered a junior desk officer position in National security Service of Britain, She works in an atmosphere of misogynists.

McEwan follows again an ethical code here, amalgamating modernity and postmodernity, revisiting history with present scenario. Questioning the very self has always been a point of theory in literary writings, McEwan is not an exception to it. Offence for overlapping moral ethics is criticized as an aspect of Metamodern thinking and insisted by medical psychologist, Andrey E. Nosovtsov :

“In turn, the appeal to the superhuman values, awakens the need for creativity, thereby making its ethics dominant. For creative consciousness, the infinite horizons of the world reveals, and the breakthrough to other worlds is likely to happen.”(Andrey, 04)

The engagement of the past with current reality has been represented by another lover of Serena that is Max, a fellow spy who works in M15. He breaks up his love with Serena when he seeks another girl. Dysfunction of relationship is again made a sentimental topic here. In the entire novel, she searches for a relationship, never gives up her identity, despite circumstances lead to defile her persona. Her ethical attitude is still maintained through the character, Max. In a nutshell, other characters are purposely decentralized by the author, thereby he makes efforts to centralize Serena. Spoiling the ethics of other characters fetches significance to emphasis the ethics of Serena, well in fact, ethics of the past, which is a common strategy used by the authors to catalyze only the most necessary things from the realm modernity and post modernity. In spite of the vulnerable things that defy the happiness of Serena all through the novel, the spot to recognize her is to understand the present and the past. Serena reflects her adulthood, stating the ethics of relationship, prevailed in every household:

“The house ran smoothly, the kitchen was always clean, the tiny fridge was full. If there were boyfriends, I never saw them. No drunkenness, no drugs, no loud music. In those days, a more likely household would have had people like my sister in it.” (Sweet Tooth, 41)

Serena’s relationship with others makes sense that she stands herself as a mode of ethical transformation or else she makes others to be a mode of Ethical code. Her love for Tom Haley is another representation of eighteen century human relationship. When Serena is assigned to convert Tom Haley, a writer of anti- communist principles, she again falls in love with a man.

Every time, she makes relationship, she forgets her nostalgia. Realizing that Tom is a Russian spy, she receives an information about his cancer. McEwan renders a kind of feeling to the readers that people living unethical code of conduct suffer out of their own fate. It is more relevant to endorse that identity crisis is no more validating. In other words, it is all about real identity which makes a meaningful relationship in human society. As it is in the case of love between Serena and Tom Haley, real self only takes its course of entity as men and women in the society. In this novels, the characters have lost their identity in order relinquish a real identity. Also, the novel ends with a note that the secret mission, Sweet Tooth is a failure. Arguably, the end of the story itself is a true example of returning to the social ethics of our culture and human relationships. It is similar to the effect that the uncanny social system and its relationships change from the times of the past, resulting in the past. It is sure that McEwan has made an attempt to disrupt social relationship through the character, Serena. Through disruption, he is trying to create an atmosphere with ethically dominant society, trying to fuse the past with the present by repeating the past. The unequivocal act of transcending from the past to the past is undoubtedly a new perspective on the human relationship. In the novel, cultural past has been endowed with dysfunction of human relationship. Violation of human relation is portrayed as a symbol of representing history with new ethics of Social life.

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