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GENDER REPRESENTATION IN IAN MCEWAN'S
***ATONEMENT* (2001)**

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Dedication

To my father

Family and friends

And all whom I know

I dedicate this modest work

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Abstract

Gender is one of the most important subjects being tackled in our century since the development of women's role in society and the spread of feminism across the world.

It is not considered only with sex or trans people but it exceeds to every aspect of life since every human has a gender role and identity. They can affect and get provoked by the society. People's identity can be changed and formed by the circumstances and the society around them. The effect of gender has extended to be included and presented in literature by many authors in their works. It was discussed from different aspects in many novels such as: *Great Gatsby*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Atonement* by Ian McEwen. The paper focuses mainly on highlighting the gender rules included in the *Atonement* and unveil gender performance of the characters of the novel. To achieve this objective, we relied first on reading and understanding gender then reading the novel to analyze it and reveal the presentation of gender in it. We came through to discover different roles of gender including role of women and men and women's sexuality.

Keywords: gender, social constructed, sexuality, role of men, role women

Table of Contents

Dedication	I
Acknowledgement	II
Abstract.....	III
General Introduction	1
Chapter One: Gender	
1 Introduction	4
1.1 Gender	4
1.2 The concept of gender performativity	5
1.3 Sociology Theories and Gender	6
1.3.1 Structural Functionalist Theory and Gender	6
1.3.2 Symbolic Interaction Theory and Gender	7
1.3.3 Social Conflict Theory and Gender	8
1.4 Conclusion.....	9
Chapter two: <i>Atonement</i>	
2 Introduction	11
2.1 Summary and Analysis.....	11
2.1.1 Summary	11
2.1.2 Analysis.....	13
2.1.2.1 The Setting	13
2.1.2.2 Symbols	14
2.1.2.3 Themes	14
2.2 Major Characters.....	15
2.2.1 Briony Between Childhood, Adolescence, and Adulthood	16
2.2.2 Briony the writer	17
2.2.3 Robbie and Cecilia	17
2.3 Conclusion.....	17
Chapter three: The Representation of Gender in The Novel	
3 Introduction	19
3.1 Gender in Literature	19
3.2 Portrayal of Men and Women.....	19
3.2.1 Role of Men	19
3.2.2 overshadowed masculinity.....	21

3.2.3. Role of Women.....	22
3.2.4. Women's Sexuality.....	26
3.3 Conclusion.....	27
General Conclusion.....	28
Bibliography.....	30

General Introduction

The concept of gender as cultural and social structure that distinguish or make difference between male and female, how they act and react with each others, and the society, shows its power and importance as social phenomena.

The perspective of gender binary created waves of objections, campaign of interceptions because it refers to the compulsory of matching the biological sex .If a person born with male genitalia, must be masculine, if with female genitalia, than must be feminine, and if happens that the new born was an intersex, the parents tend to choose for him or her, only to stay under the umbrella of a two gender system, and to preserve this ideology. As an objection the perspective of gender socially constructed has been encouraged, so it witnessed a lot of supporting theories like Judith Butler's Gender Performativity, which believes that gender is a socially constructed. Given to the importance of the general system, it has been studied by the main theories of sociology, Structural Functional theory, Symbolic Interaction theory, and Social Conflict theory.

Not only sociology showed interest in gender, also literature had a relationship with gender in one way or another. For centuries people maintained the stereotype of men and women in their lives and their artistic works like painting, sculpture, and writing. The concept of gender annulled the boundaries between masculinity and femininity. Except for men and women's genitalia nothing left to differentiate between the both, certainly that is not what identifies them as male or female. Their gender is socially constructed, this understanding created a spheres of creativities and studies in art especially literature.

Ian McEwen one of the most best selling contemporary British authors. He is a famous successful writer with readers from all over the world, he wrote great works among them the novel that based on the Time magazine is as one of one-handed best English novels. *Atonement* with it great narrative plot, it was a platform for many awards and nomination, also a case of studies and researching, when the writer who named one of the 50 greatest British writers since 1945, made a comment how he believe that only people with male genitalia are men at the Royal Institution, he raised enormous amount of questions about his views to transgender specifically, and to gender generally.

In an attempt to know how McEwen presented men and women in this great novel, these following questions have been raised:

1. How did McEwen deal with gender roles?
2. How did the main female characters in McEwen's novel experience sexuality?
3. To what an extent the characters fulfill the expectations of their society?

This work tackles Ian McEwen's presentation of gender in his novel *Atonement*. This project consists of three chapters, the first one entitled Gender. It gives a closer look to both of the perspectives gender binary and socially constructed, and highlights the differences between Gender Essentialism and Social Constructivism; also it deals with one of the main gender theories Gender Performativity and its understanding. In addition to the concept of gender regarding the major sociology theories. The second part entitled Atonement. It is devoted to the novel, starting with summary and analysis which contains the setting, symbols and themes. Than introducing the major characters, highlighting the life of the character Briony Tallis also, the love story between Cecilia and Robbie Turner. The last chapter is concerned with the concept of gender in literature, and the portrayal of men and women in the novel. It contains four parts Role of Men, Overshadowed Masculinity, Role of women, and finally Women's Sexuality.

Chapter One

GENDER

1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to present a general overview of gender, the concept of gender performativity and Sociology Theories and Gender. It comprises three parts: the first part of this chapter is devoted to the concept of gender. The second part defines the concept of gender performativity. The last part deals with sociology theories and gender. It mentions the three main theories of sociology and their view of gender which are: Structural Functionalist Theory, Symbolic Interaction Theory, and Social Conflict Theory.

