

# McEwan's Enduring Love: A Psychoanalytical Investigation

Roohollah Reesi Sistani<sup>1</sup>, Ruzy Suliza Hashim<sup>2</sup>, & Marziyeh Farivar<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, University of Jiroft, Jiroft, Iran

<sup>2</sup> The Center for Research in Language and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup> Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, University of Gonabad, Gonabad, Iran

Correspondence: Marziyeh Farivar, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, University of Gonabad, Gonabad, Iran.

Received: April 11, 2022

Accepted: May 11, 2022

Online Published: May 13, 2022

doi:10.5430/wjel.v12n5p108

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n5p108>

## Abstract

This essay is a psychoanalytic examination of Ivan McEwan's novel 'Enduring Love'. The Object Relation Theory, which asserts the existence of a fundamental human instinct known as mother-child relationship, provides a unique viewpoint on how an individual interacts with his or her environment. It is about studying the characters' behaviours and attempting to understand them from a psychoanalytic perspective. The anxieties and tensions that permeate McEwan's characters' psyches in Enduring Love will be shown via the use of synthesising key phrases and concepts from Klein, Fairbairn, and Winnicott's object-relations theory. Klein, Fairbairn, and Winnicott argue that during an infant's early years, there are both good and toxic things from the outside world. These things, which include activities, people, and relationships, are referred to as objects, and are internalised as positive or negative experiences, indicating that what we live through, contributes to the development of our self and personality. Mother is an object, and the infant's relationship with his or her mother is critical to the child's maturation, growth, development, and later stages of life. According to this, identifying the source of McEwan's characters' failures in their interactions and relationships with one another results in their early childhood's unsatisfactory emotional experiences, resulting in an imperfect development in later stages of life in establishing healthy relationships.

**Keywords:** object relations theory, mother-child relation, McEwan, maturation, anxiety

## 1. Introduction

In the field of literature, psychoanalysis appears to be a fundamental feature and component, although the evolution and development of psychological analysis does not have a long history. Within this realm, both writers and readers of literary works are involved since these three are, essentially, the manifestation of the meanings. Considering the work as the expression or the portrayal, one may admit that a writer does not merely create a book of fiction; as Freud explains "in the field of unconscious the writers takes the precedence over an analyst" (Kogan, 1299). Comparably speaking, Freud remarks that a work of literature is similar to an imaginative world in which the people and incidents are arranged and ranked. Literature, in this way, reflects its compatibility to daydreaming which is a way to an individual's subconsciousness. Dreams can be patterns of what one thinks of hate, love, religion, sexuality and family, etc. Such feelings of everyday life create a particular way of thinking for any individual which lead to various psychological phenomena revealing themselves in a variety of shapes. Ryan (2007) emphasizes that these experiences which are the roots of many different feelings are, relatively and primarily, associated with individuals' relations to their parents. Tyson (1999) elaborates that in order to find an adult's pattern of behaviour, one must search for the history of experiences that one had had during childhood because such experiences maintain their persistence in the psychic. Thurschwell (2001) discusses it in the same manner that Freud's suggestion of evaluating these experiences and their impact is profoundly illuminating. This is a cogent argument upon associating psychoanalytical approach to a historical approach of the work of literature and not to cast it aside.

One of the most prominent psychoanalytical theories is concerned with the child-mother love known as the object-relations theory. This presumes that individuals' forms of early emotions, their early relations to themselves and to others are molded and influenced by the love bond between the mother and her infant. "object-relations theory,

accordingly, considers the human psychic, having a life span beginning with the infant's relation to his mother" which is an exceptionally complex relationship. It is concerned with "one persistent need on the part of the infant: the need to be loved by the mother" (Gurac, 2007). Love of the mother, which involves protection and gratification, at the early age marks the nourishment which an infant needs in order to be alive and to grow. This growth and development is connected not only to the mental aspects, but also to physical growth and well-being. This dyadic relationship which is emotionally meaningful, as Bergmeier et al., (2020) stated, affects the eating behavior of the child in the following years of his/her life. In the same manner, maternal depression and rejection are listed as despairingly detrimental in a child's behavioral pattern since such items are the traumatic events of children's life (Schiff, Pat-Horenczyk, Ziv & Brom, 2021). The negative symptoms of those behaviors can decrease, if some form of mediations alleviate the amount of the child's exposure to the defective maternal connection.

In an extreme case, concerned with murdering own child, investigated by Dekel, Abraham and Andipatin (2018), child homicide by parents or a caregiver are said to be the result of parents' childhood's exposure to violent relationships. The writers emphasized that a traumatic parent-child past in various shapes of neglect, absence and abuse can adversely affect the future bonds and relationships. On the contrary, McAdams et al. (2017) claimed that parents' well-being and satisfaction bring about self-esteem and self-worth for the child, resulting in a happy relationship. Parents' behavioral patterns in terms of care or control depend on several factors such as their social class, personalities, well-being and anxieties and their own childhood experiences. However, according to Stafford, Gale, Richards, Kuh and Mishra (2016), economical condition of parents must not be overlooked since it plays a direct role in the mental health of parents-child relationships.

