

Democracy as Simulacrum: Incredulity towards the Metanarrative of Emancipation in Ian McEwan's *Saturday*

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ABSTRACT

Laying bare simulacrum-oriented aspect of the western democracy in the contemporary world within almost a single day—15 September 2003—is what McEwan highlights in his novel Saturday (2005). To substantiate this hypothesis, Lyotard's definition of postmodernism especially his notion of incredulity towards metanarrative of emancipation is taken as the theoretical backbone to animadvert the contemporary assumption of democracy. Dramatizing the terrorized and terrorizing life of Henry Perowne, Saturday reveals the real blank face of democracy, the fact that democracy in its postmodern veil has lost its traditional essence and is shrank to hollow mask which has risen itself to be a simulacrum. The concluding section of this study discusses that the ramification of this dominating "simulative democracy" is nothing but hegemonic control, a phenomenon, which according to Baudrillard, begets terrorism.

Keywords: *simulacrum; democracy; metanarrative; terrorism; hegemony*

INTRODUCTION

corruptio optimi pessima 'the corruption of the best is the worst.'

The facts speak for themselves, particularly when they are underlined to lay bare the nature of democracy that the West has dreamt for 'non-democratic' countries. Approximately hundred thousand civilians were killed due to violence during the Iraq invasion and post-invasion from 2003 to 2011, while others have suffered from injury and property damage everlastingly. According to a study undertaken by Johns Hopkins and Columbia universities in collaboration with al-Mustansiyah University, "the death toll of the US occupation on Iraqi civilians was estimated at over 100000" and "most individuals reportedly killed by coalition forces were women and children. The risk of death from violence in the period after the invasion was 58 times higher than in the period before the war." These facts about the occupation of Iraq, which was legitimized under the label of "Operation Iraqi Freedom," were completed by the most immediate impact of the invasion which "was the systematic destruction of a large portion of Iraq's cultural heritage and infrastructure" (Ismael & Ismael 2005, p. 616). These are the straightforward interpretation of the dream which the democratic countries have under the flag of democracy and freedom: a tragedy referred by American media as an unintended consequence of an explosion of freedom.

The fiction also proves uniquely able to portray those 'genuine' aspects of democracy but in its own appropriate way though Cowell in his review of McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) waves it aside: 'fact had made fiction irrelevant'. To understand McEwan's virtuosity in *Saturday*, Rohinton Mistry's warning to the reader in his short story *Swimming Lessons* is very illuminating: "the fiction should not be confused with fact since 'fiction does not create facts, fiction can come from facts, it can grow out of facts by compounding, transposing, augmenting, diminishing, or altering them in any way'" (1987, p. 253). *Saturday* with its complex thematic layers is a fiction developed out of the catastrophic fact of the US invasion

of Iraq. Contextualizing the life of Henry Perowne, a brain surgeon, in the pre-invasion period of Iraq war in London, McEwan writes *Saturday* to illuminate the hidden and obscure aspects of facts. To do so, the novel requires to revolve at, what Cowell calls, “a point of cross-fertilization between fact and fiction.”

Blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction, but not as radical as some of the postmodern metafictional novels, McEwan blends the last decade’s political history with the gruesome historical facts such as the Iraq war and 9/11 attack and intricately weaves them into the Perownes’ domestic molestation. Employing a third-person narrator and maintaining a subtle distance from Henry Perowne’s internal perspective, McEwan eschews the fusion of fact and fiction in a way that may lead to self-consciousness of narration, a risk that might have destructed the narrativity of *Saturday*. The juxtaposition of facts and fiction enables McEwan to equip *Saturday* with a less dreadful version of the characteristic “fictional space” with its known macabre atmosphere that he has created in his early novels namely, *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), *The Cement Garden* (1978) and *The Innocent* (1990). Unlike his earlier novels, *Saturday* weaves a unique narrative form. The major and the minor storylines in this novel are interconnected into parallel nonsimultaneous narratives. To put it more illustratively, from an abstract vertical perspective, the structure of various levels of the narrative here simulates the image of concentric circles that expand the scope of the novel from the streets of London to the middle East and beyond in terms of setting, and cause it to extend its character representation from the consciousness of the protagonist and his family to the collective consciousness of the people out of the text. The temporal span of the novel that covers Henry’s life in one round of the clock supports the attribution of such circumvent figure to the narrative of *Saturday*.

Figuratively speaking, this circumvent figure of the narrative of *Saturday* brings together four major parts of this study which aims to show how McEwan lays bare the simulacrum-oriented aspect of the western democracy in the contemporary world within almost a single day--15 September 2003. Following a brief introduction on the political reading of the novel and some observations on the term “democracy” especially when it becomes an acceptable excuse for the invasion of Iraq, the role of the mass media in propagating, perpetuating and legitimizing such a full-scale invasion is argued. Then, Jean-Francois Lyotard’s definition of postmodernism especially his notion of incredulity towards metanarrative of emancipation is taken into consideration to animadvert the contemporary assumption of democracy. Finally, in order to expose clearly how the westernised democracy is metamorphosed into a novel notion that has lost its original ambition the widespread speculation of Baudrillard elaborated in his influential article “The Precession of Simulacra” is integrated to the discussion. Indeed, relying on Baudrillard who exposes the postmodern preferentiality of signs by explicating how reality is replaced by simulacrum, a process Baudrillard refers to as “hyperreal” (1988, p.170), the major aim of this investigation is to demonstrate that democracy in the postmodern world is a simulacrum since it has no longer any trace of freedom in it. In other words, as simulacrum stands for reality and introduces itself as real (while it is not), democracy also stands for freedom while totally bereft of it.