1.1 Gender

What is gender? And where does it come from? These are some of the questions that come in our mind when we hear the word 'gender'. And to answer these questions, it should be taken into consideration that "sex", and "gender" are not the same thing. Most people get confused between the two, thinking that they are similar, but they are totally different. They belong to two theories which clarify where gender comes from: Gender Essentialism, and Social Constructivism.

Gender Essentialism says that gender refers to "sex" which is related to the biological differences. It refers to someone's genitalia, hormones, and chromosomes that define a person as a male, or a female. Some people tend to see biological sex as binary, but that is not completely right. Once in almost every 2000 case of birth an Intersexes born; when female is born with 46 chromosomes including two Xs, and male are born with the same number of chromosomes but instead of the two Xs there is X and Y. The intersex is born either with 45 chromosomes including X or Y, or with 47 chromosomes including XXX, XXY, or XYY. So, biological sex which determines if one was born as a male, or a female, or an intersex is assigned right at birth.

In the other hand, Social Constructivism says that "gender" which is a state of being is constructed by society, and society's expectations to define how women and men are supposed to act, walk, dress, choose career path, and even choose colors.

There is a certain assumption which states that if someone was born as a female, she will be a woman, and she will be feminine, and if a person was born as a male he will be a man, and he will be masculine. This is not entirely true, but when people are comfortable with their biological sex are considered as a Cisgender. If someone is a cismale or cisfemale, it means that their biological sex matches with their gender identity, but there are some people who do not fit with their biological sex. They are considered as transgender, their biological sex do not line up with their gender identity, for instance: an assigned female at birth do not feel right by being a woman identifies as a man is a transman , when the opposite happens is called a transwoman .

1.2 The concept of gender performativity

One of the most famous theories of gender is Judith Butler's Gender Performativity, which presents gender as something performed. It does not mean that a person can perform any gender he likes. It is performed as an act and to serve communication as some expressions are performed, for instance: when a husband says to his wife you are divorced, his not just communicating, he is creating an action which is an end for their marriage. Butler believes that Performative Utterance produces an identity by the repetition of actions that constitute people's gender. She says: "Gender performativity is not a matter of choosing which gender one will be today, performativity is a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms through which one is constituted." Basically gender identity is not formed by people themselves, however by the continuing of doing the same actions.

Butler performativity lies on social constructivism. It holds a view that gender is socially constructed. She says "Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis" (522) According to her gender is not who the person is, it is what he does regularly. His actions are imposed on him by society for example; when a baby is born, and being assigned a male or a female, certain actions are expected from them , mainly the society draw them boundaries to live by, so their gender identity will be created by society.

1.3 Sociology Theories and Gender

Sociology theories are many, and various some of them lost their values, while others continue to serve the communities. Overall these theories created an understanding to the societies, behaviors, and relationships, and helped people to know, and embrace their social reality. Some of the main important theories are: Structural Functionalist Theory, Symbolic Interaction Theory, and Social Conflict Theory. These theories studied many social phenomena like Gender, the phenomenon that made almost everyone interested with, each one in his own perspective.

1.3.1 Structural Functionalist Theory and Gender

This theory stands on the studies of Emile Durkheim, who has a vision that society should be systematic and as a result it will be stable. This theory explains how society's parts must help in creating solidarity. The parts are institutions like family, government, religion, economy, education, and media that fulfill the needs of people. According to functionalism these institutions that work together to operative the society, could fade and no longer exist if it does not serve the role that it was created for.

Gender presentation maintains the systems structural functional. It helps keeping the society organized. The existence of gender gives a clear image of what every person should do to keep living, meet the needs of the other members of the society, and contributes in the society. Girls should have an expressive skill like empathy, and sensitivity which makes it easier for them to take care of the family. Boys should be prepared to gain instrumental skills like being aggressive and confident, so they can handle more tough roles since they are physically stronger than women. So they work outside the house while women's tasks are inside. This order maintains the stability of family institution, which keeps the solidarity of the whole society next to the other institutions.

This theory would be perfect if women could not perform men's jobs, but that is not the case, women can provide food too. The facts that the heads of the family are composed of two genders that complete each other's roles remain circulated. The sociologist Talcott Parsons claimed that for the interest of the family unit women and men should cooperate, and be complementary to each other, women as housewives, men as the source of food, money...etc. Society makes people fit these categories, meanwhile, it makes them reject who do not fit with these gender norms.

Although this theory had some success in the mid twenties, but it faded because it had some holes: first of all the traditional form of family (one man, one woman and children), it is not the only type of families that exists in societies, for instance: same sex couples, single parents, childless adults. Second adaption of gender binary; this theory does not involve intersex and it ignores them because they don't fit the two gender system.

1.3.2 Symbolic Interaction Theory and Gender

This perspective is also known as Symbolic Interactionism, George Herbert Mead brought this view to the American sociology in the early twenties. He claims that people do not behave only on what is objectively true. They behave based on what they believe in, and the way that an individual sees himself (herself) changes and progresses through the social interaction that they have with other people. These interactions are relied on symbols they witnessed in that period. This theory believes that symbols that people use to create meaning to things, and developing views on how to act and interact with others from the society. In fact, the term 'Symbolic Interactionism' is derived by Mead's student Herbert Blumer. He developed and summarized this theory by giving three tenets: First, people act based on the meaning that they give to things. Second, the meaning given to things is based on social interaction; one thing could mean a totally different thing to others. Finally, the meaning given to things is not permanent, it could change by time.

Symbolic interaction view is very helpful for people who want to understand social aspects like gender. This perspective believes that gender is not innate, but it is something that a person does, based on what people think it is true about others and social interaction.