## 2. Methodology

Object relation theory was developed in England on the ground of this assumption that "people throughout their lives" long for and search for a relationship which is mutually loving, close, satisfying, close, and acknowledging" (Stiefel, Harris & Rohan, 1998). It altered the focus of psychoanalytic theory to the relations and interaction of the infant with the mother who is considered as the primary caretaker (Nilson 2000). In fact, the contemporary psychoanalytic literature started to list one of its ubiquitous phases of its development. In this theory, "attention began to be focused on these early relationships with the mother which precede the Oedipal dynamics, and they began to modify and replace the monadic view of the self, postulated by Freud" (Nilson, 2000). Object relation theory departed from the traditional perspective of psychoanalysis and it confirms the significance of other people in the development of an individual's personality (Mitchell, 1981).

Interpersonal relations are the crucial point of attention in the object relation theory. It was Freud who chose the term object for the purpose of appointing the target of the drives, the 'other', 'real or imaginary', toward whom the drive is directed" (Mitchell, 1981). Freud's emphasis on the psychic process is notable, and according to him "excesses or deficiencies of gratification...either obtained or denied" play a determining role (Mitchell, 1981). Thus, there introduced a new perspective that seeking pleasure is not the target, but the aim is to seek an object. According to Mitchell (1981), Melanie Klein additionally expanded the notion associated with the object and elaborated on the "internal objects" which had been fundamentally related to role of objects Fairbairn's work". She proposed that "objects are inherent in, and thereby created out of the drives themselves, independent of real others in the external world" (Mitchell, 1981). By this Klein indicated that the images of others which are phantasized become an internal presence which are related to the nature and content of an object, and this determines the psychical processes (Mitchell, 1981).

While the child's primary object relations are the body parts' images, later on, the child is toward the real objects which represent in the world. The desires and derives of a child in terms of love and hate are toward these objects which are considered as the underlying part and the scaffold "onto which later experiences accrue" (Mitchell 1981). Klein (1959) in her elaboration referred to mother who is the primary object as the "whole object" and clarified that the existence of a mother is an unconscious phenomenon or awareness in infant's mind which functions as the basic primal relation of the infant to his/her mother. Establishing a relationship with the object entails the internalisation of the object and its projection to the external world. Klein seems to consider such internalization to be a manner of connecting to the external world, declaring that it is essentially what the ego does: "constantly absorbing into itself the whole external world". The internal objects and the objects in real external world are corresponding. They refer to people, experiences and situations which are considered as the others and are internalised. In this respect, object relations theorists endeavor to state that people live in both external and internal worlds, simultaneously, and that what they experience from both can "ranges from the most fluid intermingling to the most rigid separation" (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).

There are numerous objects in a child's inner world which are taken into the ego. These objects signify goodness and badness for their variety of features corresponding to how parents are represented in the consciousness of the child. In the same way, other people of the child's life are internalised (Klein, 1959). Over time, those early images of objects are transformed into real objects who are parents. Klein (1959), accordingly, suggested that if the real object and the internal object get closer in content, there would be less pathological situations. This early formation of a child's psychological structure, which is about how the inner image of self and the other people or the other objects and how this is manifested in the interpersonal relations and situations, is investigated in the object relations theories. The relationships that people have are both related to real people and the images which represent such people in their psychic. Object relations theories' task is to concentrate on the infant's early life "that leave a lasting impression; that is, a residue, a remnant within the psyche of the individual". These past relationship's /experiences' remnants and such inner object relations are the shapers and formers of the individuals' relationships as well as perceptions with the other people around them (Clair, 1986). Greenberg and Mitchell confirmed that object relation theories strive to inquire into the relationship which is built or created between the "real, external people and internal images and residues of relations with them", and the determining influence of "these residues for psychic functioning" (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).

The child growing up means finding and developing a separate sense of self and others, addressed as the objects, which is different from the primary desires and drives (Ryan, 2007). Through "learning that the primary care-giver [mother] is a separate being and not part of the self, by seeing the care-giver as object rather than part of the child's subjective universe, the child begins to acquire autonomy, the ability to exist and survive on its own" (Ryan, 2007). This indicates that by means of the object relations theories, the infant's complications in the primary object relations can be decoded. It must be noted that the most proportion of this relation of an infant is to the mother as she alleviates the pain of separation (Nakanishi, 2011). For this reason, Klein announced that the behavior of people in their environment could be deciphered by looking into their period of infancy and their good object relations; so that if the child experiences a normal early childhood, the healthy development toward maturity could be confirmed. The mental or physical diseases, more often than not, are due to the infant's insufficient "efforts to establish good object relations" (Eklund, 2000).