SATURDAY AND POLITICAL CRITICISM

Disclosing the embedded political ideology of a literary text or its historical situatedness is the primary aim among critics who leave behind Richards’s practical criticism, the New Criticism or Russian Formalism, those who embark on a journey from text to context. In such a contextual-oriented criticism, when the reading is navigated toward the consideration of the political status quo of a novel like *Saturday*, the controversial issue of the degree of political overtness of the theme codified in the novel raises. Measuring the degree of

“politicality” of a given text, a narrative fiction can be placed between two extremes: it can be either a political manifesto as the works with Marxist commitments or have a latent political theme or even be a Political allegory as Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, in which “the characters and actions that are signified literally in their turn represent, or ‘allegorize,’ historical personages and events” (*Allegory*).

Evaluating *Saturday* for its political overtones, Heber declares, “the text’s political engagement appears, first of all, to be partial and implicit rather than overt and direct.” nevertheless he reluctantly adds that the political reading of *Saturday* is a matter of contention: “Interestingly, this [political reading of *Saturday*] has given rise to a situation in which the chief point of contention is whether the novel is, in fact, a political work, rather than what its political comment might be” (2007, p.3). Despite him, Siegel in his overall review of the novel goes one step further and emphasizes that *Saturday* “is not a political book” (2005, p.34) but a novel about “consciousness that illuminates the sources of politics” (p. 38), and “how politics gets invented from the stuff of emotion the way mind is created out of the brain” (p. 35). Rorty also shares this view with Siegel and remarks “the book does not have a politics,” tracing the novel’s “politicsless” in Henry’s impasse between action and thought. Rorty believes that Henry represents a typical character in the contemporary West who cannot “sketch a credible agenda for large-scale change” (2005, p. 92).

Setting aside those divergent views on the political status of *Saturday*, the novel goes beyond the depicted political scale. In fact, McEwan ushers the reader to move beyond the portrayed events and makes him to observe them from bird’s eye view. analogically speaking, unlike Fredrick Jameson who remarks in the opening page of *Political Unconscious* “always Historicize” (1981, p.10), McEwan does not believe in “always politicise.” in other words, he does not employ political issues in his novels for the sake of their politicality or as a support for certain ideological doctrine (e.g. Liberalism, Marxism, Capitalism, etc.). The smorgasbord of political outlooks that McEwan orchestrates in this novel are there to provide the contrast context to project democracy. Bringing Tony Blair as a character, referring to George W. Bush’s administration or integrating the burning issues of the last decade including the Iraq war, Al-Qaeda and post 9/11 incidents or the Middle East crisis in an account of one day of the Perownes’ life in *Saturday*, McEwan opens a passage for a fundamental question: “Is this what we ‘really’ mean by democracy and freedom?” Like other contemporary novelists, McEwan only raises the question and never risks settling the argument or finding a solution for it. Therefore, the line of enquiry here does not pursue the condition of psyche in a postcolonial discourse in *Saturday* as Kowaleski does in his article, “Postcolonial Melancholia in Ian McEwan’s *Saturday*”), since a multiplicative, reciprocal understanding of the text sounds more insightful than portraying a coercive “textual” battle of power between the West and the East in the novel. Besides, this investigation diverges from anti-racist debates which invariably magnify the portrait of the marginalized communities (i.e. the Muslims or Afro-Americans) in Britain which is the subject of Butler’s scholarly article, *The Master's Narrative: Resisting the Essentializing Gaze in Ian McEwan's Saturday*.

WAR FOR DEMOCRACY: IN SEARCH OF A CASUS BELLI

According to *Webster’s dictionary*, *Casus belli* is a Latin expression meaning the justification for acts of war. To justify The United States’ invasion of Iraq in 2003, The White House under George W. Bush’s administration announces on its website:

Whereas the efforts of international weapons inspectors, United States intelligence agencies, and Iraqi defectors led to the discovery that Iraq had large stockpiles of chemical weapons and a large scale biological weapons program,

and that Iraq had an advanced nuclear weapons development program that was much closer to producing a nuclear weapon than intelligence reporting had previously indicated[.]

Disappointed by the first pretext and in need of a new *casus belli*, the United State alleges that Iraq supports international terrorism (although they did not find any direct relation between Al-Qaeda and Saddam’s regime) and finally invades Iraq to topple Saddam’s autocratic government and establish her own version of democracy. As displayed in *Saturday*, the last declaration brings about two major reactions Firstly, those who believe it the responsibility of the Iraqi to dethrone the tyrant and establish their own government (the views of the London demonstrators on 15th September 2003, near whom are Henry’s daughter Daisy and his son Theo). Secondly, those who prefer the intervention of the allied military force led by the United States for removing Saddam and establishing what they called the “ideal Western democracy” (Henry and his American colleague, Jay Strauss, opt for this stance).

