

Psychological Trauma in Ian McEwan's *Saturday*

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Abstract

Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday* details about 9/11 attack and its impact on people. Henry Perowne is the protagonist of this novel. Perowne was affected psychologically by the incident of Twin tower attack. McEwan has linked twin tower attack in his novel *Saturday* on World War Trade Center. Writing about traumatic experience helps one to decline the shock and motivate the human being forced to a painful experience to produce further. The sudden attack in America were highly disturbing for the, and their immediate and after effect led to a study on trauma at a fictional level. McEwan points out the occurrence of terrorism in its global dimension through his male protagonist Perowne, by interpreting the events that happened on that particular Saturday.

Keywords: 9/11 attack, Trauma, Politics, World War.

The 9/11 attacks on American World Trade Center has signified historically because of the destruction of *World Trade Center* of America by terrorists on 11 September 2001. More than 2000 people died because of this terrorist attack and in the history of America it is the Black day of America. The psychological trauma caused by the attack and its shocking effect affected psychologically of millions of citizens around the world, and also it created a sense of spiritual disbelief and caused a perceived failure of the language to represent such ferocity.

The protagonist of the novel *Saturday* is Henry Perowne. He is a good professional neuro-surgeon and handles more than three hundred cases a year. He is married to Rosalind, a corporate lawyer for newspaper. McEwan narrates what Perowne does and thinks and also about what happens to him and his surroundings because of the incident of Twin Tower Attack. This novel mainly focus on the traumatic experience, of the 9/11 attack and expose how life has come to be governed by terrors following a traumatizing attack. One early morning of Saturday, Perowne wakes up and looks something amazing in the sky. His mind goes back to the memory of an incident that happened in America and how the terrorist

captured four planes and attacked Twin Towers. That attack has become a symbol of destruction which completely occupies Perowne's mind. Perowne believes that planes have assumed a new dimension in the post 9/11 attack and that it has become weapons targeted against humanity.

Perowne seem to be horrified by their incapability to visualize, and also their failure to imagine the direct consequences of inflicting violence on human bodies. It is the act of watching from distance an attack which they could not stop is that which produces terror and panic in their heart. Traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in psychological arousal and emotion. The traumatized person may experience intense emotion but without clear memory of the event. Trauma is generally known as a disease related to mental depression or sudden shock caused by unprecedented or unpleasant incidents or events. The symptoms of trauma come out from frequency of traumatic images of narrative in the form of victim's strange behavior. Ellen Verbestel defines trauma, unlike the wounding of the body, which is much more complex because it is not experienced in real time, which makes it harder to register for our consciousness.

The novel *Saturday* is set on a particular day February 15, 2003 Saturday on this day thousand of people gathered in Hyde Park to protest against the impending war in Iraq by America and its associated part which included Great Britain. The novel's span is a day presenting the life of perowne, the protagonist, a successful neurosurgeon. He lives in the posh Fitzrovia neighbourhood, a prestigious place in London with his wife, Rosalind and two children Daisy and Theo and grandfather. Henry wakes up at 3:40 before morning baffled and fearful before dawn by experiencing burning aircraft descending towards Heathrow.

The plane emerges from the trees crosses a gap and disappears behind the Post Office Tower. If Perowne were inclined to religious feeling, to supernatural explanation, he could play with the idea that he's been summoned; that having woken in an unusual state of mind, and gone to the Window for a reason, he should acknowledge a hidden order, an external intelligence which wants to show or tell him something of significance. (17)

Henry mistakes this burning plane as a terrorist attack like 9/11 attacks on America, the sight brings to Perowne's mind the most dreadful assumption that he could not sleep and later he finds that the plane was steered by Russians and landed safely.

On Saturday his troublesome time starts because his mind fills with the scaring because of the plane crash in Twin Tower. Everything that happens in the novel is due to the terror because of the haunting images that he had stored in his mind, that whatever he has seen on the TV which frightened him so much that a minor plane crash seems to him like 9/11 attacks though it's already almost eighteen months have passed. This seems to haunt Perowne and it might be the cause why the scene seems to be so terrific. However, a haunting torment remains to disturb Perowne's Saturday because an enormous peace march is in progress and Henry mistakes the minor plane crash as a terrorist attack and this mistake not only affects Perowne's life but also all characters. The impact of 9/11 attack and its memories pervades throughout the whole novel.

McEwan's characters come against this experience of time shaping. For a certain period of time they get to different places and being, in one place, they can stay in various time planes. Time travels through the construction of a passage and McEwan explores and deploys these temporal and narrative structures but he does not attempt to reproduce the modernist text but revolutionized the ways in which stories could be told.

Ian McEwan wrote *Saturday* in the aftermath of 9/11. The action takes place in a span of twenty four hours, on the day of a massive anti-war demonstration in London in the spring of 2003, four weeks prior to the American invasion of Iraq.

The proposed war, Perowne finds, generally doesn't divided people predictably; a known package of opinions is not reliable guide. According to Jay, the matter is stark: how open societies deal with the new world situation will determine how open they remain. (100)

Perowne's day begins on that early Saturday morning, when he sees a burning aeroplane streaking across the sky. This casts a shadow over the rest of his day as reports on the television change and shift. It happens to be the day against the Government's decision to support America in invading Iraq. London is blocked with traffic, diversions in abundance, an influx of demonstrators, agitated news bulletins and brigades of policemen, extra traffic wardens and holder of spectators with their cameras. Saturday should

be his day off, time for rest and recreation, but an encounter with a pair of hoods in a narrow street, where Perowne unintentionally removes a wing – mirror, provides the reality distress that encompasses all his family when they barge in to a familial celebration. The anxiety aroused in the prolonged scene, when the intruders terrorize, take control and order Daisy, Perowne's daughter, to strip nude is intolerable. Theo and his father fling Baxter down the stairs and his skull got cracked. However, Perowne saves Baxter's life as he operates successfully on his contender.

McEwan wrote this novel to show how Perowne's life had changed completely within a day. Just like how Dr. Perowne's life changed by Baxter in one day, a Saturday. At the outset of *Saturday*, the opening catastrophe appears to be coming from airborne terrorists attacking the capital; however the actual threat comes from a vengeance seeking chap who has been blemished by his own unfortunate genetic destiny. Through this Ian McEwan's highly applauded novel of urban life in the aftermath of 9/11, *Saturday* is unique as it limits its time frame to a single day in recent history on February 15, 2003, a day that readers bear in mind because of the resulting colossal anti-war demonstrations.

In the twenty-first century, *Saturday* attempts on 9/11 attack in uncertain climate of terror. The depiction of a sole reflection of London in the consequences of the unparalleled terrorist events of September 11, 2001 stands in contrast to Ian McEwan's early works that presented an archetypal in *Darkest London* about poverty, oppression, squalor and abridged humanity. However, *Saturday* introduces a shift in this vision by refracting the city through the lens of postmodern texts, ideas and images.

McEwan makes a writing of the "post - modern novel" with his unique thematic concern and postmodern techniques. The writer is concerned with the postmodern themes. He not only focuses on the dark issues like violence, sex and immorality, but also probes into the problematic relationship between fiction and reality, history and fabrication. Meantime, he adopts the postmodern intertextuality in his experimental writing practice.

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