These interactions make it easier for individuals to choose how and whom to deal with. By using Blumer's tenets, people can analyze, and understand how gender form social interaction. The new born infants the only thing different about them is their sex organs, which classified them as male, females, or intersex, while wearing a diaper it is impossible to know which sex they are, The word boy or a girl is the first sup of gendering them .From the point of announcing whether it is a male or a female, people will interact based on the child sex. These interactions contribute in shaping babies gender by colors, kind of toys, type of clothes, even the way used to talk to them, also by rejecting all behaviors that do not belong to traditional gender roles, like a boy wearing a skirt.

However, these babies get older, some interactions are expected from them based on their gender, but it may change if they performed an opposite gender to their biological sex. Then, people will change their expectations, and the way of dealing with them. Symbolic Interaction theory focuses on the micro skills and experiences and ignored the macro ones.

1.3.3 Social Conflict Theory and Gender

Conflict theory claims that society is racing to own resources. Karl Marx found this whole view thanks to his questioning about freedom. He believed that humans are not free because they are restricted by couple boundaries, they can not survive in nature unless they work in groups to adjust it to meet their needs; that is what known as labor. He said “we must labor cooperatively in order to survive “. The world changes as a result of breaking those constraints, the natural one. While the social constraints lie in the unequal distribution of power, resources, and status between groups, which created social classes like The Bourgeoisie (the owners of means of production and the capitalists) , and The Proletariat (the working class and the poor) . Karl Marx was concerned with causes and results of the clash between them. He highlighted the rise of Capitalism in Europe, and its economic, social, and political implications. The control of bourgeoisies (minority) to the proletariat(majority) found a pressure and a clash between them. This status effected the economic system, which effected the whole social system. Marx declared that the proletariat will reach the stage of awareness when their situation get worse. They will have a kind of a revolution, if their attempts succeeded they will have a new social system like Socialism, if not they remain living under the umbrella of Capitalism.

Lot of theorists add more understanding to Marx’s conflict theory to support ,refine, and develop it, like the Italian scholar Antonio Gramsci, Max Harkheimer, and Theodor Adorno.

Thanks to this theory, many other theories emerged in social science, like Feminist theory, Critical race theory, Queer theory and so many others. Social Conflict theory studies class conflict which remains a reference, and a background to study other conflicts like religion, race, sexuality, and gender.

Conflict theory represented men as the dominator while women took for granted, so they remain high handed, and powerful. A lot of social problems emerged when groups

control and dominate other groups. By applying the principles of social conflict theory on gender, the bourgeoisies resemble men, when the proletariat represents intersex and women. Men had ultimate power especially in the structural system, because women at some point were forbidden to have high education. They had no right to inherit, or have any kind of wealth, even had no right to vote, a legislation that men found to prevent women from trying to change their situation, and remaining on bottom of power pyramid. Women were subordinate because they stereotyped as weak and emotional, meanwhile men strong and aggressive. Even when women sneaked to men's world, they were suffering from brutal treatment. They paid less than men for the same jobs; they were sexually abused, and never had the same privilege as men.

The uneven distribution of power between men and women led to conflict among genders. The result of this conflict shaped in feminist movement. Understanding gender inequality is the aim of feminist theory. It emerged to denounce equality, and that is what it focuses on. Unlike those who think that feminism focuses only on women. Within Feminist theory a lot schools of thought like, liberal feminist, which argue that women have the same abilities as men, and they try to found chances, and some rights to adjust women's position. Radical feminist believe that gender should be viewing from new perspective, some of them were against transgender, while others supported them because they are creating a new gender. They even presented lesbianism and celibacy as choices.

1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have attempted to provide an overview about gender in general along with the concept of gender performativity. We also tackled the sociology theories and gender and their view of gender which are: Structural Functionalist Theory, Symbolic Interaction Theory and Social Conflict Theory.

Chapter two

ATONEMENT

2 Introduction

The second chapter tackles the novel *Atonement* and its parts in details. It starts with the summary and analysis of the novel. Then, it moves to the major characters that the novel was built on (Briony with her life stages, Cecilia and Robbie).

2.1 Summary and Analysis

2.1.1 Summary

In the summer of 1935, the Tallis family were expecting the Quincey cousins, the young twins Jackson and Pierrot, and the 15 years old Lola. The youngest member of a very upper-class family (the Tallis family) Briony already had plans for her cousins, practicing on their roles in her play *The Trails of Arabelle*. They had only one day to prepare before the arrival of the oldest brother Leon and his friend Paul Marshall (an owner of a chocolate factory). Emily Tallis, the mother supervised the preparation to welcome the guests, her husband Jack was in London occupied by his job in the government.

While the practice was failing, Emily gave her 23 years old daughter “Cecilia” one task which was to grab some flowers and put them in a vase, a very expensive one. She went to the fountain to get some water, where she met Robbie Turner the son of the housekeeper and her childhood friend that became a stranger in the last couple of years. He walked her to the fountain, while he was trying to help her get some water, they broke the vase lip, and the two pieces fell in water. Cecilia took her clothes off and dived to get the pieces out. Robbie had nothing to do but watching her in her wet underwear trying to get dressed and leave. All this happened in front of Briony while she was standing at her window. She was much shocked about what she saw.

When Robbie was heading home, he met Leon who invited him to dine with them, which bothered Cecilia. She even asked her brother to cancel the invitation. Robbie thought that he should write an apology letter to Cecilia, while he was trying to do that over and over. He wrote what he really felt towards Cee in an inappropriate way. Then, he wrote the letter he was supposed to write. In his way to the dinner party, he saw Briony and he thought it would be better if his letter arrived before he does, so he called her and gave her the letter to be handed over to her sister. After awhile, he realized that he brought the

other letter (the one expressing his feelings) but it was too late, Briony was almost home, whatever happens now, he has to face it.

The letter opened Cecilia's eyes on the truth, that she loved Robbie. She told him that in the library where they made love and got interrupted by Briony. Who thought by her enter, she saved her sister from sexual abuse.