Henry’s viewpoint is in synchrony with the option that war and violence for removing a dictatorial regime is the best choice: a standpoint which can be justified on the ground that first of all he is a Darwinist, an aspect of his character that Root compares to that of *Enduring Love’s* Joe Rose (2011, p. 65). Secondly, he has been in touch with a tortured Iraqi professor in Saddam’s regime who is a substantiative proof to the fairness of his view. This scheme of thought and experience, consequently, places him into the pro-Iraq war camp in his debates with his daughter and son who are anti-war. His marked preference brings to mind the cover page of Noam Chomsky’s book as a graphic description of Henry’s scheme of things:

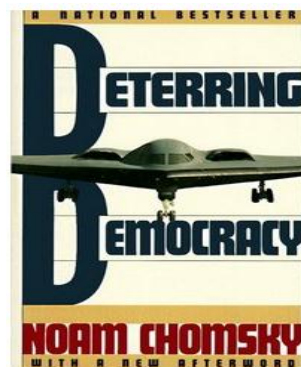


FIGURE 1. The cover of Chomsky’s book connotes “if you do not come to democracy, democracy (with stealth bomber) will come to you.

Being a mouthpiece of the said Americanized democracy, Jay Strauss, Henry’s American anaesthetist, has similar pro-war attitude. His point of view about the Iraq war represents the standpoint of The White House. While playing squash with Henry, Jay remarks, “Iraq is a rotten state, a natural ally of terrorists, bound to cause mischief at some point and may as well be taken out now while the US military is feeling perky after Afghanistan” (McEwan 2005, p.100). Jay’s judgment of Iraq in the novel reverberates Alex Jeffery remarks in which “senior political figures of UK and US presented Saddam Hussein’s Iraq as a ‘rough state,’ threatening the stability of the international state system” (2007, pp.445-46). As Jeffery quotes from Falah *et al*, “every war must be constructed as just by the initiating state, and the ‘rough state’ label served as an attempt to legitimize US-led military intervention as a pre-emptive means of self-defence” (p.446). The issue of the legitimacy of the Iraq war in *Saturday*, however, has an austere counterpoint in Daisy’s attitude:

You [Henry] know very well these extremists, the Neo-cons, have taken over America. Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz. Iraq was always their pet project. Nine eleven was their big chance to talk Bush round. Look at his foreign policy up until then. He was a know-nothing stay-at-home mouse. But there's nothing linking Iraq to nine eleven, or to Al-Qaeda generally, and no really scary evidence of WMD. (p. 190-91)

Henry and Jay's standpoints, roughly speaking, are tied neatly by the consequentialist loop in the sense that the goal (to export and install Western democracy in the rest of the world) justifies the means (violence and war). This Machiavellian standpoint is at work even "before" the reader engages in the concatenation of events in the novel. It acts like ideology, in Althusserian sense, which precedes the existence of subject. At the very opening paragraph of the novel describing the early hours of Saturday in February 2003, Henry "wakes to find himself already in motion" (McEwan 2005, p.1). The nuance of the verb "find" indicates that Henry's motion is not voluntary and he "has been already set into motion" toward the window to spot a burning light flying past. To identify its nature, a series of facts and fiction crisscrossed his inquisitive mind: a comet, meteor, plane with its engine on fire and terrorist attack. Perceiving an imminent threat as a clairvoyant, his active mind foreshadows a disaster that fills the spaces between the words and the reader like a poisonous smoke. .

Striking an image of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre, the sight of the plane with its firing engine makes Henry draw the conclusion that he is witnessing another 9/11 but this time in London. The association of this burning spot in the sky with a terrorist attack turns to an obsession with terrorism that that has begun with continues till the last pages of the novel when Henry reminds the reader,

London, his small part of it, lies wide open, impossible to defend, waiting for its bomb, like a hundred other cities. Rush hour will be a convenient time. It might resemble the Paddington crash-twisted rails, buckled, upraised commuter coaches, stretchers handed out through broken windows, the hospital's Emergency Plan in action. Berlin, Paris, Lisbon. The authorities agree, an attack's inevitable. (McEwan 2005, p.276)

Though Simpson believes that "*Saturday* is a novel about uncertainty and anxiety that seems to have no connection with events or ideas, the kind of anxiety that can be felt by someone as content and successful as Perowne," it is obvious that Henry's anxiety is the consequence of his obsessive preoccupation with bombing attack. His anxiety is a symptom of a systematic perpetuation of paranoia in the subject's psyche planned to be triggered by efficient means (e.g. the mass media) when it is necessary. In this sense, *Saturday* portrays with clarity and insight the different ramifications of internalizing and reactivating of paranoia while compromising on war and massacre in the name of democracy for a generation hunted by terror and anxiety. Henry refers to this state of mind as "the growing complication of the modern condition" (p.127).