### *2.1 Good Object and Bad Object*

Klein (1946) believes that the mother's breast forms the ego's core object in connection with the good object. This view emphasizes the good breast as a prototype of any object which may mean gratifying and the opposite of it may mean persecutory. Klein illuminates that the origin of object relations is at birth, a vital time, when a mother with all loving aspects feeds the new born which itself makes the first connection of the baby to the external world. Once the mother is internalized into the child's internal world as a good object, "an element of strength is added to the ego" (1946). Afterwards, it is the ego that absorbs the object and brings about the sense of perception toward good features which are connected to the mother. Then the sense of identification with the mother, which is with a good object, "shows externally in the young child's copying the mother's activities and attitudes" (Klein, 1946). Simultaneously, the unpleasant stimulus is connected to badness of the object marking the denying breast. The good breast which is introjected forms an essential part of the normal ego development. It must be noted that the emotional condition of the mother can affect her interaction with the child. The mother's touch, tone of voice and way of showing care and interest, her breast feeding, as a genuine expression of noticing and love are among "the mother's personal relationship to the infant" (Guntrip, 1961). The process of well introjection can be influenced by the lack of the situation of good-enough mothering. Klein (1946) affirms that fully enjoying being mothered and deficiency in it can influence the internalization of good or bad mothering. In other words, the bad and good object comes from feeding the infant or not. Hence, unavailability of the parents may bring about frustration in the child in terms of "longing for contact and relation" (Mitchell, 1981).

### *2.2 Good Enough Mothering Environment*

Winnicott introduced the concept of a "good-enough mother" to explain the manner through which parents function in order to adequately provide for the child so that he/she might get a good beginning in his/her life. In this manner, Winnicott (2012) explained that that maternal care, which may be of various types, can determine the patterns of the defenses of the individual as well as the later life sublimations. According to Winnicott, good enough is associated with the concept of caring in the sense that the infant is taken care of, psychologically and physically, and his/her needs are predicted and met (Stiefel, Harris & Rohan, 1998). The early age of an infant is a critical phase which is about the infant's relationships to the worlds, and good enough mothering can contribute to the infant's appropriate development in different stages. A mother whose adaptation to her infant, at different stages of his/her development,

is appropriate, as Winnicott remarked, helps and allows the child to have the best environment to develop and to grow up as an individual who attains the capability of maturity in his object relation.

Such a mother within the concept of good-enough mothering constantly cares for the infant's needs, anticipates and adapts and respond to his/her step by step need development so the infant acquires "an experience of omnipotence" (Jacobs, 1995). This relationship which is important in infant's belief in an external reality is the infant's mental health too due to the fact that the infant's needs are not disturbed or blocked. On this detail, Clare Winnicott (2012) believes that good enough parenting and good enough mothering brings about the infants' health which is "a capacity to leave magical control and destruction aside, and to enjoy the aggression that is in them alongside the gratifications, and alongside all the tender relationships and the inner personal riches" which contribute to what we may call as the life of childhood.

The relationship is what Winnicott connect to the environment since the mother as the object is an external reality (2005). And if this environment is good enough, the maturation process of the infant is secure. Winnicott's concentration on the "interaction of the child with the environment" places "instinctual development into a social and interactive context with the result that he understood the emotional development of the young child almost exclusively in terms of the child's relationship with the mother" (Clair, 1986). The mother as the facilitator influences the infant's shape of development and her absence brings about grave impacts on the child's procedure of development. This absence is translated into both the absence of breast and the absence of a mother figure in whole.

The influence of the mothering presence, as Winnicott analyzes, is essential from birth, and explained that, this state of "good-enough mothering" can be described as mirroring which reflects the child's real self. Once the infant is assured of the supports, he/she becomes attuned to his/her impulses and body functions which leads to the evolution of a sense of self (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). On the other hands, mother's failure in predicting and meeting and understanding the infant's needs and her defective caring causes disruption in the infant's self-sense of omnipotence and contentment. Gratifying the infant and his/her needs, therefore, is connected to growth and health. Winnicott (2012), in this regard, defines "the primary maternal preoccupation" as it includes the mother's love and her self-sacrifice, the sense of care and nurture for the child. Considering such a bond and the probability of lose, Winnicott mentions that anxieties may exist because of the extent of pain which is the consequent of the feeling of lose or separation from the source of love and care, the mother (Gurac, 2007). The infant's vision of no good mothering environment is frightening and he/she can be afraid of being annihilated which implies that, as the sense of comfort resulting from good mothering increases, the sense of annihilation or lack of security decreases.

