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Normal Abnormalities: Disseminating the Social and Cultural Structures in Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden*

Dr Pravin K Patel*

Abstract: The paper explores the discourse of the social and cultural structures of gender and sexuality, perversion of family structure and values in the context of constituting a family unit that falls into an incestuous relationship in Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden*. It studies how these discourses have been produced and legitimated. It deals with subversion of social and cultural structure, traditional hierarchies, divisions, and power relations that isolate and subordinate one over another.

Keywords: Incest, Social Structures, Derrida, Foucault

The fiction of Ian McEwan represents a paradigm shift in the social and cultural condition in terms of attitudes towards gender and sexuality, man-woman relations, family-structure, values, beliefs and the public-sphere. McEwan challenges women's traditional and culturally mandated identity which is constructed through marriage and motherhood, and critiques the representation of masculine and feminine space build on binary oppositions. The questioning of the social and cultural sphere dismantles the historical ways of thinking built around the so-called universal structures or absolute foundations. McEwan opens up a space to dismantle the illusion of priority in the representation of the day-to-day activities in contemporary existence, the patriarchal dominance in contemporary social experience, the function of inherited tradition in contemporary culture, and undercuts an all-encompassing rationality of Enlightenment that attempts to offer an infinite moral and social advancement and conceives of humanity as a unitary subject striving towards the goal of universalist account of existence and perfect coherence or stability.

The Cement Garden deals with multifaceted aspects of culture and society in contemporary situations. The exploration of the codes of sexual behaviour, the destructive hierarchies in the male-female relationships, the family and patriarchal structure, violence, etc. are the essential concerns in this paper. Although the novel deals with varied subjects, it is always a traumatic event that initiates the dissolution of family and social relationships. The novel incorporates a description of centripetal characters, events and incidents that provide a distinctive and radical description of shocking scenes, violence and macabre atmosphere at the broader social, cultural, and political scenario. The repulsive descriptions of the everyday world and visceral images of society open the darker side of humanity. As Jack Slay, Jr. remarks:

Ian McEwan creates dark portraits of contemporary society, writing to expose the haunting desire and libidinal politics that lurk beneath the facade of an everyday world. His characters – incestuous siblings, heart-broken gorillas, sadomasochistic lovers, infatuated prime ministers, corpse dismemberers – play the depraved lovers' game of a modern wasteland, hoping that the procurement of any sustaining relationship can provide refuge from the chaos and turmoil of their very lives and worlds. (*Ian McEwan* 1)

The Cement Garden is a story of four orphaned siblings who, in order to avoid being taken into an Official Care, bury their dead mother in a trunk and cover up with cement in the garden, and attempt to carry on a possible normal life. In their attempt to create a seemingly normal family unit for the betterment of their life, the two elder children develop an "incestuous relationship". The novel is concerned with such themes as "perversity," "incest," and "violence" which disrupt the conventional moral standpoints.

The paper explores the logic of the construction of social and cultural history – the logic of rationality and reconstruction, the logic of constructing and constellations, and the logic of textuality and deconstruction – in the select fiction. This study attempts to show how the subject reconstructed through rationality is deeply flawed, how they are grouped to offer a particular meaning and finally to undermine the constructed notions of "social values" through textuality and deconstruction. Since the later two logics are of chief concern, the study is based on the work of Michel Foucault (as a practitioner of the logic of

constructing and constellations) and Jacques Derrida (as a practitioner of the logic of textuality and deconstruction).

The logic of rationality and reconstruction is a reductionist approach towards social and cultural history, that is, it regards the normative and historical structures of culture and society as the reconstruction of the ideals for human emancipation. And, in this process, it ignores the historically fragmented, multifaceted, complex, and culturally diverse truths. The logic of constructing and constellations takes a middle position between rationality and reconstruction on the one side and textuality and deconstruction on the other. The logic of textuality and deconstruction do not imply that the "context" and "real" situation are only constituted by the "prison house of language" and idiosyncratic linguistic rules, forms, and conventions that are apolitical, ahistorical, and concerned with the notion of "anything goes" and unlimited textual "free-play". In other words, it counters the notion of linguistic access to the reality that forms an insuperable gulf between language and reality. Derrida's idea of textuality "embraces and does not exclude the world, reality, history" (*Limited Inc* 136), that is, it incorporates the entire "real-history-of-the-world" (136) with all its cultural, social, economic, socio-institutional, biological, psychological, material, and historical elements. Derrida argues that what he really means by "there is no outside-text" is that "there is nothing outside of context" which refers "to history, to world, to reality, to being, and specially . . . to the other" (136).