The systematization of paranoia, at least after 9/11, is part of the government's master plan put into action for chauvinistic purposes. As Henry in his mind's eye observes:

The government's counsel-that an attack in a European or American city is inevitability-isn't only a disclaimer of responsibility, it's a heady promise. Everyone fears it, but there's also a darker longing in the collective mind, a sickening for self punishment and a blasphemous curiosity. (McEwan 2005, p.176)

Isherwood affirms that "Britain has historically been involved in similar processes of recycling trauma into narratives of national identity and security" (2006, p.34) and this is what

Henry's Iraqi patient, Professor Miri Taleb, who has been tortured by Saddam regime puts in other words: "it's only terror that holds the nation [Iraq] together, the whole system runs on fear, and no one knows how to stop it" (McEwan 2005, p.64). Oddly enough, there are no significant differences between the means of preserving the national identity for both the democratic and undemocratic countries.

THE MASS MEDIA: AN INSTRUMENT FOR CASUS BELLI

The mass media provides an effective mechanism for legitimization of war by justifying it as a war for democracy. Shaping the collective imagination of the individuals, the mass media achieves its goal in two phases. First, it ensures that the collective systematized paranoia prescribed by of the Western governments' master plan is put into action by injecting more and more anxiety and fear into the society. Henry contemplates "[h]is nerves, like tautened strings, vibrate obediently with each news 'release'" (p.181). Then, after perpetuating the planned terror and anxiety in the subject's consciousness, the mass media is able to trigger in people whenever it is necessary the expected reaction the government wants from them: for instance, in *Saturday*, it is going to inculcate in people the violence and massacre in the Third world countries like Iraq or Afghanistan as an established cultural norm.

Attempting to resolve his ambivalence about the legitimacy of Iraq war, Henry, a constant consumer of news right from the early pages of *Saturday*, confesses how news has made him isolated and passive. Like the eyes of big brother in Orwell's *1984*, the mass media omnipresently carries out round-the-clock surveillance throughout Henry's life and controls both his public and private life. Watching the burning spot in the sky right, before anything else, Henry thinks about media coverage of the incident. Paradoxically, Henry consciously "suspects he's becoming a dupe, the willing febrile consumer of news fodder, opinion and speculation and of all the crumbs the authorities let fall. He's a docile citizen, watching Leviathan grow stronger while he creeps under its shadow for protection" (p. 184). In fact, his major concern is that "he isn't thinking independently" (p.184-85).

Disseminating social norms (i.e. language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, rituals, etc.) both at the micro-levels of society and the macro-level encompassing real totality underlying it, the mass media, as a key mode of mediating between the individual and society, interprets which act of violence is appropriate and which one is not. This functionality of the mass media makes the process of legitimization of war and violence for the spread of democracy around the world by the so-called democratic countries a very easy task. Tellingly, the mass media creates a condition in which the state and the citizen arrive at an agreement on the violent act which, according to Smith, has three important provisos: "the violence must be a last resort, restrained to minimum levels, and there should be no peaceful alternatives; the violence must be undertaken by a quasi-heroic 'pure' figure against an 'evil other'; the violence must be undertaken for selfless and universalistic reasons" (1997, p.110). Baudrillard's observation on the conflicting role of the mass media in the terrorist attack of 9/11 is quite insightful about the relationship of media and terror:

We would forgive them any massacre if it had a meaning, if it could be interpreted as historical violence—this is the moral axiom of good violence. We would pardon them any violence if it were not given media exposure ('terrorism is nothing without media'). But this is all illusion. There is no 'good' use of media; the media are part of the event, they are part of the terror, and they work in both directions. (2003, p.30-31)

INCREDULITY TOWARD THE WESTERN DEMOCRACY: AN EXAMPLE OF THE INVALIDATION OF THE METANARRATIVE OF EMANCIPATION

Through the gate of Abu Ghraib prison run by coalition forces, the discussion on the nature of that version of Western Democracy fabricated for the third world countries can enter the forum where Lyotard's definition of postmodern period as incredulity toward the modern metanarratives is the central issue. Addressing the significant roles of narrative which stands at the basis of human experience and makes up different discourses of society, Lyotard believes that narrative "tells us who we are, and allows us to express what we believe and aspires to." According to him in his *Postmodern Condition*, narrative is the foundation of a society's knowledge—be they physics, chemistry, literature, laws, customs, or even gossips—different discourses to which he refers as language games (Malpas 2003, p.21).

On a higher level, Lyotard then talks of "metanarratives" the grand narratives that control and organize the language games by setting their rules and taking the responsibility of their successes and failures. In his views, the metanarratives give a totalizing and comprehensive account of various historical events as well as social or cultural phenomena based on the appeal to "universal truth" or "universal values." He points to two significant metanarratives of modern period namely, "the metanarrative of emancipation" and "speculative metanarrative." He considers the eighteenth-century Enlightenment (freedom of people from religious superstitions) and Marxism (freedom of the workers from their masters' exploitation) as the elements of "the metanarrative of emancipation."