Fairbairn also emphasized the same method of interpretation that the role a good-enough maternal figure is profoundly significant regarding the child's future's interactions with others (Silas, 2011). Klein, furthermore, explains that if an infant feels successful in internalising a mother who is good and helpful, the infant's whole life will be beneficial which creates feelings of trust in the unconsciousness. However, When the infant experiences the presence of a bad figure or the loss of his/her valued object, the child develops a defence mechanism in his/her phantasy world. Then through maintaining a "wishful hallucination" attempts to "maintain the idealization of his good object and omnipotently annihilate the bad" object, because, losing the good object for the child "is felt as an attack by bad objects" (Segal, 2011). Similarly, this indicates that if parents are not on good terms, difficulties in terms of destructive impulses and phantasies, fears and distrust, may arise in the child which will disastrously affects the child's "unconscious mind".

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1 Not Good-Enough Maternal Figure Represented in Clarissa

McEwan (2004) used a psychological medium of expression in 'The Enduring Love' as stated by Byrnes (1999). He continued that the nature of Joe's relationship with his wife surpassed what the plot aimed to reveal. What we receive as a decline in their marriage is not Parry's obsessions and McEwan mischievously expresses a deep point regarding their problems (Byrnes, 1999). McEwan's art in penetrating into the depth of his characters' psychic layers reflects a worn out object relation which reveals the infantile worries and anxieties which are re-enacted in adult subjects. Once one feels lonely, he/she would have the inclination to make relationship. McEwan reveals that how, withdrawn and forced to be "lonely" to its world, the ego attempts to reach out and make relationship.

In this fiction, McEwan creates persistent narrative subjects, some grown-up individuals in the adult world. Moreover, he describes to us the boys within the adult, and the root causes of adult dependency and aggression in infantile deprivation. Facets such as the persistent and desperate infantile need for the acceptance and emotional assurance, and the perception of female figure as an ambivalent object or a depriving maternal figure who is desired,

yearned-for, but also unsatisfying. These anxieties shape Joe's interaction, in particular, with his female figure as Clarissa and Jed's unsatisfactory and depriving early child-mother experiences.

Throughout the novel, Joe is disturbed by his desires for emotional fulfillment and Clarissa is perceived as an ignorant and unsatisfying object for him and in either case she remains a frustrating bad object. The nature of this relationship between Joe and Clarissa; assuming Joe as a "child" and the primary anxiety of depicting Clarissa as a female figure, who is needed, yearned-for but unsatisfying by Joe, mimic an infantile relic, an unsatisfactory primary object relationship between a "child" and a not good-enough mother (McEwan, 2004). Joe's object relations are burdened with a longing for being understood and receiving emotional fulfillment, accompanied by the anxiety of being ignored and rejected by his female love object. These feelings also shape his interactions with Clarissa and this is where the infantile origins of this individual's adult restlessness come to be most noticeable. Hence, the emphasized ungratifying relationships between the male figure and female figure, as I see, suggests a lingering object-relation fixated in the early phase of the infancy.

The residues of primary love bond and child-mother experiences are significant in the 'Enduring Love'. Although seldom addressed openly and directly, these experiences take up a fringe but fundamental part in the novel; the notion of primary child-mother representation is frequently present at the boundaries of the novel-lingering over the story, and therefore, leading the narrative, on the way, to some conclusions. It is declared that even in the non-appearance of superficial mothering, McEwan makes us aware of the manifestation of those primary child-mother relics through the behavioral symptoms of the adult characters: "sometimes you're like a child", Clarissa tells Joe, who, in a sense, performs for her as her missing child to fulfill her own unsatisfied desires to become a mother, since she is "unable to bear children" and it is Joe who in his interactions with Clarissa mostly feels "a childish pang of sorrow" (McEwan, 2004). Once he feels to be left alone and not to be understood and accepted by his own loved object, Clarissa.

Through his love bond with his love object, Joe suffers from a sensation which is "like a skin, a soft shell", and a "faint connection rooted" in Joe's "enduring fragment of childhood dream" (McEwan, 2004). This imagery is also illustrated as sometimes "like a half remembered place from childhood", hovering over Joe's relationships with his love object (McEwan, 2004). Hence, as Xan, one of the gun sellers in 'Enduring Love', mentions, to recognize our adulthood psychic anxieties, it is necessary to fly back to our childhood experiences which reflected frustration with our primary love objects, due to the fact that the frustrated needs of childhood, especially in the early age, are the roots of anxieties (McEwan, 2004).