Steven Connor regards the novel as "a useful recourse for history" embodying a view of events and experiences with some authority of eye-witness accounts and individual testimony. He further opines that novel represents, in a very precise way, "how the world is, or seems to be" through the workings of imagination or fantasy. It brings together the individual and the general by reducing the gap between the isolated subjectivity and peopled world (*The English Novel in History 1950-1995* 1). However, it does not suggest that the novels are a second-order phenomenon for social and cultural histories, nor does it mean that social norms and structures are nothing but fiction. It is instead to assert that the themes and concerns which construct the fictional world are to be seen at work in different dimensions of culture and society of the contemporary and historical world.

The Derridean perspective gives a thrust to those facets of social, cultural, familial, institutional, and such other concerns which are subordinated, derecognized, and subdued by the hegemonic structures.

The Foucauldian study focuses on the issues of archaeology, genealogy, discourse, and power/knowledge.

Derrida: History and Textuality

Derrida disseminates traditional notions of presence, absence, and history. His idea of history is not built on the concept of verisimilitude, realism or mimetic discourse. For him, the world outside of the text is itself a text. However, it is not an assertion of linguistic textuality, instead, the "text" of which Derrida speaks is not merely words, but *life* itself: "our very relation to 'reality'. . . functions like a text¹". The formulation, "there is nothing outside the text," does not refer to a system of language in the text but, to a sense of "writing" which comprehends the existence of the word in the world in an indefinitely multiplied structure in the past, the present and the future. The Derridean text implies that "any experience is structured like a network of traces which returns to something other than themselves. In other words, there is no present which is not constituted without reference to another time, another present. The present-trace. It traces and is traced" (Cited in *Derrida* 1). In addition, the text and textuality in Derrida is a kind of "writing" which deconstructs every voice, of every point of origin, and brings infinite deferment of the signified.

Derrida's concept of history can also be explicated through the concept of textuality that shares the sociolects ("a repository of society's myths") and at the same time challenges, cancels, or negates the very nature of the represented object. In this way, it erases the crucial significance of the presence of the present event and context, and at the same time writes them in a new way that closes the gap between the legitimacy and supremacy of one over the other. Derrida's deconstructive understanding of history consists:

in transforming things by exhibiting writings, genres, textual strata (which is also to say – since there is nothing outside the text, right – exhibiting institutional, economic, political, pulsive [and so on] "realities") that have been repulsed, repressed, devalourised, minoritized, delegitimated, occulted by hegemonic canons, in short, all that which certain forces have attempted to melt down into the anonymous mass of an unrecognizable culture, to ("bio)degrade" in the common compost of a memory said to be living and organic. From this point of view, deconstructive interpretation

and writing would come along, without any soteriological mission, to "save," in some sense, lost heritages. ("Biodegradables" 821)

The Derridean approach has given an impetus to social, political, economical, institutional, and such other realities which are minoritized, devalored, and repressed by the hegemonic structures. It shows that the overturning of linguistic hierarchies could be applied to the overturning of the social and political hierarchies. Derrida's concern with textual strata is intended to represent the hidden meaning in the text's fabric: "A text always has several epochs and reading must resign itself to that fact" (*Of Grammatology* 102). Thus, Derrida is concerned with de-sedimentation or de-sedimenting of the text for allowing what was always already in its texture to the surface:

"[T]he system of logocentric repression . . . [is] organized in order to exclude or to lower (to put outside or below), the body of the written trace as a didactic and technical metaphor, as servile matter or excrement . . . [L]ogocentric repression permits an understanding of how an original and individual repression became possible within the horizon of a culture and a historical structure of belonging". (*Writing and Difference* 248)

Foucault: Discourse, Power and Subject

Foucault was concerned with the rules and practices that produced a meaningful statement and regulated discourse in different historical periods. Discourse, Foucault argues, never consisted of one statement, one text, one action or one source but whenever they "refer to the same object, share the same style and support a strategy . . . a common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern, they for Foucault belong to same discursive formation" (cited in *Representation* 44). Concerning the question where meaning comes from, the critics of Foucault rightly describe "nothing exists outside of discourse" or "nothing has any meaning outside discourse". Foucault argues that we can have only knowledge about things if they have a meaning, not the things in themselves which produce knowledge. History, like power/knowledge, is a process of exclusion which leads the production of certain discourse over others.