At dinner, the atmosphere was turbulent between Briony and Robbie. At that point, she was sure that he is a sex maniac, like Lola said after she told her about the letter that she read before handed to Cecilia. Everyone was at the dinner table except for the twins. They left a note that they escaped. Lola was the first one went out looking for them, followed by Leon and Cecilia together, and Paul, Briony, and Robbie all by themselves. During Briony's search for the twins, she saw two figures, to find out that one of them was Lola and the other one could not tell who he was especially that he run when he saw her. Lola just got rapped and she could not tell for sure who he was, but Briony could. She was sure that he was Robbie although she did not actually see him.

Everybody even the police were waiting for Robbie to comeback. They all believed that Robbie was the rapist relying on Briony's words except for Cecilia and his own mother. Finally, he returned with the twins to go straight ahead to jail. Cecilia promised to wait for him.

The writer shifts to 1940, Robbie had been released from jail to join the war as a soldier in France against the Nazis. He was trying to survive to finally live with the love of his life Cecilia. The last time he saw her when he got released she became a nurse, and she broke all kinds of relationships with her family. Her letters helped him remain hopeful when the war was horrible.

The narration shifts again to talk about Briony. She became a nurse in London like her sister after she gave up on studying in Cambridge. Because she knew for sure that Robbie was innocent and she full of guilt and regrets. One day she asked her friend to exchange their days Off, to crush Paul Marshal and Lola's wedding. Then to visit her sister and tell her that she is ready to tell their parents the truth. Surprisingly, she met Robbie there. She was happy that he survived, and at the same time afraid of his reaction. It is clear to her now that both of them will never forgive her, even when she promised to change her statement in court and in front of everybody, and to finally declare that Paul is the one who rapped Lola not Danny Hardman like Robbie and Cecilia thought.

In the last part of the book, Briony is 77 years old. She became a very well-known writer. She just found out that she is dying, and her book “Atonement” will probably be published after her death. She was waiting for the death of the lord and lady Marshal to avoid the prosecutions but it seemed they will live longer than her. In her book, she kept the real names with few changes in the truth, like the fact that both of Robbie and Cecilia died in 1940. They were never reunited because he died in the war while she died in an explosion. Briony gave them a happy ending in her book as a compensation for her mistake that ruined their lives.

2.1.2 Analysis

2.1.2.1 The Setting

The first set up was the Tallis resident in 1935. This family belonged to the upper class, their house was luxurious. It had a pool, a fountain, a huge garden. It had everything that makes any country home perfect: a wood, a river, even an old temple and it was very big. It contained refugees during the war. Then it was turned into a hotel in the last part of the book.

The second set up was France 1940. During the second world war where Robbie met Nettle and Massi they were in the British army. They followed Robbie’s instructions though they were above his military rank. However, they believed that he was their chance to join the rest of the army in Dunkirk coast where they will wait for the boat to bring them home.

The writer described the beauty of nature, but he highlighted the horror of war. He portrayed bloody scenes, the sufferance of soldiers from hunger, thirst, fear of death, and the lost of their hopes and dreams.

The last set up was London (1940 -1999), mostly in the hospital where the war’s effects were represented. Besides the pain and the lost that Briony had witnessed. There was a description of the hospital, the church where Lola got married, and to a couple of streets that led to Cecilia’s home. Also, a mention to some areas in the last part of the book.

2.1.2.2 Symbols

The trials of Arabella: this play lived through the entire book. It tells the story of a girl named Arabella who falls in love with a wicked person. After she runs away with him and gets sick, everyone leaves her alone. She falls in love with a prince disguised as a doctor and finally gets her happy ending by their marriage. Araballe resembles Cecilia while the prince is Robbie who was planning to be a doctor. The writer was trying to give Cecilia and her lover a happy ending in every possible way. In the last part of the book the grandchildren finally performed the play in Briony's birthday. Reviving the play symbolized an atonement.

Luc: The wounded French soldier, who died between Briony's arms, also symbolized atonement. Luc represents Thierry Briony's husband. He died in 1997 when she was 75 years old. His name is French and he had a picture photographed in France; similar to Briony's transformation to the fact that Cecilia and Robbie died in her book to make up for her mistake. She also deprived herself from love. Luc who told her that he loved her, died before they get the chance to live that love.

The vase: It was very valuable to the Tallis family not because of her price but because it indicated the valor and bravery of their uncle Clem. Essentially, the vase symbolized Cecilia and Robbie's love, it was first broken on the first day of their love story ,but Cecilia fixed it in the same day. It was until 1940 that Betty totally broke it, in the same year, both of Cecilia and Robbie past away.

2.1.2.3 Themes

Sex theme: there are two important sex scenes, both of them set in first part of the book. The first one was between the new lovers Robbie and Cecilia in the library. It happens to be the first and the last one. The second was Lola's rapping by Paul Marshall. These two acts were witnessed by the 13 years old Briony who totally misunderstood what she saw.

Guilt theme: the actions of the little Briony had effects on her life as a grownup person. It caused her dropping her future in Cambridge. These effects exceeded to others, she kept her sister away from her lover and their family. Thanks to her Lola and Paul's marriage was possible.

Atonement theme: Briony tried to fix her mistake by sending a letter to her sister telling her that she wanted to change her testimony. She was not lucky enough; both of Robbie and Cecilia meant to die before any of that could happen. So, as a kind of atonement, she wrote a book telling their story by keeping all the facts, except that she could make up for them, and they lived happily.

2.2 Major Characters

As any other literary work, *Atonement* needs characters to build a story on, to act and interact with the events, and to contribute in their development the main characters are:

Briony Tallis: the 13 years old girl was the third and the last child in the Tallis family. Her love for secrets goes beyond her love for writing. She was a fanciful person who happened to be in the wrong place and the wrong time, resulting her to see some events and interprets them incorrectly. When she got older, she realized her mistakes and tried to get them right.