However, in *Postmodern Condition* he argues that when the "enlightened" man declares war (World War I and II) and Marxism ends with Leninism, there is no doubt in the failure of these "metanarratives." Expressing his scepticism toward the totalizing nature of the "metanarratives," he defines "postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives," and argues, "the narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal" (1984, p. xxiv). Since, as Malpas explains, the root of Lyotard's incredulity goes back to his anti-capitalist ideology in which knowledge in the contemporary world is valid in terms of its efficiency and profitability in a market-driven global economy (2003, p.28), he prefers the plurality of small narratives that compete with each other over the totalitarianism of grand narratives.

Democracy with its all universal aspects is one of the taken-for-granted examples of the metanarrative of emancipation that along with other system of values collapses during the World War I and II and their aftermath. According to Boyers,

Democracy was tested and found wanting during the first half of the twentieth century. The well-established democracies of France and England were unable to avoid, and indeed entered enthusiastically into, the futile savagery of trench warfare in World War I. In the aftermath of the war, the collapse of fledgling democratic regimes in post-World War I Italy, Germany and elsewhere led directly to Nazism and at least indirectly to the Holocaust and to World War II. (1985, p.145)

Unlike the post-war novelists who made every endeavour to portray the despair and political estrangement generated by these epic failures of democracy, McEwan in *Saturday* attempts to highlight the various dimensions of the remnants of that failed democracy which like any other Western-made commodities is going to be exported to another part of the world (here, the Middle East countries). Although the westernized democracy like other merchandise is nothing but a "simulacrum," the method of its exporting is strikingly different, i.e. via war and violence.

As far as *Saturday* is concerned, the trace of this Lyotardean standpoint is roughly behind the philosophical statement of Henry's son: "think small." According to Theo:

When we go on about the big things, the political situation, global warming, world poverty, it all looks really terrible, with nothing getting better, nothing to look forward to. But when I think closer in—you know, a girl I've just met, or this song I'm going to do with Chas, or snowboarding next month, then it looks great. So this is going to be my motto—think small. (McEwan 2005, p.35)

Although in the narrow sense there is a distinction between Lyotard's idea of "small narratives" and Theo's "think-small" perspective, in the broad sense there is a real affinity between their views particularly in terms of the disapproval of globalizing and totalizing certain system of values such as Western democracy. Baudrillard's this affinity critique of the phenomenon of totalizing universalism of various cultures and values in his *The Spirit of Terrorism* illuminates more clearly this affinity:

Any culture that universalizes loses its singularity and dies. This is how it is with those we have destroyed by forcibly assimilating them, but it is also the case with our own culture in its pretension to universality. The difference is that the other culture dies of their singularity, which is a fine death, whereas, we are dying of the loss of singularity, of the extermination of all our value which is an ignoble death. (2003, p.88)

Declaring early in the novel that "the bigger you think, the crappier it looks" (McEwan 2005, p.34), Theo declines to be a cog in the machinery of universalism. Instead, in the face of global uncertainty, Theo prefers to be small and particular. For him, as Henry contemplates disapprovingly, there is a "lifetime's satisfaction in twelve bars of three obvious chords" of his blues guitar (p.27). Indeed, the music genre of blues which originated primarily in African-American communities of the United States in the early years of the 20th century, was in a broader sense an attempt for individualization (and emancipation) of the deprived people of America's "Deep South." Here McEwan's characterization of Theo as a talented blues guitarist is a way to suggest the slavery of contemporary race supported by Universalism and globalism. Elaborating on Theo's view, Isherwood remarks, "'thinking small' ignores the culturally and geographically specific conditions that allow Theo to separate the sphere of his immediate existence from the effects of global instability and violence. Simply put, Theo is taking advantage of a form of insulating privilege, and his failure to recognize this suggests a problematic sense of entitlement to security" (2006, p.54).

Baudrillard's distinction between the two terms "universal" and "global," further sheds light on Lyotardian origin of Theo's incredulity toward Western democracy:

Between the terms 'global' and 'universal' there is a deceptive similarity. Universality is the universality of human rights, freedoms, culture and democracy. Globalization is the globalization of technologies, the market, tourism and information. Globalization seems irreversible whereas universal would seem, rather, to be on the way out. At least it has constituted itself as a system of values on the scale of Western modernity, which has no equivalent in any other culture. (2003, p.87-88)

Reading democracy in this light, democracy appears as a set of values that later gets universalized and loses its singularities and values to the extent of the eventual globalization and degradation. In *The Spirit of Terrorism* Baudrillard stresses, "democracy and human rights circulate just like any other global product like oil or capital" (p. 90).

Theo's nonparticipation in the London huge anti-war demonstration implies that the 18-year-old son of Henry is increasingly conscious of the hegemonic role of the globalized market-oriented values (such as London anti-war demonstration) and the hollowness of political rhetoric. Unlike his sister Daisy, for a character like Theo who thinks Blues, going to sleep is more preferable than "tramping through the streets to make his point" since his attitude is "so strong he doesn't feel much need to go" (McEwan 2005, p.151). Although Theo's decision can be interpreted as his passivity or even he is referred as another version of Henry's political barrenness, the breaking-out of the Iraq war on 20th March 2003, one month after London's demonstration, confirms Theo's position about the futility of people's effort in preventing the Iraq war since the plan and its objects have already been designed beyond any intervention.