Clarissa, in 'Enduring Love', is perceived as an emotionally unavailable love object. She just relies on her own sensations, "and at times she finds Joe's rationality absurd and unnerving" (Malcolm, 2002). In Allen Palmer's opinion it is Clarissa's unsupportive nature which has pushed Joe toward facing all his difficulties "alone" (Palmer, 2009). Regarding their failure to experience a satisfactory relationship, even the time Joe "saves" Clarissa in a climactic moment within the novel, Joe realises that there is no love and gratitude from Clarissa, instead he finds her looking "with an expression of such repulsion" (McEwan, 2004). In the imageries of her ignorance, being unsatisfying, and Joe's failure to establish a gratifying love bond with her, this female figure as an emotionally unresponsive love object is, therefore, established. Hence, Clarissa's inability to behave in a good enough and supportive manner, and her "unsupportive" penchants in accepting Joe's comprehension of what is happening brings about the gradual isolation which Joe went through (McEwan, 2004). Since Clarissa, his love object, is unresponsive and ignorant in Joe's world, he is not capable of establishing an emotionally satisfying object relation with her as his internalized love object. Referring to Clarissa's rejecting and "unsupportive" nature, Joe says that "to her [Clarissa] I was...the thieving invader of her private space. As far as I was concerned, she was disloyal, unsupportive in this time of crisis" (McEwan, 2004). Joe's relationship with Clarissa, in fact, entails an agitated relation to a love object that he, who is perceived by his love object as a "child", apprehends as unresponsive and rejecting. This image suggests that Joe's inner world mimics an infantile object relation where the need for being accepted is expressed in terms of oral anxiety.

Based on the aforementioned issues, it can be said that the interactions between Joe and his female figure, Clarissa, as two adult individuals, is a metaphoric representation of a child and a yearned-for mother figure who is not gratifying and good enough, but frustrating. In other words, the male-female relationship between Joe and Clarissa in *Enduring Love* follows the pattern of a child-mother relationship and the state of being dependent when viewed in the context of the object-relations theory. According to Klein (1952), a man's feelings towards a woman are always dependent on his attachment to his mother at his early age. As Klein (1952) puts it, apart from superficial characteristics, finding a love-partner is associated with some deep unconscious motives which leads to getting

attracted to one another for a satisfactory relationship. The feelings of a man towards a woman are always influenced by the type of attachment to his mother when he was an infant (Klein, 1952). Nonetheless, Klein believes that this process “will be more or less unconscious, and may be very much disguised in its manifestations” (Klein, 1952). Therefore, concerning the root causes of choosing a “love-partner” and the residuals of early attachments to the mother in adult interactions between two adult individuals, Klein is of the opinion that at times a man’s choice of a woman as his love-partner is based on some different characteristics and personally traits which are dissimilar to his mother’s “but some characteristics of her personality are in accordance with his early impressions of his mother and have a special attraction for him” (Klein, 1975).

As mentioned earlier, object relation theorists emphasize the first relationship between a child and his mother (Klein, 1935). They suppose that this first relationship shapes a basic paradigm for an individual’s adulthood and it “acts as a focal point in the ego” (Klein, 1935). In any case, if a child cannot make a healthy primary introjection and relationship with the primal first source of gratification and love feelings, he will not develop his relations with the external world either. We will see that Joe as McEwan’s male character in ‘Enduring Love’ has a basic problem in establishing his interactions and relationships with his supposed loved objects, which is mainly a female character. Joe cannot experience his female character or the supposed loved object as a person who is both beloved and bad. A mixture of good and bad in one whole object is not felt and achieved for him.

Klein makes clear that the psychological processes, she describes are positions that we must negotiate again and again throughout our life in all kinds of situations both in our childhood and adulthood. In their adult interactions, Clarissa through her failure at giving Joe, the “child” in her eyes, an emotional assurance, frustrates him. This female figure and the “child” suggest, in fact, the two parties of a failed object relation; an unsatisfying, frustrating woman and a “lonely”, disbelieved, and rejected child. In other words, they re-enact the persona’s internalised insufficient early object-relation with the primary loved objects, that he remembers as frustrating and, therefore, as leaving him alone and left out.

Early mechanisms that the child utilises in his interactions with his primary caregivers, such as the need for acceptance, longing for emotional assurance, phantasing mother as either gratifying or frustrating, will not be abandoned in maturity. This situation signals the fact that the adult is always haunted by the infantile processes, according to Klein. Thinking of this, one might find that there are no rational or emotional explanations except the idea of a mechanism within the infant’s early days that “makes all knowledge and judgment possible” (Phillips & Stonebridge, 1998). Consequently, this psychic mechanism and “position is an always available state, not something one passes through” (Mitchell, 1981). As a result, it is based on such theoretical foundation that I suggest, the interactions between Joe and his female figure, Clarissa, as two adult individuals, is a metaphoric exemplification of a child and a yearned-for mother figure who is not gratifying and good-enough, but anxiety provoking.