Cecilia Tallis: she was 23 years old, the second child for her family. A student in Cambridge University along with Robbie who was her childhood friend. To find out that she loves him, and promises to keep loving and waiting for him when he went to jail and the war after that. Her love and her words had power over Robbie. She died keeping her promise.

Robbie Turner: the only child of the housekeeper, he was 23 years old. He was sent to jail for a crime he did not commit. Then, he had to choose between prison and war, he picked war and unfortunately, he passed away there.

Lola Quincey: the only daughter to a divorced couple. She was a 15 years old girl with the appearance of a woman. She was super feminine. Despite she was two years older than her youngest cousin, Briony felt like a child comparing to her. She reminded her aunt Emily with her sister Hormone, like mother like daughter. Both of them wanted to grow up fast, this may led to her rape.

Paul Marshall: a 24 years old businessman. He made a fortune by selling chocolate to soldiers “the Amo bar”. He had four younger sisters. In his first day at the Tallis’s, he had an erotic dream about them. When he woke up, he met the twins and Lola. They were in the adjacent room talking when he saw Lola and realized that she does not look like a child. He got turned on by seeing her eating a bar of his chocolate. He told her that she

reminded him of his favorite sister whom he just saw an erotic dream about. All these scenes reveal the sexual monster inside him. The fact that he rapped Lola was not surprising, the surprise was marrying his victim and letting an innocent man pay for his crime.

2.2.1 Briony Between Childhood, Adolescence, and Adulthood

Briony is a neat, organized and a dreamy character that has a sharp mind and a strong voice. She was fearless when it comes to speaking her mind. Although she was a child of ten years old, she admitted her love to Robbie after he saved her from drowning. Her confession was not out of gratitude, she risked her life only to know if Robbie was willing to save her _She was testing him and waiting to see his reaction, so she would find out if he loves her or not_ This is not a ten years old girl behavior; that is kind of what grownups do; this shows how strong and imaginary she was as a child.

When she turned 13 years old, she started a new chapter of her life, the adolescence chapter, this age is the transition gate between childhood and teenage. In this stage, her love of writing and secrets emerged. She had all kinds of places to hide except an actual secret to hide. She had only her stories so she used to keep them a secret until she completed writing them, she had an urgent need for secrets because she believed that they will complete her transition into a grown up, that is why after seeing what happened at the fountain. She allowed herself to open her sister's letter to bear the burden of telling who rapped her cousin. The way that she insisted that the rapist was Robbie although she did not see him, she took those actions based on her belief that she is a mature person who can analyze and link events, which end up with sending an innocent man to jail.

The older Briony gets the more, she realizes her mistake. The sense of guilt took her innocence, made her mature for real this time. At the age of 18 years old, she decides to put some limits between her life and her family and against their will she became a nurse. All her actions were shaped in taking responsibility for her behavior in the past. The strength that she had as a child and as a teenager was totally gone as an adult. She could say something in the church to stop Lola and Paul's marriage, but she did not. She could confess her sister face to face but she did not. She had no faith or trust in herself or her decisions because of her guilt and shame.

2.2.2 Briony the writer

In the last part of the book, Briony becomes a famous writer. She had what it takes to be a good writer, a talent, personal experiences and a lot of inspiration like: the war, the hospital stories, the second marriage of her father, Leon's struggling after the death of his first wife, also the death of Cecilia and Robbie. Her last book "Atonement" is the most important thing she ever wrote, it contains the hidden truth, atonement and a kind of peace for her soul that lived a whole life in regret.

2.2.3 Robbie and Cecilia

Cecilia and Robbie knew each other since infancy. They were close friends but after they went to Cambridge they almost stopped talking. She got angry when she heard that he was planning to become a doctor. He thought that her reaction was because her father was paying for his education while the truth was that she wanted him to be always around. Both of them were ignorant by their inner self, they did not discover their feelings for each other until that evening in the library.

This couple is the tragedy of the book, their love had no chance, it was executed in the first day, but they did not give up to the cruelty of their fate. They promised to love each other no matter what. Briony was the one that kept their promise alive by changing their fate in her book.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the novel and had a brief explanation about it. It had the summary and the analysis along with the major characters: Briony Between Childhood, Adolescence, and Adulthood and as writer also Robbie and Cecilia.

Chapter Three

The Representation of Gender in the Novel

3 Introduction

In this chapter, we discussed the gender roles which appeared in the novel. The chapter started with gender in literature. Then, it discusses the portrayal of men and women. After that, it tackles overshadowed masculinity, role of women and women's sexuality.

3.1 Gender in Literature

One of the most discussed points in any literary work is gender whether the author's, or the characters'. Gender is the definition of the characters, how they express themselves, and the kind of behaviors expected from them based on their gender which is essentially based on the sex of the individual that defines him as man or woman. This concept has existed for centuries, when women stereotyped as housewives dedicated their time and efforts to men in their lives, while men are the guardians or the providers (provide food and money for their families) and it progressed when women started taking some of their freedom and becoming more independent. Females started to have their own occupations in life away from the men-centered life; and this was represented in many literary works such as: *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austin and the *Atonement* by Ian McEwen.