Being lost in his contemplation on despotism and the tyrannous acts during the first half of the 20th century, Henry, moreover, rhetorically expresses the failure of the totalizing metanarratives when he says, "after the ruinous experiments of the lately deceased century, after so much vile behaviour, so many deaths, a queasy agnosticism has settled around these matters of justice and redistributed wealth. No more big ideas. The world must improve, if at all, by tiny steps" (McEwan 2005, p.74). Ironically, however, McEwan makes Henry's contemplation on the social equality and the egalitarian distribution of wealth in society concurrent with his walking toward the mews where his "silver Mercedes S500 with cream upholstery" is garaged. What inspires Henry to think about such issues is the presence of a road sweeper, "a pink-faced man of about his own age, in a baseball cap and yellow Day-Glo jacket, with a handcart, sweeping the gutter for the council" (p.73-74).

DEMOCRACY AS SIMULACRUM

A dictionary definition of "simulacrum" is "an insubstantial form or semblance of something." It connotes a copy of a copy whose relation to the model has become so attenuated that it can no longer properly be said to be a copy. As a result, the copy stands on its own without a model. Fredric Jameson in his *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* refers to simulacrum as "photorealism" (1991, p.30) a painting which is not a copy of reality, but of a photograph, which is already a copy of the original. Simulacrum is discussed in Gilles Deleuze's article "Plato and the Simulacrum." there he points to a substantial difference between copy and simulacrum:

If we say of the simulacrum that it is a copy of a copy, an endlessly degraded icon, an infinitely slackened resemblance, we miss the essential point: the difference in nature between simulacrum and copy, the aspect through which they form the two halves of a division. The copy is an image endowed with resemblance, the simulacrum is an image without resemblance. (1983, p.48)

In the postmodern era, democracy is nothing but an example of "an image without resemblance." To see how, a reference to Baudrillard's theory of orders of simulacra that explicates the birth of simulacrum is inevitable. The shifted nature of the postmodern democracy is not a certain instance of metamorphosis or secular transubstantiation, transmutation, etc. As Baudrillard writes on the nature of simulacrum: "It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself; that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes (*Webster Dic.* p.167). The same process operating on the "real" in the postmodern world exactly affects democracy and this is what McEwan attempts to zero in on in *Saturday*. Undoubtedly, the

outcome of such an operation is not beauty but ugliness. That is why in her response to her father's pro-war comment that "the price of removing Saddam is war, the price of no war is leaving him in place," and Daisy remarks "it's crude and ugly" (McEwan 2005, p.190).

The mutation that Democracy undergoes until its postmodern version is more comprehensible when approached via the lens of Heidegger's linguistic attitude embedded in his theory of Being where he diagnoses the linguistic symptoms of what Baudrillard later hypothesizes in his orders of simulacra as a postmodern "syndrome." Giving primordial significance to language, Heidegger believes in the centrality of the Greek language as the original experience of most of the key words in the Western culture. Tracing the most fundamental words, back to their origins, according to him, can reflect the original experience of their coming into existence through Being. Each generation adds a layer over the original meaning of a word, covering it like layers of rust and this is how over a long period of time the key words have become impoverished and they no longer carry the meaning and significance they once did (Lemay & Pitts 2010, p.89).

Emphasizing language's special relationship to beings and Being, Heidegger claims that "Greek was the Logos: a language where the words of the language are inseparable from what they name" (p.92). Consequently, there is no doubt that democracy as a term has a history. There was a time in Ancient Greek where the word *dēmokratía* (the origin of the word democracy) really meant "the rule of people by the people for the people with equality and freedom" or "the sovereignty of the will of the people." In other words, at that time, there was no difference between the word and its meaning or the word and the untainted experience of it. Rusted away into a priceless relic throughout the history of political thought, the word democracy becomes only an impoverished word that has nothing to do with the collective will of people. As obvious in the prescribed democracy for Iraq in *Saturday*, democracy has turned to be only a simulacrum. Besides, this is the implication of Daisy's remark, "Americans try to organise a democracy, pump in the billions and leave because the President wants to get himself re-elected next year" (McEwan 2005, p. 187).

The interesting aspect of Henry's characterization is that he is incapable of penetrating into the concept of democracy and seeing the mutational process it has undergone so far. He has certain reservations concerning language and its refined product—literature. As Root observes, "like plots that violate Henry's standards of plausibility, language itself seems to lead him away from rational sense and to build meaning out of unreasonable, yet felt, relationships" (2011, p.73). Literature, for Henry, is all mixed up with and virtually indistinguishable from religion and both of them are outmoded means of understanding the world. Instead of reinventing the world in literature, Henry wants it explained (McEwan 2005, p.66). Obvious, for instance, in a scene where he is stuck in traffic-jam and reflects that "he lacks the lyric gift to see beyond the iron weight of the actual. He's a realist" (p.168), Henry is aware of his shortcoming in artistic perception, a lacuna caused by his rationalistic viewpoint. However, his overall disbelief in the functionality of literature disqualifies Henry as a man of uncovering all the rusted layers that history has placed over the original experience of the words central to his life such as freedom, truth, democracy, etc. As the protagonist, he is not to understand his place in the world by recognizing the initial moment of existence, the moment of "Being speaks" which, according to Heidegger, lies at the centre of the most important words.