Subjects like "madness," "punishment," or "sexuality" produce a certain kind of knowledge about themselves. Any discussion on "insanity," "punishment" or "sexuality" prescribes certain ways which

govern what is "sayable" or "thinkable" and exclude the other ways. "Subject," which in some way personifies the discourse – the madman, the hysterical women, the criminal, the deviant, the sexually perverse person – represents the way knowledge was constructed about it. How this knowledge acquires authority, and a sense of truth at a historical moment is an important concern for Foucault.

The practice in the institutions to deal with the subject – medical treatment for the insane, punishment for the guilty, moral discipline for the sexually deviant – is regulated and governed by the discursive practices. The acknowledgement of a different discourse or episteme supplanting the existing one opens up a new discursive formation and conception of "madness," "punishment" or "sexuality" to regulated social practices in new ways. Foucault's *History of Sexuality, The Birth of Clinic, Discipline and Punish* focus on the roles of various institutions, and how they affect people and their conduct in resisting the effects of the institutions. He also emphasises the discursive practices in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*:

. . . the prohibitions, exclusions, limitations, values, freedoms and transgressions of sexuality, all its manifestations, verbal or otherwise are linked to a particular discursive practice. It would reveal, not of course as the ultimate truth of sexuality, but as one of the dimensions in accordance with which one can describe it . . . in a system of prohibitions and values.
(213)

"Thou Shalt Not": The Construction and Interrogation of Incest

The fiction of Ian McEwan deals with interpersonal and family relationships in and out of the social structure, and suggests a new possibility of human conditions replete with lust, incest and macabre elements. The characters in his short stories and the first two novels are described as pervert and deviant who defy the social norms and inherited family morals. In Freudian terms, their behaviours are governed more by "id" and "ego" than by "super-ego". In consequence, there is no control on their desire and emotion, and no distinction between what is right and wrong. The characters in the novels have not internalized social values, and therefore, their responsibilities to and expectations of society are completely opposed to the super-ego. As the implied meaning in the novel, *The Cement Garden* suggests that the characters do not get immoral but lawless. There are signs of disregard

for accepted norms and traditional values in playing, reading, and such other actions from the very beginning. Jack finds the idea of covering the garden with cement proposed by his father as a "fascinating violation," getting the mother bed-ridden helps the children start new modes of life, and they foresee a complete "sense of freedom" on their mother's possible departure of the hospital. There are violations upon violation and deterioration of order in terms of Tom's infantile regression, decayed food, the conduct of Jack in front of his dead mother in his dream, and Julie and Jack's relationship. The novel, in the words of Malcolm, "depicts a collapse of norms, rules and order" (*Understanding Ian McEwan* 63), some of which are embedded in the text, and the others depend on the reader's horizon of cultural knowledge. The idea of incest, overtly and covertly, is described throughout the novel: in the very beginning of the novel, Jack and Julie stripe the clothes of Sue, their younger sister, and inspect her body including the sexual organs by assuming themselves as doctors. This is followed by Jack's fantasizing of Julie, his sister, in activities of sexual pleasure, while avoiding working with his father who dies while working in the garden.

The death of the father does not affect Jack, which leads many critics to arrive at the notion of Oedipus-complex. It becomes clearer when Julie takes over as surrogate mother. Jack, finding the authoritative role of Julie not easy, rebels against and takes up the position of her partner; and as time passes, they play the roles of "mommies and daddies" to Sue and Tom. Jack's attitude and feeling towards Julie are not simply brotherly, and moreover, he finds himself continuously drawn towards her physicality. He finds a kind of sexual pleasure as he applies sun-cream to Julie. According to Angela Roger, "[T]he relationship between Jack and Julie . . . moves inexorably from normal sibling affection to incest". Jack hates his younger brother, Tom, as he takes bath with the help of Julie – "[w]ith all this going on, I . . . feel envy of my naked brother" ("Ian McEwan's Portrayal of Women" 46) – and is jealous of Derek, the boyfriend of Julie. As time passes, Julie becomes more responsive to Jack which results in social violation from the incestuous encounter. Their relationship is suggested all over the novel—Jack touches Julie's nipple, which is "hard and wrinkle like a peach stone" (*The Cement Garden* 55). However, the relationship of Jack and Julie, unlike that in "Homemade," is consensual and long awaited.