Joe’s interaction with Clarissa, all through the novel, entails an agitated relationship to a love object that the persona (Joe) initially perceives as unresponsive and frustrating. Towards the end of the novel, despite experiencing a set of emotionally ungratifying relationships, we find that, Joe, instead of relinquishing Clarissa, perceived to be as his unsatisfying love object, attempts to return to this love object. Their relationships have been fraught with too much psychological tensions and “there is no resolution to their underlying difficulties” and also apparently “their reconciliation, is not convincing” since it “is relegated to a casual mention in the epilogue” (Byrnes, 1999). Nevertheless, Joe tries to keep his bad love object. This imagery implies that deep in his psyche and at the core of his memory, his love object is remembered as a soothing and loving object.

Klein believes that a mother is the first and foremost gift of love given to us. This gift is not ordinary which is loved and protected by self and “loves and protects the self” (Klein, 1946). This is the memory of mother’s love (whether gratifying or frustrating) that persists unaltered deep in our psyche all through the life by the self, and this is what I see in ‘Enduring Love’. Therefore, I argue that the aforementioned sad and zealous adult relationships in ‘Enduring Love’ are springing from their early game of love with their primary caregivers, the mother, in particular. It is suggested that underneath these scenarios of the absence of satisfaction and aggressive inclinations, lies the same underlying unsatisfactory or not good-enough maternal experiences which have been rooted in childhood.

All through the novel, Joe has been depicted as a needy individual, a needy “child” who is dependent and desires for his love object’s caresses. His dependency on Clarissa is exemplified, for instance, the time he needs her emotional support to deal with his psychic challenges and asks her if she could stay there by him, but as Joe himself concludes “she [Clarissa] had failed to support me” (McEwan, 2004). This suggests her failure at supporting Joe emotionally against his psychic anxieties regarding Jed’s obsession, and also his wretched feelings over Logan’s death.

Despite all the frustrations this needy “child” experiences from his unsatisfactory interactions with his love object,

nevertheless, fear of abandonment and being “lonely”, and anxiety over separation from his love object, are illustrated in the images of his “isolation” which are highlighted towards the finale of the novel (McEwan, 2004). This imagery of Joe’s anxiety over his “isolation”, being ignored, and “lonely” is quite obvious, for instance, despite the fact that he and Clarissa are living together in their house, he has been feeling peculiarly lonely, and also after Clarissa leaves him alone and goes to her brother’s house, Joe dejectedly indicates that Clarissa forced his “isolation” (McEwan, 2004). These images reflect Joe’s anxiety over separation from his love object. In fact, towards the end, the novel continues with these series of images of impairment, sadness, lack of emotional assurance, and inarticulacy. There is no satisfying object relationship between Joe and Clarissa but “silence”. This silence has been described as a concrete entity personified as an object, “a sparkle or hard gloss, and a thickness too, like fresh paint” which profoundly influenced their emotional life (McEwan, 2004). This imagery of sadness is illustrated towards the end of novel, when, as an example, Joe is driving accompanied by Clarissa. As she points to the fields, she says that the environment was beautiful, but they were still unhappy and he did have no idea about whom she was talking (McEwan, 2004). It is an image of cold and unsatisfactory situation, which is more like “an enclosed space”, as Joe says, than a gratifying one (McEwan, 2004).

This strong emphasis on the images of being “lonely”, “isolated”, and likewise confined in “an enclosed space” and inarticulacy (having just a very “small-talked” set of relationships) in Joe’s set of interactions with his love object in the finale of the novel, manifests Joe’s isolation and his deep psychic anxiety over separation which incapacitates him. This “separation anxiety” (to borrow Fairbairn’s words) over being separated from his love object, provokes a great deal of pain for Joe; “I experienced a sudden ache, part desolation, part panic, to observe the speed with which this mate, this familiar [Clarissa], was transforming herself into a separate person” (McEwan, 2004). The imagery of these psychic tensions implies Joe’s being needy and dependent, and also his horror of being separated from his perceived maternal female figure, even though this maternal female figure is experienced all through the story as an emotionally ungratifying and not good-enough love object.

The situation of recognizing Joe as a needy and dependent individual who experiences no emotional assurance from his unsatisfactory love object, but still is expressing his painful anxieties with regard to his isolation and being separated from her, exemplifies what Fairbairn (1941) calls “anxiety over separation” for the child towards his unsatisfactory mother. Fairbairn (1946) believes that there is an extreme sense of dependency between the mother and the child which reflects how anxiously painful it could be for the infant to experience the separation. In fact, as Fairbairn (1943) states, “separation anxiety is a characteristic product of the tendency of the individuals who have remained in a state of infantile dependence”, and as a result, this anxiety which is rooted in the status of separation reveals itself “as a fear of isolation”. According to Fairbairn (1941), when the child is uncertain about the emotional support of the object he/she is associated with, the huge amount of anxiety forces him/her to renounce that type of dependency which “would be equivalent in his eyes to forfeiting all hope of ever obtaining the satisfaction of his unsatisfied needs”.

