

An analysis of Ian McKean's *The Child in Time* using analepsis as a narrative technique

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Abstract

Ian McEwan is one of the prolific writers in the contemporary period. He has published his novels under the strategy of postmodern condition. One of the features in postmodern novels are narrative structure. He is a controversial writer who gives importance to narrative techniques in his novels among other novelists. In his novels he has attempted to point out difficulties and possibilities of the characters and its settings. He has used narrative techniques in his novel to highlight the characters point of view and their strategies. At the same time, realistic nature of the characters and their strategies have explored through the techniques. Many of the themes and events reveal according to the strategy of postmodern narrative. Specifically, one of the novels of Ian McEwan has examined the narrative technique of analepsis in *The child in Time*. Here, analepsis has divided into two sections- internal analepsis and external analepsis. It has featured with third person perspective.

Keywords: Narrative Techniques, Internal analepsis, External analepsis, Postmodern Condition. Third person Perspective.

The proposed research attempts to focus on narrative technique of analepsis, in *The Child in Time* through the third person perspective. Narrative techniques are a tool to explore the characters perspective and its settings. It is a device to the narrator who tries to expose storytelling of the character. It gives deeper meaning to the readers and visualizes the situation and circumvent. Analyzing the novels of Ian McEwan, he chooses the techniques to understand

the story or about the characters in which he conveys message to the readers and the method that he has used to develop a story. Ayyildiz asserts in his research article, “Traumatized Perception of the Self and Time in Ian McEwan’s *The Cement Garden* and *The Child in Time*” explains as “His novels depicts traumatic incidents in claustrophobic and public spaces and their impacts on the individual, portraying how trauma distorts the victim’s perception of the self and time” (22). It points out the traumatic event shapes the characters to know about themselves and hints to the readers to analyse the condition of characters and the technique that Ian McEwan has used in his novels. Here, Ian McEwan has used narrative technique of analepsis to prove how the characters are reflected in their own way. Analepsis is a device in which characters remember the story or events happened before. It is called flashback. It is divided into two sections – internal analepsis and external analepsis. Internal analepsis takes the readers to think about the event that have already happened but the character is in present condition. External analepsis has recounted the events that had happened before when the story is narrated.

Examining the characters in *The Child in Time*, Ian McEwan uses the techniques which highlight the novel to know about the characters, situation and circumvent. Ian McEwan uses analepsis in all circumstances even in the title of the novel. The title of the novel *The Child in Time* induces the readers to think about the unknown child and exposes something happened to the child in time. It is mixed with external analepsis and internal analepsis. Primarily, the characters suffer and depress throughout the novel, when they think about past and present-day events. Jahanroshan asserts in his research article, “The Appearance of Child within in Ian McEwan’s *The Child in Time*” explains as, “Stephen lost his daughter, Kate, two years ago and continuously looking after her. By searching Kate, Stephen along with his eagerness to be a father once more looks after his own lost childhood. Stephen’s unstoppable search for Kate for two years is not only for Kate herself, but also is an obsession of Stephen’s for his own childhood” (69). Stephen, the protagonist is affected by traumatic event after the abduction of his daughter, Kate. When the novel begins, readers find out the characterization of Stephen and his missing daughter Kate. Situation and circumvent assert the condition of Stephen and he thinks about his daughter, “Her phantom growth, the product of an obsessive sorrow, was not only inevitable- nothing could stop the sinewy clock- but necessary. Without the fantasy of her

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continued existence he was lost, time would stop. He was the father of an invisible child” (2). The novel moves up and down to analyze the condition of major characters such as Stephen, Julie and Kate. Stephen who suffers guilty about the condition of his daughter due to his misbehavior, his relationship with Julie is breakable. Ahamad, et al., assert in their research article, “Belatedness of Trauma, Self-Reflexive Conscious and Narrative Vicissitude in *The Child in Time*” explains as, “As a trauma victim losing his daughter Kate, Stephen could not evade the ethical load that it’s his carelessness that leads to the tragedy” (163).

The narrative expresses panoramic state of the characters and reveal the settings and scenes move between the present and past event. Settings and scenes indicate external analepsis to the readers as, “This was a lost time and a lost land- scape- he had returned to once to discover the trees efficiently felled, the land ploughed and the estuary spanned by and motorway bridge. And since loss was his subject, it was an easy move to a frozen, sunny day outside a supermarket in south London” (7). The narrative of the story explains the conscious and unconscious state of Stephen’s life and explore how he has engaged in the situation and circumvent which analyses the techniques through its plot and settings. Ian McEwan has proved the essential nature of the characters through its setting and unexpected event. The unexpected event has passed in Stephen’s life. Stephen has experienced strange event that he sees his parents as a young couple in a pub. Child assert in his chapter, “True Maturity: *The Child in Time*” explains as “Stephen’s vision is seen a way of placing himself as the cause of his own birth” (62). The event and situation drag the readers to think about the past and present event of the characters. It keeps the readers to move here and there to find out the characters nature of one’s own.

The Child in Time focuses on the personal problems of major character Stephen and the minor character Charles Darke who suffer in their life during their childhood days. Narrative sequence of past and present intertwined in all situations and points out the self-conscious state of mind through the narrative technique. In the mid of the novel, Charles tries to say about his childhood days to Stephen. In a meantime, Stephen thinks about his past events. The panorama view of the characters tries to explain their condition to the reader in indirect way. It determines the characters sufferings due to their past situations. The traumatic experience of Stephen and Julie, Charles and Thelma are analysed by the concept of techniques which shows the individual

suffering in his or her life. It provokes the readers to think possibilities of Stephen's life and reunite with Julie. Stephen acknowledges, "He was only the catcher, not the home, and his one thought was to return the child to its mother" (245). The couple reunites and the abducted child is represented by another child at the end of the novel. Unexpected events, and uncontrollable feelings are revealed through the techniques which show the characters view point and their circumstances.

Through the analyses of third person perspective Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* demonstrate the postmodern condition and its strategies conclude the narrative techniques of analepsis which try to focus on the conscious state of the characters. For instance, the situation and circumvent has analysed through the techniques which the characters point of view has examined. Ian McEwan has used narrative techniques to know about the condition of the characters precisely and the situation which moves the characters backward and forward to conclude the effects of the story. In his novels, Ian McEwan employs analepsis as narrative techniques to highlight the characters circumvent and events which portray the real-life situations of people in their day- to-day life.

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