Julie and Jack's attempt to keep the family together is disrupted by Derek, the boyfriend of Julie, who could not accept the incestuous relationship. Derek destroys the unity of family constructed by the children by informing the authorities about the burial of the mother in the basement and their unacceptable behaviour. In *The Cement Garden*, the two elder children Julie and Jack are arrested by the police towards the very end of the novel. The reason behind taking them into custody is that their personal relationship violates "The Law of Incest in Britain". The incest between them lies in their sexual intercourse because they are brother and sister. According to English Law, the incest is criminalized by the Sexual Offence Act 1956 which incorporated the punishment of Incest Act 1908². Thus, one of the determining factors behind their punishment is the "presence" of an institution, the English Law. The act of arrest can also be considered in the logocentric approach of Derrida, and the most fundamental project of deconstruction is to expose the roles of logocentrism.

In this connection, an attempt is made to elucidate the meaning of logocentrism and locate its position in the construction of incest in *The Cement Garden*. Logocentrism is a search for stability, authority and a centre which is called *logos* or "transcendental signified". It is a discourse which assumes "the pure presence of the truth," and which reveals the truth. Logocentrism, thus, regards the "being" of the entity as "presence". The authority of presence, its power of valorization, structures all our thinking. Derrida, in *Of Grammatology*, identifies "logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence as the exigent, powerful, systematic, and irrepressible desire for such a signified" (49). The role of deconstruction is to subvert and undermine the logocentric position of the text and to reveal that this is a construct in discourse.

The Cement Garden revolves around the metaphysics of social and cultural norms. The relation of Julie and Jack in the novel is regarded as incest which is against nature. Their relation is considered as morally and legally wrong and causes public feelings of shock. Derrida reminds that Lévi-Strauss, in his *Elementary Structure*, encounters the notion of incest and claims that it does not accept the nature/culture opposition. It is at the same time natural and cultural. Natural in the sense of its universal prohibition and cultural in the sense that it is the construct of society. Thus, the notion of the so-called incest as against nature is dismantled. Derrida further writes in *Writing and Difference*, "Obviously there is no

scandal except within a system of concept which accredits the difference between nature and culture" (358).

The notion of incest is considered as construction and legitimation by discourse and Power/Knowledge. Foucault is concerned with how power operated within what he calls an institutional *apparatus* and its *technologies* (techniques). Foucault's conception of the apparatus of punishment included a variety of diverse elements, linguistic and non-linguistic – "discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, philanthropic propositions. . . . The Apparatus is thus always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain coordinates of knowledge. . . . This is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of the relations of force supporting and supported by types of Knowledge" (*Power/Knowledge*, 194-96). The novel, *The Cement Garden* grounds its meaning in the social, cultural, political, and theological structure. The children are accused of indulging in incest, and as a consequence, they are arrested by the police. The question is, what makes one decide the primal fulfilment of the children's physical desire through incest as scandalous? Is it the author? Or is it the socio-cultural background of the reader? Or is it the text of the novel? Or is it "the Ideological State Apparatuses" or "the Repressive State Apparatuses"? It is very difficult to decide on any one particular issue. In a way, all these are responsible for the construction of incest as a scandal.

If the role of society, religion, and the tradition of literary art are removed, there will be no such issue of incest³. Every society and religion prohibits incest. Derrida writes, "The church fights passion with excision (*Ausschneidung*, severance, castration) in every sense: its practice, its 'cure' is *castratism* . . . It has all the times laid the stress of discipline on extirpation (of sensuality, of pride) . . . the practice of church is *hostile to life* (*Spurs* 93). The prohibition is reflected in the cultural artefacts, for instance in Greek Literature⁴. In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, at one point it is said, "He who commits patricide and incest is a criminal, brings a / curse on his country, and is doomed to punishment". Love has a fundamental role in the formation of the family, but this love for Hegel does not exist outside marriage. Marriage fulfils the desire but what keeps it as desire is a suspension of time. The sexual desire is an *Aufhebung*, the contradictory force to consume and

preserve, as Derrida says, it is that which "limits in order keep, denies in order to enjoy" (*Glas* 123). The object of desire remains as well as escapes destruction.