The emphasis on isolation and the sense of separation anxiety that the novel ends with, implies that, eventually, the anxiety over separation from his female love figure does not permit Joe to relinquish his infantile attitude of dependency. The anxiety of not being accompanied by the love object, the anxiety of separation, despite all the frustrations and tensions that he has experienced, is so intense that it does not permit Joe to grow out of his infantile dependency, and, therefore, he still desires for “Clarissa’s forgiveness” and “tolerance” (McEwan, 2004). Concerning this situation, Harry Guntrip (1961) in his reference to Fairbairn’s ideas, remarks that as “the infantile ego has become disturbed and arrested in its development in the earliest stages”, it feels vulnerable and fearful (McEwan, 2004). What keeps it “thereafter fixed so stubbornly in that position of ego-weakness”. As I see it, the mother figure, a desire to preserve her, inside the psyche, as long as possible, is what preserves the child alive in his internal world, since, to relinquish the mother, in a sense, is to relinquish a very specific and irreplaceable love bond. But if this relationship is an unsatisfactory relation, and if this is a not good-enough, frustrating mother, and if the ego understands its status of vulnerability, as Guntrip (1961) indicates, why this ego does not renounce that unsatisfying, not good-enough object? The answer, based on Fairbairn’s remarks, is that “human survival, depends upon relationship, so the tie to the internal bad object is far preferable to no object at all” (Ogden, 1994).

Therefore, having a bad mother, as Fairbairn believes, is better than having no mother, because relinquishing this bad loved object is similar to giving up the hopes of finding any satisfaction of his/her unsatisfied needs, “or relinquishing this bad loved object, for the child, means the renunciation of all the hope of ever being loved and “desire to be loved” (Fairbairn, 1946). As a result, all these object relational situations are experienced, even though internalising this loved object means that the ego recognises its vulnerability and weakness and exists “in a state of fear”, and infantile dependency, and preserving this bad loved object within causes the ego to come to live in a state

of perpetual enduring its love.

In sum, needy and dependent, Joe desires to stay with his ungratifying love object (Clarissa), and although his set of interactions with Clarissa is a kind of love bond which exemplifies a lack of promising indication of the connection, and is fraught with considerable psychic anxiety and conflict, however, he still prefers to hold on to having some hope of “obtaining the satisfaction of his unsatisfied emotional needs” (Fairbairn, 1941). Consequently, I suggest that “enduring” in ‘Enduring Love’, for Joe, is in fact a verb of “endure” describing Joe’s engagement with this situation of coping with his set of unsatisfying love relationships with his not good-enough love object.

#### 4. Conclusion

The present research on the prominent novel of McEwan, ‘Enduring Love’, showed that the primary interactions between a mother and her child are of significance in the sense that the influences of residues of experiences within such interactions during the early age can be markedly critical. In ‘Enduring Love’ this is a type of relationship which, due to the physical absence of the mother, is not immediately palpable and it is masked by the main characters of the novel whose lives are fraught with difficulties due to the lack of good-enough facilitating mothering. Investigating the characters in terms of the behavioral symptoms that they presented in the novel through the synthesised theories of Klein, Fairbairn and Winnicott shows such an impact. The characters’ behaviour in their early childhood relationships was observed. Due to the unsatisfactory relationships that the characters experienced in their childhood, they had insufficient self-confidence because of their fragile ego, resulting in anxieties which adversely influenced their relationships. In this novel, Joe, Jed, Clarissa, as the adult characters, are constantly searching for the love object. Although they are adults in an adult world, they seek any mother who can be good enough and gratifying. They look for a mother by whom they are able to “obtain the satisfaction” of their “unsatisfied emotional needs”. Therefore, infantile memories are found here again. Fairbairn, Klein, and Winnicott’s theory of primary object relationships is an endeavor to address the mother whom we strongly treasure and the child that we are.