The dramatic irony here is the fact that Henry, as a literary character, is not aware that he has a linguistic existence. Words have constructed his physicality and their meanings have moulded his psyche. He is a descendent of Don Quixote whose "whole being," according to Michael Foucault, "is nothing but language, text, printed pages, stories that have already been written down" (2002, p. 51). He even unconsciously relies on language to exert his will-to-power. He makes use of the medical language to get rid of Baxter and his gang at his car

crash. In other words, mastering the medical discourse, Perowne practices his power by labelling Baxter with saccade syndrome (a kind of neurodegenerative disorder) and manipulate him by raising a false hope of surviving his incurable disease through offering him a fictitious story. Kosmalska refers to this aspect of Henry's character and remarks that "the use of language throughout the novel seems to repeat the notion that by means of jargons people control and exclude others, highlighting their authority and constructing their position of supremacy technological superiority for invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan" (2011, p. 268). The valuable implication of Kosmalska's observation is that linguistic invasion via jargons by a clique of political elites is as crucial as the military invasion in subjugating people.

During his argument with Daisy, Henry often uses freedom and democracy interchangeably while these two words are not synonymous. Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom and it consists of practices and procedures that have been moulded through its long history to achieve freedom. Indeed, democracy is the institutionalization of freedom. As an institution, it has some aspects of Derrida's definition of the term in his iconic article, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences." Therefore, it is organizing, balancing and orienting freedom. Besides, the organizing principle of the institution of democracy limits the "play" of the concept of freedom within the totality of the defined frame in order to keep the system coherent.

Democracy's institutionalization of freedom leads to the fallacy that democracy is freedom. It brings about, to use Baudrillard's terminology, the substitution of sign for real. In his *Simulations* under the chapter "The Precession of Simulacra," Baudrillard explicates this substitutional process and names its product a simulacrum:

It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself, that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes. Never again will the real have to be produced [...] (1983, p.4)

According to Baudrillard, simulacrum is the final product of a four-stage process when an image precedes reality:

1. It [image] is the reflection of a basic reality.
 2. It masks and perverts a basic reality.
 3. It masks the absence of a basic reality.
 4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.
- (1983, p.11)

Being the original reality of democracy, freedom is accordingly substituted by democracy in the postmodern era. In a similar four-stage operation, democracy has preceded freedom so is a simulacrum. Similarly, since Baudrillard refers to what remains at the end of the operation as "hyperreal"—a sign that no longer represents or refers to an external model—the freedom can be tagged "hyperfreedom" which stands for nothing but itself and refers only to other signs. The crucial point in Baudrillard's definition of reality in the postmodern era is that image does not copy, represent, transfigure or transmute reality, but image introduces itself as reality (a reality without basic reality). In terms of democracy, the same scenario is valid since democracy, in the following process, establishes itself not as a representation of freedom but as a simulacrum, a freedom proper bereft of freedom:

1. Democracy is the reflection freedom.
2. Democracy masks and perverts freedom.

3. Democracy masks the absence of freedom.
4. Democracy bears no relation to any freedom whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

To portray the lack of distinctions between reality and simulacra because of hyperreality, Baudrillard offers the “imaginary world of Disneyland as an example of hyperreality. The very plaque at the entrance of Disneyland which tells “Here You Leave Today And Enter The World Of Yesterday, Tomorrow And Fantasy” is a support for Baudrillard’s claim. According to him, by presenting its “imaginary” world to its visitors, Disneyland ensures them that the rest of America is “real”:

The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false: it is deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. Whence the debility, the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. It is meant to be an infantile world, in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the "real" world, and to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere, particularly among those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster illusions of their real childishness. (1983, p.25)

The issue of the Iraq war in *Saturday* is another example of Baudrillard’s notion of hyperreality which McEwan makes use of to expose the emancipatory nature of democracy as a simulated copy. America’s invasion of Iraq is not to endow freedom to the Iraqis. It is actually an attempt to ensure the people around the world that they themselves have democracy. In other words, it is a way to conceal the absence of freedom in America. As Daisy remarks “when the Americans have invaded, they won’t be interested in democracy, they won’t spend any money on Iraq, they’ll take the oil and build their military bases and run the place like a colony” (McEwan 2005, p.186). Indeed, the invasion of Iraq not only had nothing to do with democracy but devastated her rich culture too. According to Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael “the significance of the looting and destruction of Iraq’s cultural symbols [after the invasion] cannot be overstated. The American forces, while guarding only the Ministry of Oil, watched the burning and the looting of Baghdad indifferently, and even refused to intervene when people requested their help” (2005, p.616).

In this regard, American invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, and massacring the civilians leads to a hollow democracy that is no more reverberant of human emancipation but it stands by itself and for itself and refers to itself. The aim of this kind of democracy is nothing but control or as Baudrillard in his analysis of Afghanistan war states “to quell any refractory zone, to colonize and tame all the wild spaces, whether in geographical space or in the realm of the mind” (2003, p.97-98).