Foucault argues that incest is a construction of knowledge and discourse for the operation of power and domination. Foucault's concept of the exercise of power is embodied in juridico-discursive mode, and the proliferating and productive mode. The former, which is – to use Foucault's other terms – similar to "the deployment of alliance," is a prohibitive power and distinguishes forbidden sexual act from the permitted; and the latter, which is similar to "the deployment of sexuality," is power/knowledge strategies and networks.

The concerns of restoring order from chaos in *The Cement Garden* are established on the Foucauldian notion of "discipline and punish" employing contemporary means of social ordering and control. Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* shows how the institutions of discipline produce subjects, and how it affects the entire system. The seminal pattern of restoring order is repression, the process through which something is determined and reduced. The institutions exercise their power to control the individual and society. The very contention of discipline and punish reveals non-reciprocal power-structure that acts selectively and reduces the domain of an individual.

The novel, *The Cement Garden*, represents the relation of two incompatible forces: the shift from the problem of the imposition of order to the problem itself. The relation of Julie and Jack in the novel may be regarded as a structure existing "outside" society, that is, an attempt to express existence outside order. The invention of police and spy, on the other hand, may be an attempt to express a kind of existence within an order, the ruled and regulated society. It is not simply a matter of order and chaos; it is more complicated than this, and expresses two modes of or possibilities of existence. The two modes, which interpenetrate, are confused with one another, but nevertheless, remain distinct. The novel, like Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*, underlines the efforts of societies to maintain order and control. In this way, the incest taboo, despite its several variations, stands for a fundamental human need to enforce the order. Since the family unit implies man's most significant attempt at social order, incest signifies a foremost defiance of that order. Incest is not a centre of family deterioration, but a sign of a "disturbed family order" that already exists.

Family Relationships: Forced Authority and Revolt

The Cement Garden implicitly counters the culture and tradition, which turn children brutal, barbaric and uncivilized when unchecked by the social controls, as has already been established by William Golding's *The Lord of Flies*. The children when completely cut off from society, attempt to run the family together and adopt the codes of familial behaviour. The codes of familial and social structures collapse during their stint of independent existence, which further degrades into the incestuous involvement of Jack and Julie.

Julie is the eldest sibling and therefore she takes the maximum responsibility after her mother's death. She takes on the roles of surrogate-father and surrogate-mother at the same time apart from being a blood sister. Her behaviour towards Sue does not change much in the sphere of daily life, but she accepts her responsibility of keeping the family together and cares for Tom as her son. The structure of the family provides a sense of order in McEwan's fiction; for instance, this motif runs in scenes regaining harmony in *The Child in Time* after the abduction, and Briony's efforts of providing order in *Atonement*. It is in this search for the order of a traditional family structure that the children adopt new social roles to fill the space emptied by the parents. In this new conduct. Julie is like the mother figure, talks to them in a very affectionate and gentle manner and they compete for her attention:

Tom, of course, wanted Julie all to himself. The second evening I followed them up to the stairs again at bedtime and leaned in doorways while Julie undressed Tom, who had his back to me. Julie smiled at me and asked me to bring Tom's pyjamas. Tom turned in the cot and shouted, 'Go away! You go away!' Julie laughed and ruffled his hair and said, 'What I am going to do with the two of you? . . . I cleared my throat and said perhaps it was bad for Tom to go on pretending to be a baby. 'Perhaps he won't be able to come out of it,' I said. Julie did not reply at first. I could just make out that she was smiling at me. She put her hand on my knee and said, 'I think someone is jealous'. We laughed and I lay back on the bed. (*The Cement Garden* 111-12)

Towards the end of the novel, she allocates the father figure to Jack, represented by the act of being her lover. Jack has already shown his interest in Julie when they play the game of doctors and nurses, and

this phase is culminated by her encouragement put in the words "go on". However, the community of family they create is far from the conventional concepts of family, since it advocates complete freedom and is devoid of rules. Petr Chalupský regards the new system in the family as a rebellion against the outside adult world, and points it out as follows: "[A] new hierarchy that values spontaneity, harmony, vitality and independence is established. Taboos are broken, sexuality is released from its restrictive bonds and true identities are discovered" ("Freedom, Spontaneity, Imagination and the Loss of Innocence" 52).