3.2 Portrayal of Men and Women

3.2.1 Role of Men

Usually the role of men refers to masculinity, and how the actions and behaviors of the character resemble the social standards, regarding their biological sex, and their sexual identity. Men's behaviors in the novel were to some extent similar to male stereotype, the male characters talked and dressed like they were supposed to, they were involved with activities that require muscles and being the providers, which are men's roles according to Structural Functional Theory, for example: Danny Hardman was one of the working set in the big house while female workers took care of the house and the kitchen, male workers dealt with jobs were known as man's jobs like driving, working in the garden like Robbie and carrying heavy weights:

"Danny struggling up with the luggage". Ian M (2002), Page 67

Jack Tallis fulfils the model of the role of men in society. He was an excellent provider, he supported his family materially and financially. Thanks to his high ranking job, not only his family also his workers especially Robbie and his mother Grace.

He was supposed to play the role of the protector based on functionalism, since protection is a man role. Even though his family members were not harmed, but a horrible crime happened in his house and an innocent men was sent to jail because of his daughter. He should have been more present. If he was there Paul would have never dared to get closer to Lola. Jack would've avoided the accident that took away his daughters. If he contributed emotionally and mentally he could've protected his daughter from making a huge mistake that cost more than a one person's life. Another gap in structural functionalist theory because women can also protect their families, it is not task concerned only men. Maybe Jack was not a protector, but he was a leader, he had the prestige. Leading is something he was born for especially that he was a principle man:

"Jack Tallis did not have it in him to turn out a young woman and her child". Ian M (2002), Page 87

He was happy that he took that decision, because Robbie Turner the lower-class boy, turned to be a top Cambridge student: brilliant, ambitious and attractive. McEwan presented Robbie as a fighter, which is what suppose to be a men quality. A young boy with a deep desire to be an important person; like a doctor to be finally more than a charity project, he said to Cecilia:

"No one's really going to give me work as landscape gardener. I don't want to teach or go in for the civil service. And medicine interests me ". Ian M (2002), Page 27

He was pretty much a sensitive and an emotional man. During the war, he risked his life many times to save others, he was overwhelmed when he saw a boy's leg on the tree and he did not want his friends to see a kind of weakness in him:

"He wanted to get ahead, out of sight, so that he could throw up". Ian M (2002), Page 192

He hid his reaction and his wound because men were supposed to be strong, aggressive, less emotional and less sensitive, because sensitivity and being emotional are female's qualities according to the standards of society before changing the stereotype of both male and female. Paul Marshall was masculine and strong. He was running a good business which became a great one thanks to the war, he created chocolate bars for soldiers, selling them during the war made him richer than he ever was, he did not get only a great living

but also a tremendous power and that was the reason behind not publishing Briony's book "Atonement" while Paul and Lola were still alive. He could have destroyed her and the publishing house in one court session. His actions were typically the stereotype role of an upper class man; he was a dominator, a presentation of how men should be, while women were controlled

3.2.2 Overshadowed Masculinity

Ian McEwan highlighted the social class in his novel especially that the British society stood on the social class system around the novel's time setting (1935-1940). Within this system women were overshadowed by masculinity, they were still set up behind, it was until the second war that feminism emerged as a strong movement, but that does not mean that nothing overshadowed masculinity, the social class itself did. Both of Robbie and Danny belonged to the lower class; they had to work to make their living; but thanks to Jack Tallis Robbie could study in Cambridge. He was smart but without the support of Jack he could never dreamed of studying there. He deserved studying there because he had the potentials.

The existence of social class created distance between Robbie and his childhood friend Cecilia, and reinforced the misunderstanding between them. The scene when they were talking in their way to the fountain, she shown her disapproval to the idea of Robbie becoming a doctor due to the six years of study, it was a long period and that means he won't be around that much, but he thought that she was worried about her father's money, he told her:

"look I've agreed to pay your father back. That's the arrangement", when she responds "that's not what I meant at all ". Ian M (2002), Page 27

She could not believe that he thought like that, if it was not the fountain incident, they would have totally drifted apart. During Cambridge time, they almost stopped talking to each other:

"She always seemed to find it awkward –that's our cleaning lady's son, she might have been whispering to her friends as she walked on. He liked people to know he didn't care- there goes my mother's employer's daughter, he once said that to a friend. He has his politics to protect him, and his scientifically based theories of class, and his own rather forced self-certainty. I am what I am." Ian M (2002), Page 79

This gap social class between them caused a change in Robbie's actions. When they got back home he started to take permission to enter the house or get anything from it while he had the freedom to walk around the house and get whatever he needs since he was a kid. When he removed his shoes and socks, Cee was furious and that was the reason she did not let him help her at the fountain.

The social class was one of the main reasons that sent Robbie to jail besides Briony's misinterpreting to all the senses that she saw. The fact that he belonged to a lower class, he can commit a crime like rapping, these kind of actions were expected from lower class people, but that did not mean that they do not happen among upper class. It's just the stereotype of lower and upper class which is not fair, but as a proof the Tallis family except for Cecilia believed that Robbie did rape Lola. Despite all their knowledge of him since he was a child, he was like a son to them especially to Jack. They had suspicion about him. While no one had doubts about Paul Marshall, the person that they have just met, and they knew nothing about him, only that he is an upper class young man and that was his immunity. Even Cecilia did not think of him as a rapist though she had a 'creepy' moment when he touched her:

"and as she passed she felt him touch her lightly on her forearm." Ian M (2002), Page54

Also Emily misunderstood the noise in the nursery room, she thought that he is that sweet and so good with the children while he was flirting with one; again only good was expected from him; ironically even Robbie thought that the other lower class boy did it. Danny Hardman was the alternative to Robbie because no one dared to accuse the wealthy upper class man which made Robbie end up in prison with few rights in the justice system simply because he was a lower class suspect.

3.2.3 Role of Women

Ian McEwan portrayal women's role and their behavior in society at the time where the story was set based on the expectation of that society, he also presented the start of social behavior change.