#### References

- Bergmeier, H., Paxton, S. J., Milgrom, J., Anderson, S. E., Baur, L., Hill, B., ... Skouteris, H. (2020). Early Mother-Child Dyadic Pathways to Childhood Obesity Risk: A Conceptual Model. *Appetite*, *144*, 104459. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2019.104459>
- Byrnes, C. (1999). *The Work of Ian McEwan: A Psychodynamic Approach*. Newcastle University. Ph. D thesis.
- Clair, M. (1986). *Object Relations and Self Psychology: An Introduction*. Brooks/Cole Publishing.
- Dekel, B., Abrahams, N., & Andipatin, M. (2018). Exploring Adverse Parent-Child Relationships from the Perspective of Convicted Child Murderers: A South African Qualitative Study. *PLoS One*, *13*(5). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0196772>
- Eklund, M. (2000). Applying Object Relations Theory to Psychosocial Therapy. *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health*, *15*(1), 1-26. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J004v15n01\\_01](https://doi.org/10.1300/J004v15n01_01)
- Fairbairn, W. R. D. (1941). *A Revised Psychopathology of the Psychoses and Psychoneuroses in Psychoanalytic studies of the personality*. Routledge Publishing.
- Fairbairn, W. R. D. (1943). *The War Neuroses-Their Nature and Significance in Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*. Routledge Publishing.
- Fairbairn, W. R. D. (1946). *Object-Relationships and Dynamic Structure in Psychoanalytic studies of the personality*. Routledge Publishing.
- Gurac, S. (2007). *A Long Night's Journey into the Mother: A Psychoanalytic Study of T. S. Eliot's Early Poems*. Lehigh University. Ph. D thesis.
- Greenberg, J., & Mitchell, S. (1983). *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvj2xv6>
- Guntrip, H. (1961). *Personality Structure and Human Interaction. the Developing Synthesis of Psychodynamic Theory*. Hogarth Press.
- Jacobs, M. (1995). *D.W. Winnicott*. SAGE Publication.
- Klein, M. (1935). *A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States. In Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works. 1921–1945*, edited by M. Masud R. Khan. Hogarth Press, 1935.
- Klein, M. (1946). *Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms. In Envy and Gratitude and Other Works. 1946–1963*, edited by M. Masud R. Khan. Hogarth Press, 1946.

by M. Masud R. Khan. Hogarth Press.

- Klein, M. (1952). *Some Theoretical Conclusions Regarding the Emotional Life of the Infant. In Envy and Gratitude and Other Works. 1946–1963*, edited by M. Masud R. Khan. Hogarth Press.
- Klein, M. (1959). *Our Adult World and Its Roots in Infancy. In Envy and Gratitude and Other Works. 1946–1963*, edited by M. Masud R. Khan. Hogarth Press. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872675901200401>
- Klein, M. (1975). *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works. 1946–1963*, edited by M. Masud R. Khan. Hogarth Press.
- Kogan, I. (2012). Ian McEwan's Solar Through a Psychoanalytic Lens. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 60, 1299. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003065112465470>
- Mitchell, S. A. (1981). The Origin and Nature of the Object in the Theories of Klein and Fairbairn. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 17, 374-398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.1981.10745670>
- McEwan, I. (2004). *Enduring Love*. Vintage Books.
- Malcolm, D. (2002). *Understanding Ian McEwan*. University of South Carolina Press.
- McAdams, T. A., Rijdsdijk, F. V., Narusyte, J., Ganiban, J. M., Reiss, D., Spotts, E., ... Eley, T. C. (2017). Associations between the Parent-Child Relationship and Adolescent Self-Worth: A Genetically Informed Study of Twin Parents and Their Adolescent Children. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 58(1), 46-54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12600>
- Nakanishi, B. (2011). *The Journey of Therapy: Object Relations Theory and Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey*. Alliant International University. Ph. D thesis.
- Nilson, S. V. (2000). *Gilgamesh in Relationship: A Feminist, Kleinian Hermeneutic of the Contemporary Epic*. The California Institute of Integral Studies. Ph. D thesis.
- Ogden, T. H. (1994). *The Concept of Internal Object Relations in Grotstein, James S. and Rinsley, Donald B.(eds.) Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations*. Free Association Press.
- Phillips, J., & Stonebridge, L. (1998). *Reading Melanie Klein*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203360538>
- Palmer, A. (2009). Attributions of madness in Ian McEwan's Enduring Love. *Style*, 43(3), 291-308.
- Ryan, M. (2007). *Literary Theory, a Practical Introduction*. 2nd Ed. Blackwell Publishing.
- Segal, H. (1964). *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*. Basic Books.
- Silas, A. (2011). *In Search of the Forgotten Parent: Toward a Psychoanalytic Understanding of the Father*. Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Ph. D thesis.
- Stafford, M., Kuh, D. L., Gale, C. R., Mishra, G., & Richards, M. (2016). Parent-Child Relationships and Offspring's Positive Mental Wellbeing from Adolescence to Early Older Age. *The journal of positive psychology*, 11(3), 326-337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2015.1081971>
- Stiefel, I., Harris, P., & Rohan, J. A. (1998). Object Relations Family Therapy: Articulating the Inchoate. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 19(2), 55-62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1467-8438.1998.tb00314.x>
- Schiff, M., Pat-Horenczyk, R., Ziv, Y., Brom, D. (2021). Multiple Traumas, Maternal Depression, Mother-Child Relationship, Social Support, and Young Children's Behavioral Problems. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(1-2), 892-914. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517725738>
- Tyson, L. (1999). *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. Garland Publishing.
- Thurschwell, P. (2001). *Sigmund Freud*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203183434>
- Winnicott, D. W. (2005). *Playing and Reality*. Routledge.
- Winnicott, C. (2012). *W. Winnicott Deprivation and Delinquency*. Routledge Classics. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203753880>

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).