The domination of simulacrum in every bit of human society, from system values and thought to merchandise and life style brings on a kind of postmodern wasteland where people attach value to the signs than what they stand for. That is why Henry contemplates the pigeon excrement as aesthetically significant: “He sees the paving stone mica glistening in the pedestrianized square, pigeon excrement hardened by distance and cold into something almost beautiful, like a scattering of snow” (McEwan 2005, p.4). This observation is doubly illuminating in terms of the current reading: firstly, it shows that the citizens of the postmodern wasteland find only metonymically the white, dry waste material of pigeon “beautiful.” Secondly, it points to the failure of the democracy to provide peace and freedom for the democratic countries. From pigeon, invariably a symbol of peace, only its waste matter has remained. In other words, during the first decade of the twenty-first century, the age of the Middle-East war, there is no room for pigeon, peace, white flag and freedom.

In his discussion with Daisy on what Iraq earns at the cost of war, Henry clearly expresses the nature of the freedom that Iraq is going to achieve: “my fifty pounds says three

months after the invasion there'll be a free press in Iraq, and unmonitored Internet access too” (p.192). This emphasis on the condition of the mass media as a criterion for evaluating the status of freedom in a country is easily refutable by a reference to Baudrillard’s statement that “the media are the vehicle for the simulation which belongs to the system and for the simulation which destroys the system, according to a circular logic” (1988,p.218). Indeed, in the market-driven capitalist society where all the narratives are evaluated based on their efficiency and profitability, the media cannot survive intact. It has to create a hyperreal circumstance (in Baudrillardian sense) and mould the consciousness of “subjects” like Henry. As a matter of fact, since multitude of media radically shape and filter Henry’s accession to original event or experience, his consciousness cannot distinguish reality from a simulation of reality.

Another example of hyperreality in McEwan’s *Saturday* is the set pieces dealing with the terrorist attack of 9/11. Reviewing the novel, Cowell writes that after 9/11, “the relationship of the real and the imaginary became more difficult”. The borderline between the two is so blurred that the political activist Thierry Meyssan in his book translated in English as *9/11: The Big Lie* even doubts the attacks, asserting that the official version of the tragedy is a total fabrication of the United States (Baloch 2006, p.142). In Meyssan’s view, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan was an operation directed by military-industries of the United States who in search of a *casus belli* launches another Crusade.

The essence of the simulated copy of democracy fabricated to control the citizens of, particularly, the third-world countries is nothing but the western political hegemony which ends up in terrorism. As Philippe Muray in his *Dear Jihadists* announces:

[W]e produced you, jihadists and terrorist, and you will end up prisoners of resemblance. Your radicalism is something we passed on to you. We can do this because we are indifferent to everything, including our own values. You cannot kill us because we are already dead. You think you are fighting us, but you are unconscious on our sides. You are already assimilated. (qtd. in Baudrillard 2003, p.64)

Under hegemonic condition raised out of the simulated democracy, in Antonio Gramsci’s sense, “the majority—usually a large majority—of a nation’s citizens have so effectively internalized what the rulers want them to believe that they genuinely think that they are voicing their own opinion” (Bertens 2007, p.69). In light of the Muray’s assertion, the terrorist attack of 9/11 is a temporal but serious counter-hegemonic lapse where the resistance against the global hegemony of the Western countries comes into force. In this sense, the pro- or anti-war characters of *Saturday* as well as those worried anti-war demonstrators do not comprehend that Al-Qaeda is the offspring of the Western universal hegemonic policy. Represented in Henry’s nightmare, they think that Al-Qaeda’s attacks are in revenge for Iraq invasion: “Al-Qaeda, it’s said, which loathes both godless Saddam and the Shi’ite opposition, will be provoked by an attack on Iraq into revenge on the soft cities of the West” (McEwan 2005, p.73).

Moreover, hegemony is not only a state apparatus. It can be exerted by individual subjects since, as Baudrillard affirms, denying reality is terroristic too (2003, p.81). Reality in terms of the Iraq war means Iraq culture, religion, history—in short, Iraqi identity. The problem with Henry and all those who think like Henry in *Saturday* is that, by denying the reality of Iraq and Afghanistan, they become hegemonic agents, those who aim to force their own hyperreality (the Western value system in the cover of democracy) on their subjects by any means of war, army coup, violence, sanction, etc. Perpetuated in mass media’s blurring of the boundary between reality and the simulated copy, the denial of others is the plague that has devastated one culture after another in the postmodern age.

In sum, the discussion on the pseudo-democratization of Iraq, portrayed in Ian McEwan's *Saturday* can be concluded by underlining the fact the novel raises serious questions about the nature of democracy that the West has designed for the countries like Iraq. The narrative implies that this "Western gift" is a systematic hegemony propagated and legitimized by means of the mass media. Indeed, democracy offered to Iraq by invading and occupying this country is nothing but a pure simulacrum which is bereft of freedom. And this is the reason for McEwan to express his incredulity toward the emancipation of human beings under the flag of democracy.

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