The author introduced the traditional women in the character of Emily Tallis. She could be the perfect model of a housewife, that achieve stability in the institution of family by taking care of her family based on Emile Durkheim's vision to the how men and female

should behave to preserve the solidarity of family ,one of the society 's part. But she was a bedridden most of the time because of her suffering from migraine pain. Her sense of responsibility forced her to analyze any sound sneak into her dark bedroom, to update and to kind of follow to whatever was happening in the house:

” Instead, Emily, breathing quietly in the darkness, gauged the state of the household by straining to listen.

In her condition, this was the only contribution she could make. “Ian M (2002), Page64

Although Emily was sick, she tried to find a way to complete one of her tasks as a housewife which was housekeeping and taking care of the family. Another task she was concerned with was finding a suitable husband for her daughter Cecilia and starting a family of her own, that is way she hoped that Paul Marshall will take Cee as his wife. Emily's judgments and standards should be questioned because she ranked Paul as the one to her dear daughter only because he belonged to the upper class. A wealthy young man was the only thing she knew about him, literally; but upper class men stereotyped as perfect partners. Emily was anxious of being a good host at the dinner party not only because she wanted to impress Paul. Usually Jack the husband hosts the occasions and events. She had an assumption that she is not good enough and can not take his place, although he was absent all the time busy with his job and his affairs, that she never confronted him or demanded her rights as a wife, she was almost okay with it. She was happy that she kept her position as his wife. Another side shows that Emily Tallis is a typical old school female was her opinion about Cecilia's higher education, she did not embrace the idea because it only caused a demand for more freedom and having a different perspective to life.

The writer created a free spirit to Cecilia's character, she was independent and did not know what she wanted exactly but she wanted things in her own way. She kept her options opened to find out what she aspire to but she had her standers as a judge , that is why she disliked the idea of marrying Paul Marshall:

“Cecilia felt pleasant sinking sensation in her stomach as she contemplated how deliciously self-destructive it would be, almost erotic, to be married to a man so nearly handsome, so hugely rich, so unfathomably stupid.” Ian M (2002), Page50

Cecilia wanted to be needed, not necessarily needy; in the scene when at the fountain, she did not ask for his help to get the pieces out of water, she did not wait even for his offer to help especially she was mad at him:

” Instead he began to unbutton his shirt. Immediately she knew what he was about. Intolerable. He had come to the house and remove his shoes and socks-well, she would show him then. She kicked her sandals, unbuttoned her blouse and remove it; unfastened her skirt and stepped out of it and went to the basin wall. ”

Ian M (2002), Page 27

They broke the vase in the first place because she refused his help. Cecilia was not a typical presentation of a traditional female. the change emerged in her character; her actions were liberal (in sense of freedom), she used to smoke whenever she wanted though her father had certain rules for women’s smoking.

“He had precise ideas about where and when a woman should be seen smoking: not in the street, or any other public place, not on entering a room, not standing up, and only when offered, never from her own supply – notions as self-evident to him as natural justice.” Ian M (2002), Page 46

Cambridge graduation had an expectation for her return to the family nest in 1935. She wanted to be valuable to her family, someone they need, that is probably the reason behind spending a whole day in the aim of putting some flowers in Paul’s room. It may seem stupid but she did not want to fail her only task of that day. Cee took that mission seriously to prove that she can be a person to depend on, like she used to take care of her little sister after a nightmare, while their mother could not because of her sickness. She felt responsible for her sister; when Briony was upset about the failure of the rehearsals. Cee was the first person to try calm her down, but this is not the same Briony that used to wake up screaming and feel safe in her sister’s arms. Being in charge, handling a few things around her, would give her something to look for, to be busy with because she was stressed and confused, but everything made sense when she discovered her feelings towards Robbie, like her objection to visit her brother Lion in London. Also her anger from Robbie’s decision of being a doctor, that would

keep him away from home to study. When as soon as she tasted love, she became steady, she did not hesitate at all although all what she shared with Robbie was a couple of minutes in the library. Any other girl would do like Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*; moved on, especially that he belonged to a lower class, a thing that did not cross Cee's mind at all. She gave up her rank for him. These actions and the coming one might not resemble to what were expected from her as an upper-class female, but it tells a lot about her personality, how strong and different she was, the proof was the life that she chose after she abandoned her family, taking responsibility of such a huge decision. Being bold enough to become an independent nurse, a career that gave her more power; having the authority over people. Giving orders and receiving respect and obedience. A thing that fascinated Briony when she saw how Cee dealt with Mrs. Jarvis the owner of the place that Cecilia rented. She was kind of rude so Cee stood up to her:

"But Cecilia turned sharply and cut her off. 'Enough, Mrs Jarvis. Now that's quite enough'. Briony recognized the tone. Pure Nightingale, for use on difficult patients or tearful students. It took years to perfect. Cecilia had surely promoted to ward sister." Ian M (2002), Page 334

Briony was a nurse too but she never had the same vibe as her sister. She was living in her own shell though when she was a kid. She was strong, kind of brave, dreamy and organized, she wanted the world under her feet. She was only 13 years old but she could see herself out of the box, not as a housewife but as famous writer that made her family proud.

"There were moments in the summer dusk after her light was out, when she burrowed in the delicious gloom of her canopy bed, and made her heart thud with luminous, yearning fantasies, little play lets in themselves, every one of which featured Leon. In one, his big, good-natured face buckled in grief as Arabella sank in loneliness and despair. In another, there he was, cocktail in hand at some fashionable city watering hole, overheard boasting to a group of friends: Yes, my younger sister, Briony Tallis the writer, you must surely have heard of her". Ian M (2002), Page 04

She was bold and confident enough to confess her love to a guy 10 years older than her, when she was only 10 after she risked her life. These are not ordinary actions of a little girl specially in that period. She was premature, the way that she handled the situation, when she found her rapped cousin was impressive. She was sympathetic and rational except for

the part of accusing an innocent man. In a very young and sensitive age, she witnessed a sexual assault.