The adoption of the new identities by Julie and Jack function like the system of the sign. Derrida in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" mentions the idea of "free play," which is, "a field of infinite substitutions . . . this movement of play, permitted by the lack, the absence of a centre or origin, is the movement of supplementarity. One cannot determine the centre and exhaust totalization because the sign which replaces the centre, which supplements it, taking the centre's place in its absence – this sign is added, occurs as a surplus, as a *supplement*" (*Writing and Difference* 365). In this way, the identities of the children are like signs who in the absence of a centre (their parents) supplement each other by means of assuming different roles and identities. With the playing of several family roles, the characters' identities become decentred: "Sometimes we were Mummy and Daddy and sometimes we were Julie and you and sometimes we were Julie and Derek" (*The Cement Garden* 131).

The novel explores two distinct traditions of the family unit – one is determined by the rules of patriarchal control and the other lacks any rules or conventions – neither of which is suitable. The family relationships in *The Cement Garden* are at first determined by the control of the authoritarian father, and later it collapses in the absolute absence of rules. Both situations are inappropriate and unsuccessful. The dysfunction of the unit for the first is the rigid social conventions, and for the later, family isolation which is completely cut off from the outer world that leads to a total loss of social rules and no one to fill the space after parents' death. The organized construction of the garden is a symbolic representation of the patriarchal nature and desire for having everything under control. Jack tells that his father "knew how to use his pipe against her [mother]" (11-11) to hurt, and later he used the "mother against Tom much as he used his pipe against her" and further he dictates "'don't talk to your mother like that,' or 'sit up straight when

your mother is talking to you'. She took all this in silence" (14). Jack expresses a strong contempt for his father's order, and hatred to him is perceived in his description of his father's death, and his "physical growth" which is a moment of his sexual fitness. As he says, "The fact that it coincided with a landmark in my own physical growth, *his death seemed insignificant compared to what followed . . .* I am only including the *little story* of his death . . ." (9, emphasis added). Moreover, what could have been a very pathetic situation is only a 'little story' to him. *The Cement Garden* represents a patriarchally dominated family having a submissive wife and obedient children. This structure is destabilized by Julie when she takes charge of the family.

Derrida in his analysis of Hegelian dialectics in the context of a family in *Glas* focuses on the "dialectical syllogisms and the architectonics" (4) of the family for its composition, and the role of recognition and freedom in this process. The idea of recognition gives the movement to syllogism – that is, the mediation of *Aufhebung* – and functions as the principle by which the value of the succeeding moment is judged. Prior to going any further, it is necessary to examine how the family composes its identity and relations. According to Hegel, biological life is a form of matter which is provided life by a spirit; in this way, the spirit is energy, movement, relation, and the forging of unity. The spirit is made of three moments: "abstract right" (*Recht*), "morality" (*Moralität*), and "ethics" (*Sittlichkeit*) that is, ethical life or objective morality. *Sittlichkeit* synthesises abstract good and abstract morality, and the previous two are quite clear what they are but they may be contexts for religion with which Hegel associates the family. *Sittlichkeit* is a syllogism and space into which the family is born; its first condition is the family, the second, civil or bourgeois society, and the last, the constitution of the state (4). Derrida questions the very idea of *Sittlichkeit* and asks whether there were no families before this stage. Derrida says that the "[t]ruth – the past-thought – is always the death (relieved, erected, buried, unveiled, unbandaged) of what it is the truth of" (32)

Although Jack does not like the authoritarian nature of his father, there are instances that he aspires for the same. This paradoxical state of mind could be in Freudian terms, an "Oedipus-complex" relationship: he hates his father's supremacy in the family and conversely he himself desires for the same authority. His longing for the male world is articulated when the workmen are unloading cement: "I liked this kind of

talk," he says, "I did not wish to be placed outside this intense community of work" (*The Cement Garden* 10). Due to lack of proper recognition, he has developed a kind of animosity towards his father and his cruelty towards his father is expressed when both of them are busy working: "Because of his heart attack my father was forbidden this sort of work, but I made sure he took as much weight as I did . . . If I was to do more, then I wanted him to acknowledge it out loud" (13-14). Jack does so, only to overtake his father's power which he exercises fully after the death of parents and the consequent absence of the male member in the family. The family relationships and tensions are not limited to only father and son, but it continues between mother and children, and among siblings. He has conflicting positions – boyish affection and dismissive attitude – towards his mother.