It is pretty tough for any girl in any age no matter which society she belongs to, so how about young girl in a conservative society where sexual activities or relationships are framed by marriage only. So Briony was a kind of a victim too, first, because she saw what happened and felt it somehow, second, because she took responsibility of telling who was that criminal despite that she had the strength and if she did not misjudge, she could move on with her life peacefully. Briony grew up to be an independent woman, she took the same path as her sister, realizing her mistake or error, she took responsibility of her actions and tried to fix them. In the last part of the book, she was presented as a famous and a successful writer which sums up the change of female characters in the society.

3.2.4. Women's Sexuality

Women's sexuality is a combination of certain acts and procedures related to sexual orientation, and sexual behaviors which are involved with many aspects like society and culture. The period when the novel was set, sexual relationships were confined only within marriage but the story presented couple of scandals, affairs and scenes where women's sexuality played an important role, regarded to sexual behavior and orientation. All the characters were straight since Ian McEwan believed that people with male genital are men. The acts of female characters were a hidden motive to the sexual scenes, like what happened at the fountain when Cecilia stripped to dive in water when she could dive with her clothes on, and she would probably if it was not Robbie the one watching, but she took her outfit without hesitation while she had no knowledge to her feelings at that time but sure wanted him to feel something and he did. What he saw and the details that he picked up:

"...as he recalled another detail. A drop of water on her upper arm. Wet. An embroidered flower, a simple daisy sewn between the cups of her bra. Her breasts wide apart and small." Ian M (2002), Page 79

These memories were the source of his erotic letter:

"In my dreams I kiss your cunt, your sweet wet cunt. In my thoughts I make love to you all day long." Ian M (2002), Page 86

Another sexual behavior emerged was choosing the right outfit, Cee had so much trouble to choose what to wear to the dinner party, she changed three times to settle on the sexiest one after the black dress that made her look like a widow and the pink one as a child. There were no doubts that the green dress was the one:

“She owned only one outfit that she genuinely liked, and that was the one that she should wear”

Ian M (2002), Page 98

The reaction that she made after reading the letter, taking Robbie straight to an isolated place like the library; although they could talk anywhere; but Cecilia kind of knew what was going to happen or secretly wished for it so she led him to the perfect place where no one could interrupt them. Apparently, she was an upper class virgin girl that did not mind losing it with a lower class boy out of the frame of marriage.

Lola also issued sexual behaviors in the first part of the book. She was a young girl of 15 years old but she appeared as women, dressing up like adults, wearing makeup, even talking like grownups, to some extent, these are sexual actions. Crowning and celebrating her femininity which led to the horrible crime her rapping. In other words, if Paul was a sex maniac; a rapist with a need must be satisfied. He could rape Briony, she was smaller, easy to control, younger and easy to manipulate her testimony but Briony had a childish look. While Lola was far away from children's look and behaviors she must have provoked something inside him, with her beautiful face, her figure or her compliment to him which he must received as a flirt, that what made her the perfect victim.

3.3 Conclusion

The last chapter gave a brief study about the gender role which was presented in the novel by Ian. It began with gender in literature. Then, it tackled the portrayal of men and women, overshadowed masculinity and the role of women. Finally, It ends up with women's sexuality.

General Conclusion

During the last few decades a huge change touched the traditional views of men and women in society. Due the organization and movements that women made, the image of women as housewives only kind of broke. Women fought for their own rights, and being equally treated as men. This alteration had an obvious influence on people's behavior. The ordinary definition of men and women's qualifications represented in frame of gender change.

The fact that I am dealing with gender in literary field, allows me to experience a great work material *Atonement*, it deserve all the 'fusses that it made. It is a wonderful piece of art because the reflection of the writer's childhood was one of the characters (Briony) which gave it credibility. In addition Ian McEwan made every reader's dream came true, having the feeling that they are in the middle of the events. While reading the novel imagining the set will not be a problem, also due his technique of telling the same event through different characters. He satisfies the curiosity about the interpretation of each character. Basically he fills all the gaps in the story telling, leaving the readers with only two tasks reading and judging.

From the first pages the reader realizes that the book is more than a story of one family. It conveys a reality about the British society around 1940. The author shows a bit of change in behavior, which is what happened for real after the war. When McEwan was presenting the gender of his characters, he lined up their biological sex to their gender. All the characters was attracted to the opposite sex, their sexual orientation was straight. They were cisgender, both of male and female characters dressed, talked, and worked matching to their genitals. However some of the characters they did not achieve what the society expected of them, because they were the beginning of change, change in behavior. Both of Cecilia and Briony were a breakdown of women's stereotype. A quiet and smooth rebellion emerged in their characters. Both of them made decisions despite their parent's refusal, showing their independent personalities. Since they never looked to their mother as role model for them, the last thing they want is being a housewife like her. They refused to be one thing, or follow a certain path Cee wanted more since she went to Cambridge, while Briony made up her mind since she was just a kid. She decided to be a writer, a well known writer, and that shows the spirit of perseverance that she had throughout the book

journey. Although she chose a difficult life, that is full of hard work and toxic feelings (guilt and regret). The Tallis girls ruined the image of social class by choosing lower class job, nursing.

There is a clear difference in the stereotype of social class and gender role, between the beginning of the book and the end of it. The writer tries to highlight the change that the British society witnessed, in last part of the tale he created a character of the taxi driver. McEwan presented him as a well educated student in a very prestigious university, has to work to make money. Also he introduced Briony again, this time as a famous writer, with a platform of fans, while her brother Leon had to take responsibility of raising his own child after the death of his wife. All these characters and their behaviors showed a change in social standers.

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