The death of the father obliterates all the rules and repressive control. The continuous illness of the mother provides an opportunity for complete freedom to the children, and the entire responsibility of the family shifts to Julie, the eldest child. This is a moment of the striking shift from male control to female control in the family order. Malcolm regards that "the entire text could be viewed as charting a passage from rigid male control, the cement garden, to a much freer, if anarchic, state, whose presiding deities are the mother and Julie" (*Understanding Ian McEwan* 59). However, there was a small struggle for power when Julie takes up some responsibilities even when the mother was alive, and Jack expresses his dissatisfaction. But this male-female polarization in the novel does not remain very rigid; for instance, Tom regresses from a baby boy into a baby girl in order to avoid being beaten up, "you don't get hit when you are a girl".

It shows that such constructions have been legitimized by the governing system, and their subversion disseminates the so-called absolute foundations of culture and society. It shows that deconstruction of such foundational systems provides a great change in the structurality of social and cultural discourse. It suggests that the issue of incest and the consequential arrest of the children involve Foucauldian discipline and punishment constructed by social and cultural norms. The explosion of cultural forms and invention of new technologies have fundamentally changed the distribution of power in culture and society impacting the gender, sexuality, race, and other social constructions. Such radical shifts in cultural representation reflect new forms of power and pave the way to reconstruct and transform the existing system and relations of power.

ENDNOTES

1. The Derridean text and textuality embody the plurality of social, historical and cultural discourses, while at the same time "eliminates the possibilities of what is *in* a text". Edward Said writes Derridean "textuality transgresses . . . its [the text's] own explicit statements . . . [in] reality," embraces "semantic horizon," and opens the possibility of "infinite generality and multiplicity" ("The Problem of Textuality" 693). His thesis asserts the text's mode of existence in the world through textuality. The privilege of one over the other is to overlook a text's ways of being.
2. The Punishment for incest was legalised in 1908 in England which was revoked by the Sexual Offences Act of 1956 that decrees a penalty of seven years or life imprisonment if the girl found under thirteen.
3. Jane M. Ford writes that the cultural history of incest incorporates both a taboo and a special privilege. From the very ancient times, the right to defloration was the privilege of such authority figures as a priest, an elder, medieval feudal lords and the like. The marriage between the prince and princess, and sometimes the king and his daughter were permitted in ancient Ireland. In some parts of Africa and Egypt, the marriage between brother and sister were accepted. Herbert Maisch notes that incest was also practised by the Incans, Persians, ancient Arabians, Mormons, pre-Mosaic Hebrews, and Indo-Europeans. The brother-sister incest was allowed by the Greeks. Cardinal Richelieu and Duke Philippe d'Orleans had incestuous relations with their daughter. Some cultures allow incest only on special occasions: "to achieve prosperity," "to promote successful hunting," or "to make the tribesmen bulletproof" (cited in *Patriarchy and Incest from Shakespeare to Joyce* 6). The practice of incest was normal in Renaissance Italy, for instance, the Borgia Pope Alexander VI (1431-1503) fathered a child by his daughter. Lucretia Borgia (1480-1519) was Pope Alexander VI's daughter, lover and daughter-in-law. Her epitaph makes a reference to these relationships:
Here lies entombed one named Lucretia – in truth
Thais, Alexander's daughter, wife, and daughter-in-law." (*ibid*)
4. The scene of incest occurs in Book IX & X of *Metamorphoses* where Ovid narrates Byblis' passion for her brother Caunus, and Myrrha's desire for her father Cinyras. Leo Tolstoy's *The Power of Darkness* (1888) and Eugene O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* (1924) also deal with the issues of incest.

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* Assistant Professor of English
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India
pravin.patel@bhu.ac.in